

SHOULD PUNISHMENT BE ELIMINATED FROM PARENTING? A REPLY TO BENJET AND KAZDIN

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For over a century, some psychologists have argued for punishment free parenting. However, a thorough look at research published during these 100 years provides interesting insight into the field of parenting. Not one of those psychologists have been able to provide a working model of punishment free parenting: all fall short of providing practical evidence. On the flipside, we provide substantial evidence that confirms that punishment is effective and permissive parenting is not.

Introduction

In 2003 Benjet and Kazdin joined a number of mental health professionals who, for the past 100 years have questioned the role and value of punishment in parenting. They state: "We propose an expanded research agenda to address questions about the goals of parental discipline; the role, if any, that punishment plays in achieving these goals." Thus, their article suggests the elimination of parental use of punishment in families.

This presentation presents information and scientific research findings to support the argument that for almost one hundred years mental health professionals have been claiming punishment free parenting is more effective than reinforcement/punishment based parenting systems advocated by the founding fathers of the United States. This presentation suggests punishment free parenting has never been scientifically validated. We suggest punishment is an integral part of Mother Nature's scheme of things and has overwhelmingly been scientifically validated as more effective than punishment free, permissively oriented parenting approaches advocated by mental health professionals.

We believe there are several very significant factors which Benjet and Kazdin (2003) fail to include with their argument that perhaps punishment should be eliminated from parental options to change children's behavior : (1) research shows people who have experienced punishment (including spanking) do not believe it produced long term negative effects in them and was effective in getting them to correct their efforts in them and was effective in getting them to correct their behavior (2) a review of Gershoff's (2002) study which Benjet and Kazdin cite to support their argument points to some serious flaws in her analysis, (3) substantial research shows punishment free parenting is ineffective, lacks scientific support, and produces substantially more after effects than parenting involving consistent use of punishment, and (4) punishment is an important and natural part of Mother Nature's scheme of things which can be more effectively applied by parents, but not totally removed.

First, it is necessary to highlight the research and theoretical speculation used to suggest that present-day parenting can function without the necessity of employing punishment. Specifically, this paper will look at the findings of Benjet & Kazdin (2003) from the Clinical Psychology Review and Gershoff (2002) in Psychological Reports.

Arguments against Punishment (Spanking)

Key issues in Benjet and Kazdin's (2003) article include ideas that the concomitant effects of punishment, developmental processes are adversely influenced by punishment have negative effects, moderators of spanking effects, and that "mild and occasional" spanking are not clearly defined. Among the concomitant effects,

Kazdin (2001) cites animal research to suggest that punishment can have side effects which include emotional reactions, aggression, and avoidance of people, settings, and situations associated with that punishment (Kazdin, 2001). Benjet and Kazdin (2003) also mention that Gershoff found similar findings with children.

Benjet and Kazdin assess the impact of corporal punishment on development. They admit studies confirming that extreme corporal punishment does indeed adversely affect the brain also may or may not be relevant to mild spanking. They do so because it is not known where the brain makes the distinction between child abuse and other forms of punishment like mild spanking, time-out or privilege removal.

Moderators of spanking effects on children is a delicate subject, Benjet and Kazdin believe, because imputing adverse behavior to a child's disposition (e.g. vulnerability to punishment) or family factors may be a form of inane blame that can have negative consequences. Kazdin points out that doing such might lead research to advocate punishment for some children without such moderating variables but refraining with other children. He then raises the point that punishment might not be needed at all, which would negate studying moderators. Finally, Benjet and Kazdin's (2003) article addresses the concern that because "mild and occasional" spanking is not clearly defined, what may be mild for one parent is not mild for another, and thus child abuse may occur under the guise of punishment. It is important to note that such an argument may lead to a full rejection of punishment if it is defined by researchers as extreme corporal punishment or child abuse. It is also important to note that while the title of Benjet and Kazdin's (2003) article refers to spanking and not punishment in general, they repeatedly include the term punishment in their arguments. Therefore Benjet and Kazdin's condemnation of punishment includes time-out, privilege withdrawal, and other such behavior modification approaches that do not involve physical coercion or abuse.

In their closing comments, Benjet and Kazdin (2003) say, "Thus, the many health, psychological, and neurological consequences of harsh punishment cannot be dismissed as irrelevant to mild spanking." However, one may argue that they can because harsh punishment and mild spanking are distinct entities blurred by nebulous attempts to tap into hypothetical constructs through non-specific operational definitions, tendentious with regard to connotation.

Additionally, no research has shown time outs, removing privileges, and overcorrection to produce neurological changes in the brain. In addition to Kazdin's article, Gershoff's meta-analysis in 2002 militated against punishment. Among her key issues, she claimed that spanking was associated with undesirable outcomes (i.e. aggression, anti-social behavior) and only one positive outcome, immediate compliance (Gershoff, 2002). She also reported that such undesirable outcomes (e.g. increased externalizing, mental health problems, and poorer competencies) are overwhelmingly consistent, reporting 94% of the individual effect sizes of the meta-analysis represented undesirable outcomes in her study. Finally, she stated that the methodology of the studies she included in her meta-analysis would not make a difference in her conclusions, because conservative post-hoc studies have purported the strength of the relationship between corporal punishment and effects is not affected by the study characteristics.

Larzelere and Baumrind (2002) responded to Gershoff's meta-analysis by calling into question its validity and significance on account of overly severe and broad definitions of corporal punishment. They also ascribe its error in terms of the fact that some parents may unjustly abuse children, but other parents may not and should not be told not to punish simply because others take measures to the extreme (Larzelere & Baumrind, 2002).

Punished People Advocate Punishment

In 1998, Michael Robinson conducted a three-generational study containing a middle-class population. He particularly sought to study spanking, a specific facet of punishment. The study included 365 subjects. 74 were present-day college students, 141 fathers and mothers, and 150 grandparents. Among other interesting findings, he observed that 77% of the subjects self-reported that spanking helped reduce behavior, 85% reported

that spanking did not reduce levels of children's trust in parents, 90% reported that spanking should be a parental discipline option, 86% reported that spanking does not cause detrimental effects, 75% reported that it does not cause resentment, 77% reported that it does not cause physical abuse, and 93% reported that spanking did not precipitate abusing others.

It is rather significant to note that the vast majority of people who have experienced corporal punishment do not believe it produced negative side effects in them such as being abusive to others, resenting their parents, being physically aggressive to others, or being distrustful of others. The vast majority of parents and grandparents did not feel spanking produced strong negative side effects in their children or themselves. These results are consistent with data presented later, showing consistent use of punishment does not produce aggression and delinquency in childhood while permissive parenting does.

Robinson (1998) posed the question, "what do people against spanking supposedly know that the majority of spanking recipients don't know?" In other words, Robinson (1998) questions the disapproval of a system that those who were subjected to it overwhelmingly did not believe was harmful. It does not seem realistic to repudiate an integral part of discipline that former children harken back to without deleterious effects. An additional important factor found by Robinson (1998) was that parental verbal putdowns contributed more to feelings of distrust, aggression, and anger over three generations than did lifetime spanking frequency. Recipients thus advocate future use of punishment on account of experience and seem to practically place a bona fide "stamp of approval" on the practice.

Critical Review of Gershoff

Also, a critical look at Gershoff's meta-analysis may suggest that removal of punishment is not realistic. According to Lazelere and Baumrind (2002), Gershoff's "blanket injunction against spanking" is not justified. Not only are the operational definitions broad and the methodology of the various experiments influential, as previously noted from Lazelere's and Baumrind's reply, but other basic tenets of empirical research to establish causality are lacking.

For example, primary studies within the meta-analyses threaten the validity of Gershoff's study. Validity, or relevance to the particular issue, cannot be confirmed in studies that purport something they cannot. Specifically, one cannot establish causality without correlation, a time-order relationship, and elimination of alternative possibilities. Only 17% of Gershoff's studies came from longitudinal studies, which focus on time-order relationships over time (Lazelere & Baumrind, 2002). Therefore, the other 83% may not have provided sufficient information to determine risk factors. An experimenter may observe that aggression and punishment covary, but he cannot claim that punishment causes aggression. On the other hand, aggressive tendencies may lead to punishment. For example, a longitudinal study cited by Gershoff (Cowan, Powell, and Cowan, 1998) attempts causality without establishing a time-order relationship. What causes what, then? Thus, correlation is a necessary, but a not sufficient factor to establish causality.

In addition, elimination of alternative variables is necessary, and studies contributing to Gershoff's meta-analysis need closer attention in this regard. It included quasi-experimental studies, and to analyze them Gershoff used a program (DSTAT) that excludes from consideration the effect sizes of coefficients from multiple regression, which assesses the interaction of many predictors on the predicted variable (Lazelere & Baumrind, 2002). By using a program that prohibits a look at alternate variables in a relationship, she cannot prove causality.

Baumrind and Lazelere also point out that a distinction should be made between behavior compliance—for which parents use punishment—and dispositional compliance. Behavioral compliance is more short-term, whereas dispositional compliance refers to the general subjugation to authority figures. Dispositional noncompliance is likely to receive more punishment to achieve behavioral compliance than a child whose disposition is one of compliance but at times is behaviorally noncompliant (Baumrind & Lazelere, 2002). Therefore, an outcome of

short-term compliance proven when punishment is used is only “the tip of the iceberg,” so to speak, because researchers have not extensively distinguished between the two. Those who disagree with punishment may not be aware that dispositional compliance is integral to internalization and appropriate social behavior. An outcome of behavioral compliance, then, may be less insignificant than many have thought, and punishment is needed to prevent future anti-social outcomes of extreme noncompliant children (Baumrind & Lazelere, 2002).

Punishment-Free Parenting Is Ineffective

A highly significant factor that needs to be considered when addressing the question as to whether scientific evidence supports the argument that punishment should be eliminated from present day parenting practices in the United States relates to the fact that a substantial portion of the mental health profession has been claiming for the past hundred years that punishment free parenting systems are more effective than parenting systems which include the use of punishment. However, while influential mental health professionals have created three alternate punishment free parenting systems to replace reinforcement/punishment based parenting systems advocated by the Bible that were established by the nation’s founding fathers, scientific research findings have repeatedly failed to show any punishment free parenting system to be effective.

In 1945 Benjamin Spock authored *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*. That book which sold over 40 million copies throughout the next 45 years advocated a punishment free parenting system based exclusively on Sigmund Freud’s psychological theory. In 1970 Thomas Gordon authored *Parent Effectiveness Training*, a book advocating a punishment free parenting approach based exclusively on the psychological ideas of Carl Rogers. In 1976 Don Dinkmeyer and Gary McKay authored *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*, a book advocating a punishment free parenting system based on the psychological ideas of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs. In 1998 Anthony Biglan addressed the American Psychological Association National Convention and pointed out that mental health professionals were encouraging the American public to employ these punishment free parenting systems when in fact scientific evidence did not support them as being effective. A historical look at the scientific research findings since the early 1900s supports Biglan’s contentions.

In 1909 British psychiatrist William Healey immigrated to the United States and began working with juvenile offenders in the juvenile court system. Healey (1915), along with other Freudian oriented psychiatrists such as Bernard Glueck and William White strongly argued that punishing individuals was the major cause of aggressive behavior and delinquency rather than an effective behavior change procedure for reducing misbehavior in children. They argued that a talk-it-out based therapeutic approach such as psychoanalysis was the answer to reducing or preventing aggressive behavior and delinquency in youth rather than having youth experience consequences for their actions.

By the 1930s scientifically untested punishment free parenting and juvenile correction programs were being strongly advocated by mental health professionals with growing group of society asking for scientific evidence to support that approach. In 1937 the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Project was initiated by advocates of Freud’s punishment free approach to provide scientific evidence that Freud’s talk-it-out, punishment free approach was effective in reducing and preventing aggression and delinquency in youth while concurrently demonstrating parental use of punishment was the major cause of those behaviors.

This control group type of scientific experiment involving 650 boys (perhaps the most ambitious ever carried out) was carried out for ten years before the data was analyzed. The results of the experiment reported in 1948 shocked the investigators as it strongly indicated the punishment free, talk-it-out Freudian approach was ineffective in reducing or preventing aggression and delinquency in youth. Feeling their data analysis had to be wrong the investigators hired two researchers (William and Joan McCord) to re-analyze all the data. In 1959 McCord & McCord published their results which included the following: (1) they found the talk-it-out approach did not reduce or prevent aggression and delinquency, (2) they found permissive parenting and inconsistent use of punishment was correlated with causing aggression and delinquency, and (3) they found consistent use of parental

punishment was not a cause of aggression and delinquency in youth.

In 1950 Glueck and Glueck reported on their study involving 1000 youth that parental use of punishment was a major cause of delinquency. However, the Gluecks' conclusions were questioned by many as being biased because their data included a great deal of information suggesting parental permissiveness was much more correlated with delinquency than was parental use of punishment. For example Glueck and Glueck's data show 56.8% of youth in detention centers came from families with permissive mothers while only 4.4% of youth in detention centers came from families with overly strict mothers (delinquent youth 13 times more likely to come from permissive rather than overly strict mothers).

The idea that aggression and/or delinquency in children is due more to permissive parenting than punitive parenting as indicated in Glueck and Glueck's (1950) data is consistent with other research findings. In England Burt (1925) reported delinquents are seven times more likely to come from permissive parents. In California Merrill (1950) reported delinquent youth were three times more likely to come from permissive parents. In 1958 Nye studied over 2200 high school age youths and reported the use of punishment by parents was not a significant indicator for delinquent behavior. West (1982) along with Paulson, Coombs, and Landsverk (1990) reported similar findings.

In 1957 Sears, Maccoby, and Levin studied 379 families having a five year old and concluded parental use of punishment was a cause of aggression in the children. However, the actual data in their study indicated a .16 correlation between aggression in children and parental use of punishment, yet a higher .23 correlation between aggression in children and parental permissiveness. In 1961 Sears retested all the children and reported there was a significant correlation between childhood aggression and permissive parenting yet no significant correlation between childhood aggression and parental use of punishment.

The field research studies just cited are representative of the over three dozen major ex post facto and experimental research investigations carried out up through the late 1990s (e.g. Paulson, Coombs, & Landsverk, 1990) which overwhelmingly report parental permissiveness to be more responsible for aggressive behavior and delinquency in youth than is parental use of punishment.

Basic laboratory research findings on punishment overwhelmingly support the field research findings in contradicting the claims of punishment free parenting advocates of PET, STEP, and Freudian parenting approaches that punishment is not effective in reducing misbehavior and that punishment causes many unpleasant side effects such as childhood aggression and delinquency. Two of the most well respected books reviewing the effects of punishment on behavior (Punishment, 1977, by Walters and Grusec; Effects of Punishment on Human Behavior, 1983, by Axelrod and Apsche) reviewed over 900 punishment studies (most were well controlled experiments) and concluded: (1) punishment is indeed an effective, scientifically validated behavior change procedure, and (2) punishment does not produce the host of negative secondary side effects (including childhood aggression) that punishment free mental health advocates have claimed.

The fact that a number of mental health professionals have authored articles making unsupported claims against punishment is exemplified by Axelrod and Apsche's (1983) review of punishment research where they talk of addressing claims about punishment effects:

In at least one account (Maurer, 1974); punishment is credited with causing juvenile delinquency, hyperactivity, anti-social aggression, vandalism, minimal brain damage, and homicide. Evidence for such claims, except in the case of aggression, is non existent...But evidence that physical punishment is a significant variable in the determination of antisocial lifestyles of criminal proportions has not been obtained (Axelrod & Apsche, 1983, p. 291-192).

When looking at punishment research where punishment was experimentally applied to human subjects (rather

than ex post facto punishment research having a host of uncontrolled secondary variables) the data indicate punishment was very effective in changing behavior without producing undesirable side effects, including aggression and antisocial behavior. Axelrod & Apsche (1983) conclude:

The undesirable side effects reviewed here come from a relatively small proportion of all the studies on the therapeutic use of punishment. Even when allowance is made for the probable under reporting of negative side effects due to editorial sanctions, it is interesting to note how few studies in the literature contain observations that would suggest clinical or ethical problems. In considering the studies where undesirable side effects were observed, the overall impression that results is one of mild surprise that serious side effects are seen so infrequently...Most of the undesirable side effects described lasted only for a few minutes or days, were quickly responsive to treatment if they did not disappear spontaneously, and constituted a relatively small and ethically justified price to pay in return for the elimination of much more detrimental behaviors (Axelrod & Apsche, 1983, p. 300-301).

In research investigations such as these where punishment is actually applied without demeaning comments or other negative factors which are often incorrectly included as part of punishment, the use of punishment is found to be effective in correcting misbehavior without producing long term undesirable emotional problems, aggression, or antisocial behavior. Up through present day (the year 2004) no substantive review of punishment research has refuted the scientifically validated point that punishment is an effective behavior change procedure. Besides the fact that both field research findings and laboratory research findings concerning punishment overwhelmingly show punishment to be an effective behavior change procedure, it is important to point out that the three punishment free parenting systems are not based on nor have they been validated by scientific research findings.

In 1992 respected psychiatrist-researcher E. Fuller Torrey reviewed all the research pertaining to Freud's psychological theory (including parenting ideas). After citing dozens of attempts to find published scientific research findings that validated Freud's ideas Torrey concludes there really is no scientific evidence at all to support Freud's psychological theory. Torrey (1992) refers to numerous attempts by psychologists to find scientific research validation of Freud's theory then says the following conclusion made by Hilgard et. al. (1952) adequately represents the conclusions of all those attempting to find scientific validation for Freud over the past eighty years: "anyone who tries to give an honest appraisal of psychoanalysis as a science must be ready to admit that as it is stated it is mostly very bad science, that the bulk of the articles in its journals cannot be defended as research publications at all" (p.44).

In 1959 Benjamin Spock initiated a thirteen year study to prove the validity of Freud's parenting ideas. According to Torrey (1992) "The results of the study provided no support whatsoever for Freud's theory and, not surprisingly, little of the data was ever published" (p.134)... "The study, probably the most ambitious ever undertaken to prove that childrearing based on Freud's theory can ameliorate developmental problems, had completely negative results" (p.135). In essence neither Freud nor any of his later advocates produced any substantive scientific research findings to show his punishment free parenting approach ever worked. All research evidence indicated just the opposite.

While Thomas Gordon began teaching punishment free Parent Effectiveness Training parenting workshops in 1962, he never carried out any substantive research showing his parenting approach was effective in changing children's behavior as PET (1970) claims it can do. In 1977 Rinn and Markle reviewed ten research projects intent on determining whether PET's punishment free parenting approach was effective. They concluded the research findings did not support PET's claims of being an effective parenting approach. In 1985 Dembo, Sweitzer, and Lauritzen reviewed 18 research investigations conducted on PET and concluded "In summary, there is little evidence that children's behavior is affected consistently by their parents' participation in PET" (p.177). Since 1985 no major review of PET research has questioned these findings.

In 1985 Dembo et. al. also reviewed the ten research studies carried out up to that time to determine the effectiveness of the third punishment free parenting approach Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (1970). Their conclusion about the research findings reported that "...parent-recorded data indicated little evidence of children's behavior change" (p.181). In 1990 the authors of STEP (Dinkmeyer, et. al.) published a journal article claiming criticisms of STEP being ineffective were inaccurate and cited three dissertations, three journal articles and one Australian government report that suggested STEP workshop attendance increased parent attitudes about STEP. In conclusion Dinkmeyer et. al. (1990) state "The STEP parent education program is effective, research substantiates this, and the reader should be informed of these facts" (p. 271). In 2003 Robinson, Robinson, and Dunn reviewed all the published research pertaining to STEP and pointed out the research findings overwhelmingly demonstrate STEP is not an effective parenting system that can produce behavior changes in children as STEP claims.

An in-depth look at the research leads to the following conclusion:

While for nearly 100 years mental health professionals have been claiming punishment free parenting approaches are more effective than reinforcement-punishment based parenting systems, they have never produced any punishment free parenting system that has been scientifically shown to be effective. For more than thirty years three punishment free parenting systems created by mental health professionals have been around, yet repeated research studies indicate they do not work. Thirty years is certainly adequate time to validate a punishment free parenting system. However, none of the three well known punishment free parenting systems advocated by mental health professionals has passed the science test. In fact there has never been a punishment free parenting system created that has passed the science test.

Punishment is Integral Part of Life

While the idea of punishment free parenting is certainly an attractive, sounds good idea to mental health professionals the research evidence suggests a punishment free parenting system may not only be unrealistic, but also undesirable. Mother Natures' scheme of things certainly includes the use of punishment. Additionally, there has never been a society recorded in the history of the Earth that did not include the parental use of punishment.

We believe that Benjet and Kazdin's (2003) suggestion to remove punishment from parenting is not only unrealistic but also impossible. We believe we should be focusing on research to determine how punishment can most effectively and ethically be implemented in society rather than suggesting it can be eliminated altogether. Benjet and Kazdin suggest society eliminate the parental use of punishment because some research suggests parenting systems including punishment may cause developmental side effects such as aggression and delinquency. However, Benjet and Kazdin provide no evidence that punishment free parenting does not produce the same or even worse side effects.

In a final argument against the removal of punishment because doing so is not realistic, it is necessary to get "back to basics." Keep in mind punishment is an integral part of Mother Nature's Scheme of things. There is no natural environment for any animal (including human beings) that can think and make choices which does not inherently include punitive experiences, including physical punitive experiences. There has never been a civilization in the recoded history of the earth that did not include various forms of parental punishment.

Additionally, consider the disparity between a lab-setting and a home environment. Kazdin's experiences, although they are very consequential, are founded on the controlled atmosphere that one can obtain in the Yale University Child Conduct Clinic. Having a focused and intensive program for noncompliant children thankfully helps many families whose children have been causing intense distress, and they are able to do so without punishment. But such controlled measures can not be generalizable to a population that does not have those same resources.

For example, it is important to notice the difference between a controlled environment in a laboratory setting versus the day-to-day stresses and unexpected events that constitute family life. The parent dyad responsible for many children does not compare to the situation found in a laboratory setting. One child may be helped by a research assistant, supervisor, therapist, and director of the clinic, whereas a mother might need to deal with four to five children at once. Logically, a mother does not have the means nor the time to carry out the same types of exercises that many researchers can do while focused on the behavior of one child. Effective parenting is a time-consuming and creative effort, it is true, but findings cannot be generalized to disparate populations. Often a mother or father cannot provide the same type of focused and intensive therapy for all their children that many research assistants can do for one child. More realistic considerations of parenting are necessary.

Psychologist Paul Robinson and his wife, Carol, have worked with over 400 problem youth in their own home over thirty years. They have had up to 15 living with them at one time. According to Robinson, the idea that parents can run a home without punishment is absolutely nothing more than a fanciful dream. According to Robinson, “over the past 30 years I have interviewed many psychologists advocating punishment free parenting and their children. I have yet to find one family who advocates punishment free parenting to actually be practicing punishment free parenting.”

Indeed, no society ever existed without punishment. Civilizations that withstood the tests of time required that law should be obeyed and a punishment to disobeying those laws affixed. Consider the metaphor of a rod—not the type of rod that, if spared, will spoil the child: when someone picks up a rod, he picks up both ends. In other words, when a child chooses a certain behavior he chooses not only that particular behavior, but the consequence of his actions, as well. Our founding fathers established a country built on laws and their consequences.

Unfortunately, the word “punishment” has been thrown around ambiguously and often with a negative lilt. Hence punishment possesses a negative connotation, which contrasts with its denotation as an unpleasant stimulus given to decrease behavior. Punishment as a construct has been almost casually thrown around among therapists today. Like researchers trying to identify an elephant in a dark room, clinicians reach out into the void to define the causes and effects. One may feel its trunk and claim, “I know what it is! It’s a tail!” and another may feel its side, shouting, “It’s a leg!” In reality, all are wrong and it is necessary for an empirical look at all the facets of the construct to assess the global nature of punishment, specifically its effective nature when not used to the extreme.

According to substantial research, punishment can be effective. However, it can also be detrimental when, as previously mentioned, taken to the extreme. The extremities of punishment may branch into directions that are not typically considered due to its connotation. In other words, today’s parents have been taught to equate punishment with physical abuse rather than communication. However, one should note the old adage that “the pen [or word] is mightier than the sword.” It is necessary to hearken back to Robinson (1998), who concluded that subjects did not ascribe to punishment the harsh after-effects that mental health professions commonly inferred among lay parents. His study noted that verbal putdowns contributed more to feelings of distrust, aggression, and anger than did lifetime spanking frequency.

Thus, this paper advocates that parents be conscientious when employing the use of punishment. It is important parents consider that harsh verbal communication can wound their children. Thus, an awareness of child abuse in its physical sense is not enough to protect a child from abuse. Separating punishment as a parenting technique from abuse would facilitate such an awareness, for this leaves room for practices like time-out, privilege removal, and extinction. Punishment is not a crime: but child abuse is. Discriminating against effective measures of punishment is not productive to improving parenting.

Discriminating against effective measures of punishment is disruptive because punishment natural part of life

and integral to parenting. Denotatively, Mother Nature's plan involves punishment. While this phenomenon is not readily considered, it may be observed with a bee's sting or a thorn's prick. To reiterate Kazdin and Benjet's question about "the goals of parental discipline; the role, if any, that punishment plays in achieving these goals," this presentation answers with a final caveat/question: Should parents be told "what sounds good," or rather, "what is practical?" Experiencing material and non material pleasure and pain are integral parts of Mother Nature's consequential scheme to influence and direct behavior in all organisms that can use reason to make choices.

We strongly encourage the mental health profession to not only pursue new research on punishment, but also to look more comprehensively at the research that has been already published. It appears that Biglan (1998) was correct. Mental health professionals have been encouraging society to accept some scientifically unsound punishment free parenting approaches that sound good when the mental health profession has not produced even one working model.

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