Practicing Safety Toolkit:
Toddler Bundle – Discipline, Toilet Training

John Stirling, MD, FAAP

Practicing Safety Learning Session
May 30, 2009
The 3 Basic Premises:

- Parents don’t know enough about child development
- Lack of knowledge can lead to abuse
- Pediatricians can make a difference!
Assessment: learn before you teach

Green light:

- Do parents have realistic expectations?
- Do they have a plan?
- Does the home environment work?
Assessment: learn before you teach

Yellow light: complications

- Child factors
  - Developmental delays, stressors
- Parent factors
  - Stressors
- Family factors
  - Multiple caretakers
Assessment: learn before you teach

Red light: serious complications

- Domestic violence
- Drug use
- Mental illness
- Previous hx violence or abuse
What to teach?

Time Out?

Spanking?

Yelling?

Reasoning?

Grounding?

Removal of privileges?
What to teach?

**Discipline must be:**

- Positive whenever possible
- Logical
  - developmentally appropriate
  - clearly explained and understood
- Conditional/consistent/predictable

*One tool will not do it all!*
How to teach?

- Most parents believe lack of discipline is a bigger problem than child abuse and neglect
  - 28% cite “lack of parental involvement”
  - 6% cite “child abuse and neglect”

*Roper survey, 1998 (800 voters)*
How to teach?

Cross-cultural considerations:

- Eliminate preconceptions
- Don’t assume shared:
  - language
  - values
  - experience
- Learn before advising!
How to teach?

Helpful Hint:

- *All* interactions with parents are cross-cultural!
Definitions:

Corporal punishment? Spanking?
Severe Parental Punishment? Subabusive violence?

“...the use of physical force with the intention of causing the child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child’s behavior.”

Murray Straus
Definition:

Methods of inflicting CP -

• open hand on buttocks
• open hand on hand, face, leg
• hitting with implement
• enforced standing, starvation, cold bathing, etc.
Incidence and attitudes (USA):

National Family Violence Survey, 1985

• 90% of three-year-olds’ parents spank or slap
• 60% hit twelve-year-olds
• 40% hit fourteen-year-olds

Straus, Beating The Devil Out Of Them, 1994
Incidence and attitudes (USA):

National Family Violence Survey, 1985

Of those who used CP:

- 55.7% slapped or spanked
- 30.6% pushed, shoved, or grabbed
- 10.4% hit with an object
- 3.2% threw something at the child

Straus, Beating The Devil Out Of Them, 1994
Incidence and attitudes (USA):

*General Social Survey, 2002 (2765 adults)*

- 73% agreed “It is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking.”
- 30% agreed strongly
Incidence and attitudes (USA):

Pediatricians in practice:
- 90% discuss discipline
- 53% discuss pros/cons of spanking
- 71% feel they neglect violence prevention

AAP Periodic Survey #38, 1997-98
Incidence and attitudes (USA):

In 320 middle-class, intact families:

- 83% used corporal punishment
- 25% weekly, 4% every day
- 35% use an object
- 85% say they would rather not use it

Graziano et al., Pediatrics 98(4), 1996
The science of punishment:

- “Corporal punishment is one of many risk factors for poor outcomes in children.”

*Pediatrics, 1998, 88(4)*
“Hey, I was spanked, and it never hurt me any!”
The science of punishment:

Drug trial criteria:

- Phase I: is it safe?
- Phase II: is it effective?
- Phase III: is it more effective than the readily available alternatives?
The science of punishment:

Conclusion:

Corporal punishment of children, used appropriately, can be effective in the short term, but can be dangerous, and is no more effective than safer techniques.
Effective Discipline Tools

Raising a Happy, Healthy Child

Reading

Routine

Relationship

Rewards

- Reading everyday helps prepare babies and toddlers.
- Having routines, like family meals, help children learn what to expect.
- Playing builds family bonds that last a lifetime.
- Praising your children will make them want to please you more.
Patient Educational Materials

• Playing is How Toddlers Learn brochure

• Teaching Good Behavior: Tips on How to Discipline brochure

• Temper Tantrum brochure
Toilet Training
Toilet training

- The developmental milestone most associated with child abuse

- Child’s role:
  - Sensory and motor learning
  - Control of elimination process

- Parent’s role:
  - Perception and facilitation
  - Help child achieve independence
• Anxiety, fear of pain, conflict with parents and emotional trauma lead to difficult training
• Parents without the proper knowledge base, or without the proper supports, can view difficulty with training as willful conscious manipulation that is spiteful
Assessing readiness

Kid:

- Motor skills
  - Walk, sit, manipulate clothing

- Social skills
  - Communicate need, imitate others
  - Have a sense of where things belong
Assessing readiness

**Parent:**

- Time available
- Consistent approach
- Control issues?
Assessment: *learn before you teach*

**Green light:**
- Do parents have realistic expectations?
- Do they have a plan?
- Does the home environment work?
Assessment: *learn before you teach*

**Yellow light: complications**

- **Child factors**
  - Developmental delays, stressors

- **Parent factors**
  - Stressors

- **Family factors**
  - Multiple caretakers
Assessment: learn before you teach

Red light: serious complications

- Domestic violence
- Drug use
- Mental illness
- Previous hx violence or abuse
Random tips:

- Expect setbacks
- Dress for success
- “It’s time to pee now”
- Specific terms are less confusing
- Reinforcement should be positive
- Rewards should be small, symbolic
- Be authoritative, but not authoritarian
Dealing with resistance:

- Resistance or inability?
  - Recheck the basics
- Star chart, rewards
- Back off
  - Remember who’s got the problem
  - Shift responsibility back to kid
  - Stay involved, but keep distance
Dealing with resistance:

- Enuresis and encopresis
  - Diagnose carefully
  - Very rarely voluntary
  - Role of withholding
Toilet Training Tools

- Parent handouts (Barton Schmitt/Contemporary Peds)
- AAP Toilet Training brochure
- Potty Charts and Stickers
- AAP Bed Wetting brochure