

Every Smack is a Humiliation

A Manifesto

Many researchers have already proven that corporal punishment on children may indeed produce obedience in the short term but will have serious negative consequences on their later character and behavior. Only if there was at least one single person who loved and understood the child, the disastrous development toward later crimes could be prevented. During their whole childhood dictators like Hitler, Stalin or Mao never came across such a helping witness. They learned very early to glorify cruelty and hypocrisy and to justify them while committing crimes on millions of people. Millions of others, also exposed to physical maltreatment in childhood, helped them to do so, without the slightest remorse.

Children should not be the scapegoats for the adults' painful experiences. The claim that mild punishments (slaps or smacks) have no detrimental effects is still widespread because we got this message very early from our parents, who had taken it over from their own parents. This conviction helped the child to minimize his suffering and to endure it. Unfortunately, the main damage it causes is precisely the numbness as well as the lack of sensitivity to our children's pain. The result of the broad dissemination of this damage is that each successive generation is subjected to the tragic effects of seemingly harmless physical "correction". Many parents still think: What didn't hurt me, can't hurt my child. They don't realize that their conclusion is wrong because they never challenged their assumption.

When in Sweden legislation laws prohibiting corporal punishment were launched in 1978, 70 % of the citizens, when asked for their opinion, were against it. In 1997, the figure had dropped to 10 %. These statistics show that the mentality of the Swedish population has radically changed in the course of a mere 20 years. A destructive tradition of millennia has been done away, thanks to this legislation.

It is imperative to launch legislation prohibiting corporal punishment all over the world. It does not set out to incriminate anyone but it is designed to have a protective and informative function for parents. Sanctions could simply take the form of the obligation for parents to internalize information on the consequences of corporal punishment available today. Information on the "well-meant smack" should therefore be distributed to all, since unconscious education to violence takes its roots very early and inflicts disastrous imprints. The vital interests of society as a whole are at stake.

Spanking is counterproductive and dangerous

Why spankings, slaps, and even apparently harmless blows like pats on the hand are dangerous for a baby?

1. They teach it violence.
2. They destroy the absolute certainty of being loved that the baby needs.
3. They cause anxiety: the expectancy of the next attack.

4. They convey a lie: they pretend to be educational, but parents actually use them to vent their anger; when they strike, it's because, as children, they were struck themselves.
5. They provoke anger and a desire for revenge, which remain repressed, only to be expressed much later.
6. They program the child to accept illogical arguments (I'm hurting you for your own good) that stay stored up in their body.
7. They destroy sensitivity and compassion for others and for oneself, and hence limit the capacity to gain insight.

What long-term lessons does the baby retain from spankings and other blows?

The baby learns:

1. That a child does not deserve respect.
2. That good can be learned through punishment (which is actually wrong, punishment merely teaches the children to want to punish in their own turn).
3. That suffering mustn't be felt, it must be ignored (which is dangerous for the immune system).
4. That violence is a manifestation of love (fostering perversion).
5. That denial of feeling is healthy (but the body pays the prize of this error, often much later).

How is repressed anger very often vented?

In childhood and adolescence:

1. By making fun of the weak.
2. By hitting classmates.
3. By annoying the teachers.
4. By watching TV and playing video games to experience forbidden and stored up feelings of rage and anger, and by identifying with violent heroes. (Children who have never been beaten are less interested in cruel films, and, as adults, will not produce horror shows).

In adulthood:

1. By perpetuating spanking, as an apparently educational and effective means, often heartily recommended to others, whereas in actual fact, one's own suffering is being avenged on the next generation.
2. By refusing to understand the connections between previously experienced violence and the violence actively repeated today. The ignorance of society is thereby perpetuated.
3. By entering professions that demand violence.

4. By being gullible to politicians who designate scapegoats for the violence that has been stored up and which can finally be vented with impunity: "impure" races, ethnic "cleansing", ostracized social minorities, other religious communities etc.
5. Because of obedience to violence as a child, by readiness to obey any authority which recalls the authority of the parents, as the Germans obeyed Hitler, the Russians Stalin, the Serbs Milosevic.

Conversely, some become aware of the repression and universal denial of childhood pain, realizing how violence is transmitted from parents to children, and stop hitting children regardless of age. This can be done (many have succeeded) as soon as one has understood that the causes of the "educational" violence are hidden in the repressed history of the parents.

The Roots of Violence

12 points

For some years now, there has been proof that the devastating effects of the traumatization of children take their inevitable toll on society - a fact that we are still forbidden to recognize. This knowledge concerns every single one of us and - if disseminated widely enough - should lead to fundamental changes in society; above all, to a halt in the blind escalation of violence. The following points are intended to amplify my meaning:

1. All children are born to grow, to develop, to live, to love, and to articulate their needs and feelings for their self-protection.
2. For their development, children need the respect and protection of adults who take them seriously, love them, and honestly help them to become oriented in the world.
3. When these vital needs are frustrated and children are, instead, abused for the sake of adults' needs by being exploited, beaten, punished, taken advantage of, manipulated, neglected, or deceived without the intervention of any witness, then their integrity will be lastingly impaired.
4. The normal reactions to such injury should be anger and pain. Since children in this hurtful kind of environment are forbidden to express their anger, however, and since it would be unbearable to experience their pain all alone, they are compelled to suppress their feelings, repress all memory of the trauma, and idealize those guilty of the abuse. Later they will have no memory of what was done to them.
5. Disassociated from the original cause, their feelings of anger, helplessness, despair, longing, anxiety, and pain will find expression in destructive acts against others (criminal behavior, mass murder) or against themselves (drug addiction, alcoholism, prostitution, psychic disorders, suicide).
6. If these people become parents, they will then often direct acts of revenge for their mistreatment in childhood against their own children, whom they use as scapegoats. Child

abuse is still sanctioned - indeed, held in high regard - in our society as long as it is defined as child-rearing. It is a tragic fact that parents beat their children in order to escape the emotions stemming from how they were treated by their own parents.

7. If mistreated children are not to become criminals or mentally ill, it is essential that at least once in their life they come in contact with a person who knows without any doubt that the environment, not the helpless, battered child, is at fault. In this regard, knowledge or ignorance on the part of society can be instrumental in either saving or destroying a life. Here lies the great opportunity for relatives, social workers, therapists, teachers, doctors, psychiatrists, officials, and nurses to support the child and to believe her or him.
8. Till now, society has protected the adult and blamed the victim. It has been abetted in its blindness by theories, still in keeping with the pedagogical principles of our great-grandparents, according to which children are viewed as crafty creatures, dominated by wicked drives, who invent stories and attack their innocent parents or desire them sexually. In reality, children tend to blame themselves for their parents' cruelty and to absolve the parents, whom they invariably love, of all responsibility.
9. For some years now, it has been possible to prove, through new therapeutic methods, that repressed traumatic experiences of childhood are stored up in the body and, though unconscious, exert an influence even in adulthood. In addition, electronic testing of the fetus has revealed a fact previously unknown to most adults-that a child responds to and learns both tenderness and cruelty from the very beginning.
10. In the light of this new knowledge, even the most absurd behavior reveals its formerly hidden logic once the traumatic experiences of childhood need no longer remain shrouded in darkness.
11. Our sensitization to the cruelty with which children are treated, until now commonly denied, and to the consequences of such treatment will as a matter of course bring to an end the perpetuation of violence from generation to generation.
12. People whose integrity has not been damaged in childhood, who were protected, respected, and treated with honesty by their parents, will be - both in their youth and in adulthood - intelligent, responsive, empathic, and highly sensitive. They will take pleasure in life and will not feel any need to kill or even hurt others or themselves. They will use their power to defend themselves, not to attack others. They will not be able to do otherwise than respect and protect those weaker than themselves, including their children, because this is what they have learned from their own experience, and because it is this knowledge (and not the experience of cruelty) that has been stored up inside them from the beginning. It will be inconceivable to such people that earlier generations had to build up a gigantic war industry in order to feel comfortable and safe in this world. Since it will not be their unconscious drive in life to ward off intimidation experienced at a very early age, they will be able to deal with attempts at intimidation in their adult life more rationally and more creatively.

How is Emotional Blindness Created?

21 points

1. The newborn child is always innocent.
2. Each child needs among other things: care, protection, security, warmth, skin contact, touching, caressing, and tenderness.
3. These needs are seldom sufficiently fulfilled; in fact, they are often exploited by adults for their own ends (trauma of child abuse).
4. Child abuse has lifelong effects.
5. Society takes the side of the adult and blames the child for what has been done to him or her.
6. The victimization of the child has historically been denied and is still being denied, even today.
7. This denial has made it possible for society to ignore the devastating effects of the victimization of the child for such a long time.
8. The child, when betrayed by society, has no choice but to repress the trauma and to idealize the abuser.
9. Repression leads to neuroses, psychoses, psychosomatic disorders, and delinquency.
10. In neuroses, the child's needs are repressed and/or denied; instead, feelings of guilt are experienced.
11. In psychoses, the mistreatment is transformed into a disguised illusory version (madness).
12. In psychosomatic disorders, the pain of mistreatment is felt but the actual origins are concealed.
13. In delinquency, the confusion, seduction, and mistreatment of childhood are acted out again and again.
14. The therapeutic process can be successful only if it is based on uncovering the truth about the patient's childhood instead of denying that reality.
15. The psychoanalytic theory of "infantile sexuality" actually protects the parent and reinforces society's blindness.
16. Fantasies always serve to conceal or minimize unbearable childhood reality for the sake of the child's survival; therefore, the so-called invented trauma is a less harmful version of the real, repressed one.
17. The fantasies expressed in literature, art, fairy tales, and dreams often unconsciously convey early childhood experiences in a symbolic way.

18. This symbolic testimony is tolerated in our culture thanks to society's chronic ignorance of the truth concerning childhood; if the import of these fantasies were understood, they would be rejected.
19. A past crime cannot be undone by our understanding of the perpetrator's blindness and unfulfilled needs.
20. New crimes, however, can be prevented, if the victims begin to see and be aware of what has been done to them.
21. Therefore, the reports of victims will be able to bring about more awareness, consciousness, and sense of responsibility in society at large.

Profile of Alice Miller

Towards the reality of childhood

Alice Miller received her PhD at the University of Basle and worked as a psychotherapist in Zurich for 20 years. In 1980, she decided to dedicate herself completely to her research on childhood and its tragic influence on the adult's life. Ever since, she is trying to share her knowledge of the decisive persistence of endured child abuse on the entire life and ways of healing.

Out of 192 members of the United Nations, only 19 have so far forbidden corporal punishment of children. In the USA, there still remain 20 states that allow this cruel violence against children and teenagers. Those appalled by these facts and aware of their consequences for the future will understand all the books by Alice Miller. Because she shows, with the help of her books, articles, flyers, interviews and answers to readers' mail on her website, that child abuse like beating and humiliating not only produces unhappy, confused children, but also destructive teenagers and abusive parents.

Alice Miller sees the roots of worldwide violence in the fact that children are beaten all over the world, especially in their first years, when their brain becomes structured. The damages caused by this practice are devastating, but unfortunately hardly noticed by society. Though the facts are easy to understand: As children are forbidden to defend themselves against the violence directed towards them, they must suppress the natural reactions like rage and fear; and later, as adults, they discharge these strong emotions against their own children or whole peoples. Alice Miller illustrates this dynamic in her 13 books by using her case histories and her numerous studies on the biographies of dictators and famous artists. The avoidance of this issue in all societies has the result that extremely irrational behavior, brutality, sadism and other perversions can be produced completely undisturbed in families and that the products can be regarded as "genetically conditioned." Alice Miller thinks that only through becoming conscious of this dynamic can we break the chain of violence. For this reason she devotes her life-work to this enlightenment.

Over the past years, Alice Miller has developed a concept of therapy that guides us to confront ourselves with our history and to acknowledge and thus reduce the still unconscious, but highly active fear of the formerly beaten child. When we succeed to eventually feel our justified, angry

indignation instead of denying it we can fully grow up and become autonomous. Since it is this childhood fear of the all-powerful, abusive parents that drives adults to abuse their own children. Countless esoteric and "spiritual" offers serve to obscure the pain resulting from the torture once undergone, yet fully denied.

Alice Miller feels that her discovery, despite its tragic aspects, contains actually very optimistic options because it opens the door to consciousness, to the awareness of childhood reality and thus to the liberation from its destructive consequences. For several years now, her search for the reality of childhood represents a sharp opposition to psychoanalysis, which remains in the old tradition of blaming the child and sparing the parents by calling the abuses fantasies. Consequently, Alice Miller renounced her membership in the International Psychoanalytical Association already in 1988.

Alice Miller defines Child Mistreatment, Child Abuse

Humiliations, spankings and beatings, slaps in the face, betrayal, sexual exploitation, derision, neglect, etc. are all forms of mistreatment, because they injure the integrity and dignity of a child, even if their consequences are not visible right away. However, as adults, most abused children will suffer, and let others suffer, from these injuries. This dynamic of violence can deform some victims into hangmen who take revenge even on whole nations and become willing executors to dictators and cruel leaders. Beaten children very early on assimilate the violence they endured, which they may glorify and apply later as parents, in believing that they deserved the punishment and were beaten out of love. They don't know that the only reason for the punishments they had to endure is the fact that their parents themselves endured and learned violence without being able to question it.

This is why society's ignorance remains so immovable and parents continue to produce severe pain and destructivity - in all "good will", in every generation. Most people tolerate this blindly because the origins of human violence in childhood have been and are still being ignored worldwide. Almost all small children are smacked during the first three years of life when they begin to walk and to touch objects which may not be touched. This happens at exactly the time when the human brain builds up its structure and should thus learn kindness, truthfulness, and love but never cruelty and lies. Fortunately, there are many mistreated children who find "helping witnesses" and can feel loved by them.

The Roots of Violence are NOT Unknown

The misled brain and the banned emotions

The Facts:

1. The development of the human brain is use-dependent. The brain develops its structure in the first four years of life, depending on the experiences the environment offers the child. The brain of a child who has mostly loving experiences will develop differently from the brain of a child who has been treated cruelly.

2. Almost all children on our planet are beaten in the first years of their lives. They learn from the start violence, and this lesson is wired into their developing brains. No child is ever born violent. Violence is NOT genetic, it exists because beaten children use, in their adult lives, the lesson that their brains have learned.

3. As beaten children are not allowed to defend themselves, they must suppress their anger and rage against their parents who have humiliated them, killed their inborn empathy, and insulted their dignity. They will take out this rage later, as adults, on scapegoats, mostly on their own children. Deprived of empathy, some of them will direct their anger against themselves (in eating disorders, drug addiction, depression etc.), or against other adults (in wars, terrorism, delinquency etc.)

Questions and Answers:

Q: Parents beat their children without a second thought, to make them obedient. Nobody, except a very small minority, protests against this dangerous habit. Why is the logical sequence (from being a misled victim to becoming a misleading perpetrator) totally ignored world-wide? Why have even the Popes, responsible for the moral behaviour of many millions of believers, until now never informed them that beating children is a crime?

A: Because almost ALL of us were beaten, and we had to learn very early that these cruel acts were normal, harmless, and even good for us. Nobody ever told us that they were crimes against humanity. The wrong, immoral, and absurd lesson was wired into our developing brains, and this explains the emotional blindness governing our world.

Q: Can we free ourselves from the emotional blindness we developed in childhood?

A: We can - at least to some degree - liberate ourselves from this blindness by daring to feel our repressed emotions, including our fear and forbidden rage against our parents who had often scared us to death for periods of many years, which should have been the most beautiful years of our lives. We can't retrieve those years. But thanks to facing our truth we can transform ourselves from the children who still live in us full of fear and denial into responsible, well informed adults who regained their empathy, so early stolen from them. By becoming feeling persons we can no longer deny that beating children is a criminal act that should be forbidden on the whole planet.

Conclusion:

Caring for the emotional needs of our children means more than giving them a happy childhood. It means to enable the brains of the future adults to function in a healthy, rational way, free from perversion and madness. Being forced to learn in childhood that hitting children is a blessing for them is a most absurd, confusing lesson, one with the most dangerous consequences: This lesson as such, together with being cut off from the true emotions, creates the roots of violence.