

# BluesNews

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## Roots and Wings

If I had two wishes, I know what they would be  
I'd wish for Roots to cling to, and Wings to set me free;  
Roots of inner values, like rings within a tree,  
and Wings of independence to seek my destiny.

Roots to hold forever to keep me safe and strong,  
To let me know you love me, when I've done something wrong;  
To show me by example, and helps me learn to choose,  
To take those actions every day to win instead of lose.

Just be there when I need you, to tell me it's all right,  
To face my fear of falling when I test my wings in flight;  
Don't make my life too easy, it's better if I try,  
And fail and get back up myself, so I can learn to fly.

If I had two wishes, and two were all I had,  
And they could just be granted, by my Mom and Dad;  
I wouldn't ask for money or any store-bought things.  
The greatest gifts I'd ask for are simply Roots and Wings.  
By Denis Waitley

## Roots, Wings, and Foster Parents

I have been thinking a lot about the kind of role foster parents will have in a youth's narrative. How will the story about them be told? Do they enrich? Did they strengthen? Did they handicap? Did they make small?

Published in 1953 in the book "Where Main Street Meets the River" by Hodding Carter (a prominent newspaper editor), "A wise woman once said to me that there are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these she said is roots, the other, wings. And they can only be grown, these roots and these wings, in the home. We want our sons' roots to go deep into the soil beneath them and into the past, not in arrogance but in confidence."

And on the subject of wings, this lyric from Sir P MacCartney,

"Blackbird singing in the dead of night, take these broken wings and learn to fly

All your life, you were only waiting for this moment to arise

Blackbird singing in the dead of night, take these sunken eyes and learn to see

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All your life, you were only waiting for this moment to be free..."

Roots and wings. Connections and freedom. I always marvel at how quickly you can become a child again when you return to your parents home, especially if it is the home in which you were raised. It isn't immediate, but close. People say it is because you will always be your parent's child. If your Daddy scared you as a little child and made you pee your pants, chances are those very same feelings will come rushing back. Those are your roots. (Not the roots with confidence as Carter opined in 1953, but roots, nonetheless.) And as soon as you leave the parental home, you feel like yourself again: grown, making decisions, independent, free.

Our roots connect us to our families and our communities. Knowing our roots is what drives the genealogy business. We have this need, in our own lives, to connect the dots, to connect the seemingly significant events in our lives into a narrative that helps us understand who we are. "The past is a story I tell myself to explain my present." Those events, this connection back through time is the story of our roots, personal and individualized. Family genealogy connects our individual stories and narratives with the larger and more inclusive narrative that the events of families tell. They too are our roots, our family roots. And we are deeply embedded in them both.

Wings are a little more challenging to explain, because it is not a simple matter of freedom or independence. It is not just autonomy. For lack of a better description, it is all of these things without any strings attached. It is freedom with the confidence that those who love you know you will come back to them without ever being asked; it is the autonomy that is not questioned, that is not doubted. You can live in the garage of your parents home and still have wings, able to come and go as freely as you wish without being told you are coming home too late. Or you can live down the street from your parents and feel you are under their watchful eye—those are not wings. I'm not sure why it is but "in case you need me" strips away flight feathers, it makes confidence disappear and makes the capable, cautious. My grandparents lived at the end of the street we lived on when I was a child; my mother hated it. It made her feel small and judged. She never did find her wings...

So, it is an oversimplification to say that the natural families of those who populate treatment foster care leave children feeling small and compromised, weak and diminished without much in the way of roots and frequently, with damaged wings that make flying, beyond short hops and furious displays, impossible. The roots these families inspire often grow in quite barren, arid, and fallow fields.

Foster parents also struggle with giving children roots. Perhaps it is the temporary nature of foster care that is the issue. Growing up in foster care, replete with multiple moves and multiple care providers is simply not conducive to putting down roots. Moving your belongings in a garbage bag from this caregiver to the next caregiver doesn't make you feel valued or connected: not so good at roots. But telling your story, connecting the dots from past to present, exploring how children are embedded in the context of their family (all roots related activities) is a valuable component of foster care.

Wings, on the other hand, is where foster families often think they excel. I think because so many foster families want children-in-care who have been mistreated and/or abused to escape or be rescued from that abuse, foster families often emphasize (or over-emphasize) the value of independence and underplay the importance of confidence. Wings require separateness and confidence; the challenges of being in-care distorts both. To be honest, largely because of the temporary and transient nature of foster care, I don't think we are very good at wings, either. But I don't know.

In the end, I really have no idea how to finish this piece. Roots and wings are a central issue in foster care; I think we could do them better. But roots and wings are born at home. It is hard to expand roots that were designed to constrict and keep you small and wings that were broken before flight was an option.

# THE HUMAN MEMORY—Part II

from

human-memory.net

What we usually think of as “memory” in day-to-day usage is actually long-term memory, but there are also important short-term and sensory memory processes, which must be worked through before a long-term memory can be established. The different types of memory each have their own particular mode of operation, but they all cooperate in the process of memorization, and can be seen as three necessary steps in forming a lasting memory.

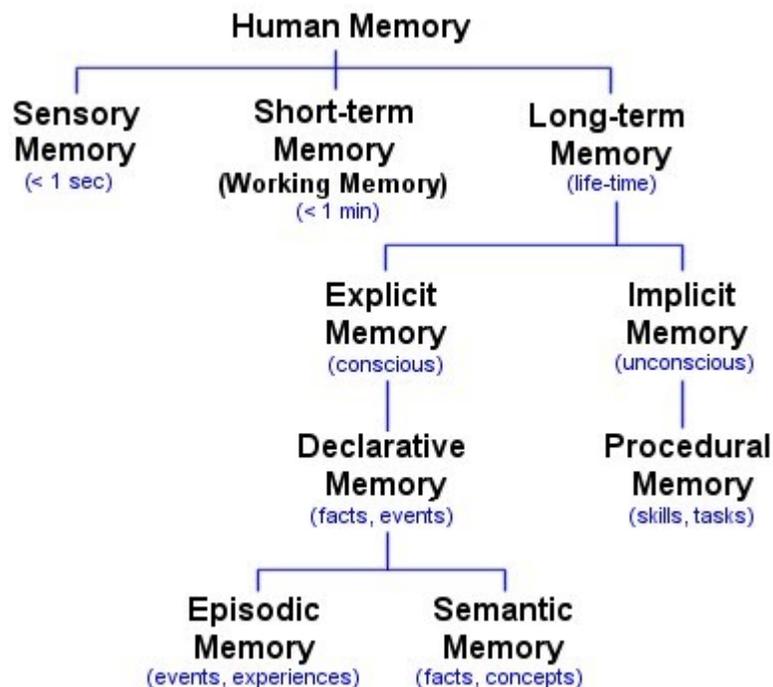
This model of memory as a sequence of three stages, from sensory to short-term to long-term memory, rather than as a unitary process, is known as the modal or multi-store or Atkinson-Shiffrin model, after Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin who developed it in 1968, and it remains the most popular model for studying memory. It is often also described as the process of memory, but I have used this description for the processes of encoding, consolidation, storage and recall in the separate Memory Processes section.

It should be noted that an alternative model, known as the levels-of-processing model was proposed by Fergus Craik and Robert Lockhart in 1972, and posits that memory recall, and the extent to which something is memorized, is

## ??? Did You Know ???

Studies have show that attention significantly affects memory during the encoding phase, but hardly at all during recall.

Thus, distractions or divided attention during initial learning may severely impair subsequent retrieval success, whereas distractions at the time of recall may slow down the process a little, but has little to no effect on its accuracy



a function of the depth of mental processing, on a continuous scale from shallow (perceptual) to deep (semantic). Under this model, there is no real structure to memory and no distinction between short-term and long-term memory.

Sensory memory is the shortest-term element of memory. It is the ability to retain impressions of sensory information after the original stimuli have ended. It acts as a kind of buffer for stimuli received through the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, which are retained accurately, but very briefly. For example, the ability to look at something and remember what it looked like with just a second of observation is an example of sensory memory.

The stimuli detected by our senses can be either deliberately ignored, in which case they disappear almost instantaneously, or perceived, in which case they enter our sensory memory. This does not require any conscious attention and, indeed, is usually considered to be totally outside of conscious control. The brain is designed to only process information that will be useful at a later date, and to allow the rest to pass by unnoted. As information is perceived, it is therefore stored in sensory memory automatically and unbidden. Unlike other types of memory, the sensory memory cannot be prolonged via rehearsal.

Sensory memory is an ultra-short-term memory and decays or degrades very quickly, typically in the region of 200 - 500 milliseconds (1/5 - 1/2 second) after the perception of an item, and certainly less than a second (although echoic memory is now thought to last a little longer, up to perhaps three or four seconds). Indeed, it lasts for such a short time that it is often considered part of the process of perception, but it nevertheless represents an essential step for storing information in short-term memory.

The sensory memory for visual stimuli is sometimes known as the iconic memory, the memory for aural stimuli is known as the echoic memory, and that for touch as the haptic memory. Smell may actually be even more closely linked to memory than the other senses, possibly because the olfactory bulb and olfactory cortex (where smell sensations are processed) are physically very close - separated by just 2 or 3 synapses - to the hippocampus and amygdala (which are involved in memory processes). Thus, smells may be more quickly and more strongly associated with memories and their associated emotions than the other senses, and memories of a smell may persist for longer, even without constant re-consolidation.

### ??? Did You Know ???

Short-term working memory appears to operate **phonologically**. For instance, whereas **English** speakers can typically hold seven digits in short-term memory, **Chinese** speakers can typically remember ten digits. This is because Chinese number words are all **single syllables**, whereas English are not.

### ??? Did You Know ???

A recent study at the University of Michigan suggests that **attention** and short-term memory processing are directly affected by a person's **surroundings and environment**.

Two groups of individuals were tested on their attention and working memory performance, one group after a **relaxed walk** in a quiet park and the other group after navigating **busy city streets**. Those who had been walking the city streets scored far **lower** on the tests.

amount of information (typically around 7 items or even less) in mind in an active, readily-available state for a short period of time (typically from 10 to 15 seconds, or sometimes up to a minute).

For example, in order to understand this sentence, the beginning of the sentence needs to be held in mind while the rest is read, a task which is carried out by the short-term memory. Other common examples of short-term memory in action are the holding on to a piece of information temporarily in order to complete a task (e.g. "carrying over" a number in a subtraction sum, or remembering a persuasive argument until another person finishes talking), and simultaneous translation (where the interpreter must store information in one language while orally translating it into another). What is actually held in short-term memory, though, is not complete concepts, but rather links or pointers (such as words, for example) which the brain can flesh out from its other accumulated knowledge.

However, this information will quickly disappear forever unless we make a conscious effort to retain it, and short-term memory is a necessary step toward the next stage

Experiments by George Sperling in the early 1960s involving the flashing of a grid of letters for a very short period of time (50 milliseconds) suggest that the upper limit of sensory memory (as distinct from short-term memory) is approximately 12 items, although participants often reported that they seemed to "see" more than they could actually report.

Information is passed from the sensory memory into short-term memory via the process of attention (the cognitive process of selectively concentrating on one aspect of the environment while ignoring other things), which effectively filters the stimuli to only those which are of interest at any given time.

Short-term memory acts as a kind of "scratch-pad" for temporary recall of the information which is being processed at any point in time, and has been referred to as "the brain's Post-it note". It can be thought of as the ability to remember and process information at the same time. It holds a small

### ??? Did You Know ???

The use of **mnemonic devices** can significantly increase memory, particularly the recall of long lists of names, numbers, etc. One case, known as "**S.F.**", was able to increase his **digit span** (the longest list of number that a person can repeat back in correct order) from 7 to 79 with the use of mnemonic strategies. **Akira Haraguchi** and **Lu Chao's** record-breaking recitations of the digits of the number Pi (100,000 and 67,890 digits respectively) also make use of mnemonic systems.

of retention, long-term memory. The transfer of information to long-term memory for more permanent storage can be facilitated or improved by mental repetition of the information or, even more effectively, by giving it a meaning and associating it with other previously acquired knowledge. Motivation is also a consideration, in that information relating to a subject of strong interest to a person, is more likely to be retained in long-term memory.

The term working memory is often used interchangeably with short-term memory, although technically working memory refers more to the whole theoretical framework of structures and processes used for the temporary storage and manipulation of information, of which short-term memory is just one component.

The central executive part of the prefrontal cortex at the front of the brain appears to play a fundamental role in short-term and working memory. It both serves as a temporary store for short-term memory, where information is kept available while it is needed for current reasoning processes, but it also "calls up" information from elsewhere in the brain. The central executive controls two neural loops, one for visual data (which activates areas near the visual cortex of the brain and acts as a visual scratch pad), and one for language (the "phonological loop", which uses Broca's area as a kind of "inner voice" that repeats word sounds to keep them in mind). These two scratch pads temporarily hold data until it is erased by the next job.

Although the prefrontal cortex is not the only part of the brain involved - it must also cooperate with other parts of the cortex from which it extracts information for brief periods - it is the most important, and Carlyle Jacobsen reported, as early as 1935, that damage to the prefrontal cortex in primates caused short-term memory deficits.

The short-term memory has a limited capacity, which can be readily illustrated by the simple expedient of trying to remember a list of random items (without allowing repetition or reinforcement) and seeing when errors begin to creep in. The often-cited experiments by George Miller in 1956 suggest that the number of objects an average human can hold in working memory (known as memory span) is between 5 and 9 ( $7 \pm 2$ , which Miller described as the "magical number", and which is sometimes referred to as Miller's Law). However, although this may be approximately true for a population of college students, for example, memory span varies widely with populations tested, and modern estimates are typically lower, of the order of just 4 or 5 items.

The type or characteristics of the information also affects the number of items which can be retained in short-term memory. For instance, more words can be recalled if they are shorter or more commonly used words, or if they are phonologically similar in sound, or if they are taken from a single semantic category (such as sports, for example) rather than from different categories, etc. There is also some evidence that short-term memory capacity and duration is increased if the words or digits are articulated aloud instead of being read sub-vocally (in the head).

The relatively small capacity of the short-term memory, compared to the huge capacity of long-term memory, has been attributed by some to the evolutionary survival advantage in paying attention to a relatively small number of important things (e.g. the approach of a dangerous predator, the proximity of a nearby safe haven, etc) and not to a plethora of other peripheral details which would only interfere with rapid decision-making.

"Chunking" of information can lead to an increase in the short-term memory capacity. Chunking is the organization of material into shorter meaningful groups to make them more manageable. For example, a hyphenated phone number, split into groups of 3 or 4 digits, tends to be easier to remember than a single long number. Experiments by Herbert Simon have shown that the ideal size for chunking of letters and numbers, whether meaningful or not, is three. However, meaningful groups may be longer (such as four numbers that make up a date within a longer list of numbers, for example). With chunking, each chunk represents just one of the 5 - 9 items that can be stored in short-term memory, thus extending the total number of items that can be held.

It is usually assumed that the short-term memory spontaneously decays over time, typically in the region of 10 - 15 seconds, but items may be retained for up to a minute, depending on the content. However, it can be extended by repetition or rehearsal (either by reading items out loud, or by mental simulation), so that the information re-enters the short-term store and is retained for a further period. When several elements (such as digits, words or pictures) are held in short-term memory simultaneously, they effectively compete with each other for recall. New content, therefore, gradually pushes out older content (known as displacement), unless the older content is actively protected against interference by rehearsal or by directing attention to it. Any outside interference tends to cause disturbances in short-term memory retention, and for this reason people often feel a distinct desire to complete the tasks held in short-term

memory as soon as possible.

The forgetting of short-term memories involves a different process to the forgetting of long-term memories. When something in short-term memory is forgotten, it means that a nerve impulse has merely ceased being transmitted through a particular neural network. In general, unless an impulse is reactivated, it stops flowing through a network after just a few seconds.

Typically, information is transferred from the short-term or working memory to the long-term memory within just a few seconds, although the exact mechanisms by which this transfer takes place, and whether all or only some memories are retained permanently, remain controversial topics among experts. Richard Schiffrin, in particular, is well known for his work in the 1960s suggesting that ALL memories automatically pass from a short-term to a long-term store after a short time (known as the modal or multi-store or Atkinson-Schiffrin model).

However, this is disputed, and it now seems increasingly likely that some kind of vetting or editing procedure takes place. Some researchers (e.g. Eugen Tarnow) have proposed that there is no real distinction between short-term and long-term memory at all, and certainly it is difficult to demarcate a clear boundary between them. However, the evidence of patients with some kinds of anterograde amnesia, and experiments on the way distraction affect the short-term recall of lists, suggest that there are in fact two more or less separate systems.

## IN HONOR OF WOMEN

This is a largely unheralded, unknown group of women inventors and visionaries who have shaped our modern world. There are incredible stories to be told of each:

		Ada Lovelace	1842	The Computer Algorithm
Margaret A Wilcox	1893	The Car Heater		
		Dr Shirley Jackson		Telecommunications Technology
Elizabeth Magie	1904	Monoploy		
		Josephine Cochrane	1887	The Dishwasher
Anna Connelly	1887	The Fire Escape		
		Hedy Lamarr		Wireless Transmission Technology
Maria Beasley	1882	The Life Raft		
		Marie Van Brittan Brown		Closed Circuit Television Security
Dr Maria Telkes	1947	Residential Solar Heating		
		Margaret Knight	1871	The Modern Paper Bag
Letitia Geer	1899	The Medical Syringe		
		Alice Parker	1919	Central Heating
Florence Parpart	1914	The Modern Electric Refrigerator		
		Stephanie Kwolek	1965	Kevlar
Nancy Johnson	1843	The Ice Cream Maker		
		Rear Admiral Dr Grace Murray Hopper		COBOL (Computer language)

## LISA IN RECOVERY



On March 29, 2018 Lisa Nemeth was admitted to LHSC University Hospital stricken with bacterial meningitis. She was unconscious for several days before slowly regaining awareness. Lisa's recovery was marred by a number of challenges and she remained in University Hospital until May 11, 2018. Currently, Lisa is recovering in the specialized recovery program at Parkwood Hospital. She enjoys visits from her family and friends.

And she is sorely missed at Bluewater. We expect Lisa might have quite a period of recovery and rehabilitation before her and look forward to the day Lisa is able to rejoin her work family. Please keep Lisa in your thoughts and hold her close to your heart. Love can move mountains and it certainly makes all things better.

### THANK GOD FOR TEACHERS

A group of 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, accompanied by two female teachers, went on a field trip to the local racetrack, (Churchill Downs) to learn about thoroughbred horses and the supporting industry (Bourbon), but mostly to see the horses.

When it was time to take the children to the bathroom, it was decided that the girls would go with one teacher and the boys would go with the other.

The teacher assigned to the boys was waiting outside the men's room when one of the boys came out and told her that none of them could reach the urinal. Having no choice, she went inside, helped the boys with their pants, and began hoisting the little boys up one by one, holding on to their 'wee-wees' to direct the flow away from their clothes.

As she lifted one little guy, she couldn't help but notice that he was unusually well endowed. Trying not to show that she was staring, the teacher said, "You must be in the 5th grade."

"No ma'am," he replied, "I'm riding Silver Arrow in the seventh race but I appreciate your help."

# What We Know About Spanking and Child Development

Spanking has been used as a method of correcting children's behavior since the beginning of recorded history (Scott, 1996), and likely was used by prehistoric parents long before it occurred to anyone to write about it. With spanking's long tenure in the scope of human history, it is no surprise that the mounting calls for parents to stop spanking their children have met with skepticism, if not outright derision, from both conservative family advocates (Dobson, 1996) and some academics (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Cowan, 2002). In this article, I summarize why we should be concerned about the continued use of spanking as a form of discipline.

Spanking, which in this article means hitting a child on the bottom with an open hand, is a common parenting practice around the world. Half of the children in a 33-country survey by UNICEF reported having been physically punished by their parents (UNICEF, 2010). The prevalence of spanking in the United States is even greater, with two-thirds of young children being spanked by their parents (65 percent of 19- to 35-month olds: Regalado, Sareen, Inkelas, Wissow, & Halfon, 2004) and most teenagers (85 percent) reporting that they were slapped or spanked by their mothers at some point (Bender et al., 2007).

As befits a widespread childrearing practice, a large body of research has examined the links between spanking and subsequent child behavior. This literature has been reviewed extensively elsewhere (Gershoff, 2002; Gershoff, 2010) so what follows summarizes what is known about spanking and child development.

## **Spanking Is Ineffective**

Most parents' main goals in spanking their children are 1) to punish misbehavior and thereby reduce recurrence of the undesirable behavior, and 2) to increase the likelihood of desirable behavior in the future. Spanking is a form of punishment and as such can only directly achieve the first goal. Specifically, punishment is the process by which a behavior (e.g., a child running into the street) elicits a punishing consequence (e.g., a spanking) that decreases the likelihood of that behavior happening again (e.g., the child no longer runs into the street) (Hineline & Rosales-Ruiz, 2012). How well does spanking decrease undesirable behaviors? Research on spanking has focused on two undesirable behaviors—short- and long-term noncompliance, and children's aggression.

## **Short-term noncompliance**

The most germane test of the effectiveness of a punishment is whether it gets the child to stop engaging in a misbehavior immediately. Recent evidence is difficult to obtain for several reasons. First, spanking is challenging to observe in the home because it occurs relatively rarely in most families and because families may not spank in front of observers. Second, it is difficult to study in the lab because university Institutional Review Boards prohibit the gratuitous hurting of participants.

In the 1980s, a research team at Idaho State University conducted a series of experiments comparing spanking with giving time outs (Roberts & Powers, 1990). The team assigned young children with behavior problems who had been referred to the clinic to one of several conditions: Some children who disobeyed an instruction were put in time out alone and others were put in time out but spanked if they did not stay in the time out for the allotted time. The children were then observed to see whether they complied with a series of 30 commands from their mothers. In an initial meta-analysis of these studies, children were more likely to comply when mothers used time outs than when they spanked (Gershoff, 2002). But the findings were based

on a comparison of postintervention rates of compliance, which is typical for random assignment experiments, and failed to consider the fact that the comparison groups in two of the five studies had substantially different rates of initial compliance at baseline. When the data were reanalyzed to compare the pre- to postintervention changes in compliance for spanking with those for time outs to take the baseline differences into account, spanking was not found to be more effective than time outs at increasing children's immediate compliance to mothers' commands (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2013).

### **Long-term noncompliance**

Parents discipline to achieve not just short-term compliance but long-term changes in behavior. Several studies have examined whether spanking is effective in achieving long-term compliance or promoting the development of conscience, variously operationalized as obedience to commands, resistance to temptation, and evidence of conscience or guilt. More spanking is associated with less long-term compliance and evidence of conscience (Gershoff, 2002; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2013), so spanking has not been found to reduce non-compliance in the long term.

### **Aggression**

Parents report that one of the misbehaviors most likely to elicit spanking is when a child acts aggressively (Holden, Coleman, & Schmidt, 1995). Beyond the irony of parents acting aggressively in order to reduce aggression in their children, does spanking reduce children's aggression? The answer is, clearly and definitively, no. In all 27 of the relevant studies, spanking was associated with more, not less, aggression in children (Gershoff, 2002).

Critics of the spanking literature maintain that this association is an artifact of a child effect, such that aggressive children elicit harsher parenting generally and more spanking in particular from their parents (Baumrind et al., 2002). Several longitudinal studies have directly tested this hypothesis by examining cross-lagged associations between spanking and children's aggression, comparing the path from spanking to aggression (the extent to which spanking predicts changes in children's aggression over time, controlling for initial levels of spanking) with the path from children's aggression to spanking (the extent to which children's aggression predicts changes in spanking over the same period). In one study of more than 3,000 preschoolers, increases in spanking from ages 1 to 3 predicted increases in children's aggression from ages 3 to 5, over and above initial levels and maternal warmth (Lee, Altschul, & Gershoff, 2013).

A second study across the preschool years with more than 2,500 children found that spanking at ages 1, 2, and 3 predicted increases in externalizing behaviors one year later, but found no evidence of a child effect (Berlin, Ispa, Fine, Malone, Brooks-Gunn, Brady-Smith et al., 2009). Moving to the elementary school years, a study of a nationally representative sample of 11,044 children found both the spanking effect and child effect to be significant over the period from kindergarten to third grade (Gershoff, Lansford, Sexton, Davis-Kean, & Sameroff, 2012). Finally, in a study of 440 families that followed children over the transition to adolescence, both the spanking and child effect paths were significant (Sheehan & Watson, 2008).

In these studies, although children's aggressive behavior often elicited more spanking over time, this effect did not entirely explain the association between spanking and children's aggression. Rather, spanking predicted increases in children's aggression over and above initial levels. In none of these longitudinal studies did spanking predict reductions in children's aggression over time; in other words, spanking was not effective at achieving parents' desired goal of reducing children's aggression. Spanking consistently predicted increases in children's aggression over time, regardless of how aggressive children were when the spanking oc-

curred.

### **Why is spanking ineffective?**

One main reason spanking is ineffective is that it fails to adhere to the conditions that behaviorists say must exist for punishment to be effective, namely that it be immediate, consistent, and delivered after every instance of the targeted behavior (Hineline & Rosales-Ruiz, 2012). It is difficult to imagine that a parent would be able to meet all of these criteria when administering spanking; indeed, it would likely be both inadvisable and bordering on abusive if parents spanked children following every instance of a given misbehavior.

Children learn by more complicated methods than just which behaviors elicit a punishment; indeed, successful socialization requires that children internalize reasons for behaving in appropriate and acceptable ways (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Spanking alone does not teach children why their behavior was wrong or what they should do instead (Hoffman, 1983). Rather, it teaches them that they must behave when the threat of physical punishment exists, but once the threat is gone, they have no reason to behave appropriately (Hoffman, 1983).

Moreover, spanking is ineffective because it is different from other forms of punishment and discipline in that it involves hitting, which is of course a form of violence (see further discussion of this issue later). Hitting, by its nature, causes physical pain, and it can be confusing and frightening for children to be hit by someone they love and respect, and on whom they are dependent. Children report fear, anger, and sadness when they are spanked (Dobbs, Smith, & Taylor, 2006), feelings that interfere with their ability to internalize parents' disciplinary messages (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Children who are spanked are more likely to attribute hostile intentions to others, attributions that in turn increase the likelihood that they will behave aggressively in social interactions (Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1986).

Spanking models the use of aggression and violence, teaching children that it is acceptable and reasonable for the person in charge to use violence to get what he or she wants and that violence is sometimes a part of loving relationships (Eron, Walder, & Lefkowitz, 1971). This latter message then perpetuates the transmission of violence in families across generations. The fact that parents often spank to punish children's own aggression is doubly confusing to children, with spanking becoming a hypocritical "do as I say, not as I do" form of parenting.

### **Spanking Is Linked With Numerous Adverse Side Effects**

In addition to its ineffectiveness at changing children's behavior, spanking is linked with a range of unintended and undesirable outcomes that thus can be thought of as adverse side effects. In a series of meta-analyses, spanking was associated with increases in mental health problems in childhood and adulthood, delinquent behavior in childhood and criminal behavior in adulthood, negative parent-child relationships, and increased risk that children will be physically abused (Gershoff, 2002).

The link between spanking and physical abuse is the most disturbing of these unintended effects, but it should not be a surprising one; both parental acts involve hitting, and purposefully hurting, children. The difference between the two is often degree (duration, amount of force, object used) rather than intent, as most documented cases of physical abuse begin with parents physically punishing their children for a perceived misdeed (Durrant, Trocmé, Fallon, Milne, Black, & Knoke, 2006). Reducing parents' use of spanking may go a long way toward reducing the number of children who suffer physical abuse each year.

## **Negative Outcomes of Spanking Are Similar Across Cultures**

Some researchers argue that spanking should be more effective with children in cultures that support spanking, in part because children should more readily accept the practice (Deater-Deckard & Dodge, 1997). Studies of this cultural normativeness hypothesis have primarily used race or ethnicity as a marker of culture. In several early studies, spanking or harsh physical punishment indeed was associated with more aggression among White children but not among Black children (e.g., Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996). However, in studies using longitudinal and nationally representative data, spanking predicted increases in children's problem behavior over time across White, Black, Latino, and Asian subsamples (e.g., Berlin et al., 2009; Gershoff et al., 2012), particularly when subsample differences in frequency of spanking were considered (Gershoff et al., 2012). In one of only a few studies that measured normativeness, more spanking was consistently associated with more aggression in children, even when mothers or children perceived that their communities largely accepted spanking (Gershoff et al., 2010).

## **Criticisms of Spanking From Outside the Academy**

The abundance and consistency of studies linking spanking with undesirable outcomes in children has failed to spur societal change in attitudes about or use of spanking. Change may need to come from outside the academic world, and a growing number of organizations representing professionals who work with children and human rights advocates have voiced concerns about and disapproval of spanking.

## **Spanking Is Increasingly Disavowed by Professional Organizations**

Based in large part on the consistency of the research linking spanking with undesirable outcomes but also on changes in attitudes about the appropriateness of hitting children in the name of discipline, several national professional organizations have called on parents to abandon spanking as a childrearing practice and for professionals to recommend disciplinary alternatives to spanking. The most prominent of these organizations are the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP; 2012), the American Humane Association (2009), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP; 1998), the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP; 2011), and the National Association of Social Workers (2012). The AAP has taken these recommendations one step further by including discipline and alternatives to spanking on its list of injury-prevention topics that pediatricians should discuss with parents during well-child visits (Hagan, Shaw, & Duncan, 2008).

In addition to these official policy statements, several leading professional organizations for practitioners who work directly with or on behalf of children endorsed a report commissioned by Phoenix Children's Hospital recommending that parents avoid spanking in favor of nonpunitive discipline (Gershoff, 2008). The organizations include the AACAP, the AAP, the American College of Emergency Physicians, the American Medical Association, the National Association for Regulatory Administration, the National Association of Counsel for Children, the NAPNAP, and Voices for America's Children (Phoenix Children's Hospital, 2009).

Religious leaders have begun to speak out against spanking, as well. Two major denominations in the United States, the United Methodist Church (2008) and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA (2012), passed resolutions encouraging parents to avoid spanking and use other forms of discipline.

## Spanking Violates Children's Human Rights

Consensus is growing among human rights advocates that spanking, or corporal punishment as it is commonly known in international circles, violates children's human rights according to at least seven human rights treaties (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007). The United Nations has said unequivocally that "Corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment are forms of violence" (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006, para. 18); that corporal punishment violates Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which protects children from "all forms of physical or mental violence" (United Nations, 1989, Article 19, para. 1); and that it should be banned in all contexts (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006).

Other international human rights bodies have called for corporal punishment to be outlawed in their member countries. For example, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has called for all of Europe to ban corporal punishment of children ("Europe-Wide Ban on Corporal Punishment of Children, Recommendation 1666," 2004). Similarly, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), part of the Organization of American States of which the United States is a member, concluded that corporal punishment violates children's human rights according to several treaties and thus should be banned "in all contexts" (IACHR, 2009, page 1, para. 3).

Largely in response to these human rights concerns, 33 countries have banned all corporal punishment of children, including that by parents (Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children [Global Initiative], 2012). Human rights-based arguments have little influence in the United States until we ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the United States is one of only three countries not to have done so (the others are Somalia and South Sudan, the latter of which gained independence in 2011). Yet it is clear that American society is increasingly isolated in our insistence that parents (and, in 19 states, public school personnel) can spank children as a form of discipline.

### Conclusion

We now have enough research to conclude that spanking is ineffective at best and harmful to children at worst. We also know that a range of professional and human rights organizations condemn the practice and urge parents to use alternative forms of discipline. We thus have research-based and human rights-based reasons for not spanking our children.

But there is a third reason not to spank our children, and that is a moral one. Although most Americans do not like to call it so, spanking is hitting and hitting is violence. By using the euphemistic term spanking, parents feel justified in hitting their children while not acknowledging that they are, in fact, hitting. We as a society have agreed that hitting is not an effective or acceptable way for adults to resolve their differences, so it should not be a surprise that hitting children, like hitting adults, causes more problems than it solves. It is time to stop hitting our children in the name of discipline.

Needless to say this article, cites a huge number of supportive research and studies. In the original publication there are several pages devoted to endnotes. I have not reprinted those notes here. The Endnotes can be found at:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3768154/>

**Professional Development / InService**

Leamington  
1st and 3rd Wednesday

Parkhill  
2nd and 4th Wednesday

Sept 20	Sept 27
Oct 4	Oct 11
Oct 18	Oct 25
Nov 1	Nov 8
Nov 15	Nov 22
Dec 8 (Christmas Luncheon)	Dec 13 (Christmas Luncheon)

**2018**

Jan 17	Jan 10
Feb 7	Jan 24
Feb 21	Feb 14
March 7	Feb 28
March 21	March 14 (March Break)
April 4	March 28
April 18	April 11
May 2	April 25
May 16	May 9
June 6	May 23
June 20	June 13