

Ever since Sholai School began in 1990, I have been interviewing parents and children from a wide range of social backgrounds. Children who have received corporal punishment from their parents may become defiant and/or difficult. Alternatively corporal punishment by their parents or teachers cause them to turn against academic studying. They may “act the clown,” or pay little or no attention in class and/or have no interest in doing their homework.

Such children are traumatised and need careful attention to integrate them into the educational community.

Vignesh (4 years) received daily spankings from his father. He was a very unhappy looking child. We advised the father to stop. Fortunately he complied. The child remained taciturn but after 3 weeks he started to trouble other children in the class; I sent him out. Ten minutes later I called him back. A week later he was again disturbing other children; again I told him to leave the class. He cried and cried, making a terrible fuss. Later when he quietened down, I called him back into the class. Within a few days Vignesh became a transformed young person. His smile was lovely to behold. Thereafter he enjoyed being with his class-mates and enjoyed studying.

This is a true story. 2 years later Vignesh’s parents left Sholai to return to Puddukottai. Since then, we have not heard from any of the family. Vignesh’s father’s name was Akhilan. I have given their true names, because it would be good to hear what happened to Vignesh in his life. Today he must be around 30 years old.

Many parents believe or are persuaded that corporal punishment is necessary to bring up their children. I recall a lawyer’s son, who looked anaemic, thin and troubled. It turned out that he was receiving regular beatings from his much larger mother. She told me that he was not serious about his studies. Therefore she beat him. However she confessed it was not doing any good. In fact he was becoming more resistant.

Of course. Think about it. If a much larger person were to beat you and tell you to study hard, you too might well react and refuse to co-operate.

If you have been using corporal punishment on your child or children and now understand that you too must stop do talk the matter over with the children. Request their understanding and co-operation. If you do not talk over with them and explain, they may become more fearful, awaiting the next time when you will spank or beat them. A few days ago I read in the Hindu of 8/11/18, the article below derived from the New York Times.

Spanking is harmful to children: study

Suggests eliminating or limiting fear and violence in a parent-child relationship

Parents should not spank their children, the American Academy of Pediatrics said in a strongly-worded policy statement.

The group, which represents about 67,000 doctors, also recommended that paediatricians advise parents against the use of spanking and said to avoid using nonphysical punishment that is humiliating, scary or threatening.

“One of the most important relationships we all have is the relationship between ourselves and our parents, and it makes sense to eliminate or limit fear and violence in that loving relationship,” said Dr. Robert D. Sege, one of the authors of the statement.

The academy’s new policy will be published in the December issue of the journal *Pediatrics* .

A 2016 analysis of multiple studies, for example, found that children do not benefit from spanking.

“Certainly you can get a child’s attention, but it’s not an effective strategy to teach right from wrong,” Mr. Sege said.

Recent studies have also shown that corporal punishment is associated with increased aggression and makes it more likely that children will be defiant in the future.

There are potential ramifications to the brain as well: a 2009 study of 23 young adults who had repeated exposure to harsh corporal punishment found reduced grey matter volume in an area of the prefrontal cortex that is believed to play a crucial role in social cognition.

Those exposed to harsh punishment also had a lower performance IQ than that of a control group.