The Emergence of “Positive Parenting” as a New Paradigm: Theory, Processes, and Evidence

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Context for Development and Child Flourishing Symposium, Sept. 2014
Overview

A. What is Positive Parenting?
   1. Lite & Strong Forms
   2. Sounds of Parenting
   3. Historical & Theoretical Origins

B. Key Processes & Techniques

C. Evidence

D. The Fundamental Challenge
Positive Parenting: Lite

• Warmth, affection, sensitive, responsive, involvement, monitoring

• Triple P-Positive Parenting program (Sanders, 1999)
STRONG Form

• Different Orientation/Paradigm

• “Positive Discipline,” “Non-Violent Parenting,”
  “Attachment Parenting”
Definition:

... a child-rearing orientation that is centered around promoting a loving, cooperative relationship, respecting the child’s individuality, and focusing on guidance not compliance.
NOT:

A power assertion orientation of control, compliance, and punishment.
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The Sounds of Parenting: Home Audio study

- 33 mothers of 2- to 5-yr-olds
- 4 to 6 evenings
- 12.95 hours per family

(Holden, Willaimson, & Holland, 2014)
Conflicts

12.2 conflict episodes per hour
(range 2.3/hr to 38.2/hr)
Example # 1

Mother and 60-month-old daughter

Offense: Sucking fingers
Example # 2

Mother and 34-month-old son.

Offense: “messin’ with the stove”
Example # 3

Mother and 26-month-old son

**Offense:** “messin’ with pages”
Power Assertion Orientation

✓ Parent-centered
✓ Immediate compliance
✓ Punitive/Painful “.... discipline sometimes confrontational or punitive, is required to socialize the child’s self-indulgent willfulness.”

(Baumrind, 1997)
B. HISTORICAL & THEORETICAL ORIGINS OF POSITIVE PARENTING
Plato (428 - 348 BCE)

Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.
Quintilian (35 – 100 A.D.):  
“[CP] is a disgrace”

Plutarch (46 – 120 A.D.):  
“children ought to be led to honorable practices by means of encouragement and reasoning”
John Locke (1603-1704)

“Children should seldom be corrected by blows”

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1717-1778)

“the words ‘obey’ and ‘command’ will be excluded”
Many others...

Skinner: (1909-1990)

Mann: (1796-1859)

Watson: (1878-1958)
PROXIMAL ORIGINS

John Bowlby (1907-1990)

“The ... conflict with which humanity is oppressed—that of getting angry with and wishing to hurt the very person who is most loved.”
Alfred Adler (1870-1937)

- Austrian psychiatrist
- “Individual Psychology”
- Birth order
- Inferiority vs. Superiority
Rudolf Dreikurs (1897-1972)

- Austrian → American psychiatrist
- Cooperation w/out punishment or reward
- Logical consequences
Dreikurs

Psychological methods (1970):

1. Encouragement
2. Emphasize task not result
3. Avoid rewards & punishment
4. Disinvolvement from conflict
5. Logical consequences
Translating into Parent Education

Jane Nelsen: 1981
William & Martha Sears (2001)

1994: Attachment Parenting International
Joan Durrant

Working with

Save the Children
Positive Parenting/Discipline
“Positive Parent./Disc.” Books

- 1965-1969: 1
- 1970-1974: 1
- 1975-1979: 1
- 1980-1984: 1
- 1990-1994: 3
- 1995-1999: 2
- 2000-2004: 2
- 2005-2009: 2
- 2010-2014: 11
If the Buddha Had Kids
Raising Children to Create a More Peaceful World

CHARLOTTE KASL, Ph.D.
author of IF THE BUDDHA DATED
B. Key Processes & Techniques

1. Sensitive P. → Secure Attachments → Positive Relationships
2. Structure
3. Children’s perspectives
4. Promote:
   a. Cooperative relations
   b. Autonomy
   c. Empathy
   d. Self-regulation
   e. Problem-solving
Common Techniques

1. Being proactive
2. Encouraging
3. Using “positive time-outs” (time-in)
4. Allowing for logical consequences
5. Avoiding punishments & rewards
6. Staying calm
7. Following-through
8. Attending selectively
9. Apologizing
10. Using humor
Sounds of Positive Parenting

A mom reacting to a 5 year-old girl playing with brother
Sounds of Positive Parenting

A mom talking calmly to a 5-yr-old boy about his behavior
The Evidence

• No RCTs

• But:

  – *Maternal responsiveness* (Parpal & Maccoby, 1985)
  – *Gentle guidance* (e.g., Volling et al., 2006)
  – *Mutually responsive orientation* (e.g., Kochanska, 2002)
Benefits of Positive Parenting

- Secure attachment
- Cooperative Relations
- Self-regulation
- Conscience development
- Fewer behavior problems
- Physical & mental health
The Fundamental Challenge: Transforming Orientations

65% (women) & 77% (men):
“A child sometimes needs a good hard spanking.”

(Child Trends, ‘09)
Views about Discipline

How important is it to discipline a 5-year-old child?

MTURK Sample

Undergraduate Sample

4.38
Views about Discipline

How important is it for a 5-year-old child to be obedient?

MTURK Sample: 4.11
Undergraduate Sample: 4.05
How important is it for parents to show a 5-year-old that his/her parent is the boss?
To what extent is it possible to raise a 5-year-old child without punishing him/her for misbehavior?
Changing Attitudes/Beliefs
(Durrant et al., 2014)

- Pre- & post-test design
- 337 Canadian parents
- Trained in “Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting”
- Significant decreases in:
  - Support for CP
  - Idea that conflict = child misbehavior
Changing Attitudes/Beliefs/Behavior

2. Holland & Holden (under review)
3. U.S. Alliance to End the Hitting of Children
   (endhittingusa.org)
Concluding Comments

1. We all need to promote *child flourishing* with this “new” approach!

1. Challenge to change mindsets.

1. Researchers: We need evidence!
On child flourishing:

“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken [adults].”
Thank you!

- Rose Asrah, Erin Brannan, & Paige Baker
- Timberlawn Psychological Foundation

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References


Key Shifts in MetaParenting

- Respect child as individual [children have rights!]
- Be cognizant of the child’s developmental level & neurological/self regulatory limits
- Promote cooperative, open communication
- Focus on long-term & joint relationship goals
- Adopt a mutual problem-solving orientation