

Some of the problems with physical punishment:

1. Some children become more violent themselves as they copy the violent behaviour of their parents. They learn that an effective way to control others is to hit them.
2. Some children spend a lot of time getting angry about the injustice of the punishment. Being angry becomes a habit and further contributes to some children being violent or aggressive.
3. They may learn to fear the people they should love.
4. It is often felt as an indignity by the child, with possible negative effects on their self-image.
5. It seems like more of a personal rejection by the adult than other punishments.
6. Many children nowadays view it as an infringement of their rights – and resent it.
7. For some adults the use of physical punishment makes physical abuse much more likely.
8. Families have gotten into serious strife when a child accidentally injures themselves when being hit or trying to avoid being hit.
9. It is not possible to have household rules banning violence. You cannot say to warring sibs: “We don’t hit each other in this family.”
10. Some kids hit back when they are big enough!
11. As kids grow it becomes impossible for Mum to impose the same kind of discipline as Dad. The old cry of “Wait till your father gets home!” is not a healthy one. So use of physical punishment makes it more likely that Dad will become the disciplinarian ogre and Mum loses respect because she cannot control the kids.
12. Today’s children are liable to focus more on the injustice and indignity of your actions and this actually takes the heat of of them. Their bad behaviour is forgotten and they are more likely to feel anger than guilt.
13. As children outgrow physical punishment it can be difficult switching to other methods of discipline.
14. Kids in some families set each other up for punishment by the adults – sometimes quite skillfully. They are probably more likely to get a kick out of this if physical punishment is being meted out.
15. It is often more a short term emotional release for the adult and is thus not used consistently or predictably. The child may learn to see it more as an indicator of the parent’s mood than as an indicator that they have done something wrong.
16. Since many parents feel guilty or embarrassed about using physical punishment they often give mixed messages to the child.
17. As it is now frowned upon in public some children will deliberately act up when they know their parents can’t hit them.
18. Some kids think it is all rather amusing! Getting Mum to chase them around the house in impotent rage is a great game for some kids.
19. Most parents report that it doesn’t actually works very well!