

Is Smacking Child Abuse?

There is a Bill coming before Parliament that will repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act. Section 59 says:

“Every parent of a child...is justified in using force by way of correction towards the child, if the force used is reasonable in the circumstances.”

This law endorses “reasonable force”, such as a smack. It does not endorse child abuse or violence. Let’s be clear about the differences.

Smacking

Smacking is spanking, discipline, corporal chastisement or corporal correction.

Smacking is motivated by love and a commitment to the child’s best interests.

Smacking is the remedy for expressions of serious rebellion such as Disobedience, Dishonesty, Disrespect and Destructiveness.

Smacking has a methodology of controlled, measured, judicial smacks on the hand or the clothed bottom.

Smacking has the objective of correction and of seeing the child’s behaviour brought back into line.

Smacking seeks to restore the parent-child relationship ruptured by the child’s unacceptable behaviour.

Smacking is centred on contributing to the child’s growth and maturity.

Smacking is applied to a child for breaking specified rules of which the child was made aware beforehand.

Smacking is done in a wider context of active, authoritative, parental involvement plus loving and consistent verbal affirmation, admonition and training.

Smacking is done with an eye to increasing the child’s underdeveloped maturity, understanding, self discipline and independence.

Abuse/Violence

Abuse/Violence is belting, punching, hitting, beating, kicking or giving someone a hiding.

Abuse/Violence is motivated by anger, frustration, revenge or some other volatile desire to get back at the child.

Abuse/Violence is dished out for accidents, mistakes, misjudgments, carelessness, being silly or other expressions of normal physical immaturity or childishness.

Abuse/Violence lashes out uncontrollably to strike anywhere, with excessive force and duration and may include the humiliation of undressing the victim.

Abuse/Violence has the objective of inflicting pain, revenge or humiliation on the child for pushing the offender beyond his or her own ill-defined limits.

Abuse/Violence seeks to relieve the offender’s perceived level of ‘stress.’

Abuse/Violence is centred on restoring the offender’s, not the child’s, equilibrium.

Abuse/Violence is perpetrated against a child arbitrarily, at the whim of the perpetrator, often without warning or explanation.

Abuse/Violence has a context of parental neglect, indulgence or arbitrary, dictatorial authoritarianism, often including impatient and unwarranted verbal abuse.

Abuse/Violence is done to assert the offender’s position of control over the child.

Smacking is discipline applied to the undisciplined child by a parent/guardian who is more disciplined than the child and who is seeking to be a role model.

Smacking consistently applied is needed less and less each year and rarely after the ages of 6 to 8.

Smacking produces a peaceful, orderly life of self-discipline in those who have been trained by it.

Abuse/Violence is an arbitrary, inconsistent attempt at discipline on the now confused and undisciplined child by one just as or more undisciplined than the child.

Abuse/Violence, because it stems from unresolved issues in the life of the perpetrator, can occur at any time.

Abuse/Violence breeds continuing violence and a lack of self-discipline in those who have been abused by it.

Here are some more major differences, showing that smacking and violence/abuse are not in the same ball park: they're not even on the same continuum:

Smacking

Motivation: The parents' love and long-term commitment to training their child in social graces, discipline and self-control over and above their own personal pleasure or convenience.

Aim: To effectively deal with a child's rebellious actions and attitudes as soon as they manifest themselves in any of the four Ds: Disobedience, Dishonesty, Disrespect or Destructiveness.

Objectives: To correct a child's rebellious behaviour or attitude from being self-centred; to train the child to do what is right; to discipline the child to show respect for property and legitimate authority.

Methodology: Smacking, spanking, discipline, corporal chastisement or corporal correction is the controlled, measured, purposeful and judicial use of reasonable force. It is done in the wider context of active, authoritative parental involvement plus loving and consistent verbal affirmation, admonition and training.

Outcomes: An ordered, disciplined and peaceful life based on family love; dealing head-on with issues of rebellion as soon as they arise; a restoration of relationships ruptured by rebellious actions and attitudes; a progressive reduction in both the manifestations of rebellion and the need for smacking.

Abuse/Violence

Motivation: Anger, frustration, vengeance or other unresolved issues in the abuser. The abuser is often personally undisciplined and may also be affected by drugs and/or alcohol.

Aim: To vent one's anger and frustration at the child's normal expressions of immaturity (accidents, indiscretions, errors of judgment, irritating hyperactivity or being boisterous and silly), as well as the child's rebellious actions and attitudes.

Objectives: These include vengeance, getting one's own back, punishing, saving face and/or humiliating the child. The child abuser often has no objectives, but just reacts.

Methodology: This is a wild card. It is typically explosive, angry, vindictive or uncontrolled belting, hitting, kicking, beating, etc., dished out arbitrarily with excessive duration and/or force, combined with verbal abuse, any time, any place.

Outcomes: The perpetrator of violence and abuse may assert his control over the child's immediate behaviour, but such irrational violence only breeds more violence and does harm to the parent/child relationship.

Did you know that Parliament is thinking of removing from parents their legitimate and necessary authority to discipline with a smack?

**Do not vote for any Party in this election
that supports the repeal of Section 59.**

Specifically:

**Greens
Progressive**

**Labour have also strongly supported this idea but are
going quiet on it for the election.**

Join hundreds of thousands of ordinary New Zealanders
in opposing this Bill to repeal section 59.

Write especially to MPs:

Sue Bradford,
Hon Brian Donnelly,
Hon Steve Maharey,
Rt Hon Winston Peters
and your local MP
(write c/- Parliament Buildings, Wellington...no stamp required).

Tell them to keep Section 59.

Don't let the MPs criminalise smacking.
Act now to protect your own future.

Family Integrity needs your support:

Financial
Practical (distribution of literature)

To become a member/sponsor, please contact:

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