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# No slaps



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URZĄD DO SPRAW  
CUDZOZIEMCÓW



Slap!

*Most parents believe that hitting children is wrong. However, even those who try to avoid physical punishment sometimes lose their temper and give their child a slap.*

#### ➔ Why?

Maybe because children are very close to their parents. No one else can cause us as much joy, but also as much grief with their behaviour. It is understandable that when raising children, we sometimes experience very strong, difficult emotions. However, it is extremely important not to let these emotions guide our behaviour.

We fully believe that adults have the right to be treated with respect. Children also have the right to be treated with respect and without violence. No child should be beaten.

Children, just like adults, are protected from beating and ill-treatment by law. Such behaviour is prohibited by the Polish Constitution. The Family and Guardianship Code also prohibits corporal punishment.

- If we shout at a child: 'You're annoying me!', give it a slap or say: 'You're useless', we are only venting our anger on it. The child feels angry, worthless, inept and powerless. And it will learn nothing this way.

- If children feel that their desires are treated with understanding and respect, but that there are boundaries that must not be crossed, they learn that when there are conflicting desires or interests, solutions that are acceptable to both parties must be sought.
- If you call your child names, it will certainly not unlearn calling other people names.
- If you hit your daughter for having hit her brother a moment before, she will begin to ask herself whether it is really wrong to hit anyone and will conclude that it is just a matter of not getting caught.

Encourage your child to cooperate. Trust it.



## → Slaps make children go blank

Slaps provoke fear, and fear doesn't suggest anything clever.

Of course, slaps stop children from doing something they must not do, but it does not make them behave properly.

A slapped child stops behaving 'naughty' in the moment, but it does not learn how it should act. The child experiences that the stronger ones achieve their goals by force. Moreover, it feels humiliated. These feelings linger in it long after the pain has stopped.

A child who is beaten suffers harm from those closest to it, on whom it relies most in the world. A child therefore thinks it is bad and worthless.

For what other reason would mum and dad treat it this way?

After a while, the child becomes indifferent to slaps and hits, because otherwise the sense of hurt would become unbearable for it.

Children want to gain and maintain their parents' appreciation. However, if stressed parents shout at the child, humiliate and beat it, this motivation stops working.

## → When your nerves are put to the hard test...

Conflict with a child can escalate rapidly. If we, adults, jump into action too late, we then fail to keep our cool. Don't let it get carried away – this is the most important rule to follow when you hear a series of rebellious 'NO!', when your three-year-old throws itself on the floor in a fit of uncontrollable anger and when you have no idea what to do. When our anger level starts to rise dangerously, we have to pull the 'emergency brake'. 'Not another step further' – these words should be on



the STOP sign that pops up in the parents' mind when they are about to hit the child. This sign reminds us that no matter how powerless we feel, children are weaker than us.

When you feel you are about to explode, try to break the vicious circle. Leave the room before you fly into a rage. Ideally, you should let your child know in some way that you need a moment to calm down. Many parents then say: 'I need to cool down for a moment'.

**Attention:** for a child who is having a tantrum, it is much better if a parent embraces or hugs the child, waiting for the inner struggle in the child to calm down.

However, if you feel that you are no longer in control, it is better to leave for a while, breathe and count to ten. You can also put the crying baby in the cot and leave it alone for a short while – shouting or shaking the child will not help you to calm it down, nor will it make the child stop crying.

And here are some other ways of calm down:

- breathe deeply,
- count to ten, or even better, count to forty,
- drink a glass of water,
- think of a situation in which you felt very good or of a person you care about,
- talk calmly to yourself.

## ➡ And once you've calmed down...

Return to your child. Pick it up and hold it in your arms. Show the child that you are sorry for being so hard on it. You will both be relieved that the storm has passed. End the matter at this point. Don't let the conflict develop further. Is there someone at home who could look after the child for a while? Not to get involved in the dispute, but so that you can calm down completely.

## ➡ Young children are explorers of the world

Everything is new, unknown and worthy of personal examination. This can be a difficult time for you, as young children often do not know what they really want. Try to control the situation, introduce as few rules and restrictions as possible. Keep the rules clear and simple – you need to explain them patiently and repeat them many times. Talk to the child at its level – maintain eye contact with it, put your hand on its shoulder to focus its attention. It is better to tell it how it should behave than what not to do.

## ➡ Preschool children

They want to know everything and constantly ask you to explain something to them. Your explanations become more and more important. In this way, you show respect for the child's desire to understand the world. Support your child and help it to find – step by step – the right way in the adult world through clear rules, positive expectations. Now, distraction will no longer be effective, but the message 'I know you can do it' will increase the child's willingness to cooperate and strengthen its sense of competence. Your recognition will give it wings on its way to independence.

## ➡ School age children

They need conversations and parents who can listen to them. Excessive permissiveness, the attitude: 'I know better' and criticism undermine a child's readiness to take responsibility and to 'stand on its own two feet'. A willingness to listen to your child and a sincere desire to understand it – without interrupting or interfering – has a completely different effect. When you are talking to your child and want it to listen to you, make sure that you are actually having a conversation with the child and not just talking to it.

## ➡ Take care of yourself

The causes of our bad mood, more often than we think, lie not in those we shout at or tug at, but in ourselves. Often, by the time the conflict with the child starts, we are already in



a bad mood – after a hard day, an argument with the husband or wife, and so on. Then any excuse can lead to an outburst. The ability to take care of ourselves is essential for us to be able to take care of others properly. This is especially difficult when we are worried about an uncertain future, have to cope with separation, face financial difficulties, live in poor conditions or suffer from problems such as alcohol, accidents or illness. However, even then we do not have to succumb to difficulties. We certainly won't solve all the problems, but we can recognise areas where we need advice, help and practical support. This also applies to parents who do not want to beat their children, yet often do. If you experienced violence yourself as a child and today find it difficult to control yourself in tense situations, you need help. A parent who chooses to accept support in order to protect their child from the harm they themselves experienced as a child deserves great respect. Seeking support is not a sign of weakness or failure, but a wise, responsible step to change a hard situation.

## ➡ Small steps lead to big goals

### **Spend time with your child every day**

Make it a time specifically planned to be exclusively for your child, to talk quietly with it, play carefree or do another activity together.

### **Think positive**

Day by day, direct your attention to the good rather than the bad sides of life.

### **Praise your child**

Does your child know when you like its behaviour? Or do you constantly criticise and nag it? Pay



attention to those behaviours of your child that make you happy and are a pleasant surprise to you. There is nothing better for a child than feeling accepted.

### **Talk to your child**

We often think that our child knows perfectly well what we want from it. This is not true. Ensure that it really understands your requests and commands.

Above all:

- Don't shout to your child from another room, come to it.
- Look at your child when you tell it what you want from it.
- Touch its arm.
- Find the right words – the message should be short, clear and simple so the child can understand it.
- Give it some time to finish playing.
- Ask your child for its opinion on matters that concern it.

### **Be understanding**

You can turn a blind eye to minor 'transgressions' with humour and tact. Take it easy. It can happen to anyone.

### **React quickly and positively**

If your child's behaviour irritates you, the words: 'Do this' always sounds better than: 'Don't do that'. Save the categorical 'No and no more' for the most important situations.

### **Find time for yourself**

In a quiet moment, ask yourself: 'What is most important to me at this stage of my life? What goals am I pursuing in raising my children? What can I do to achieve them? How can I involve my child in this process?' Even the most loving and caring parents make mistakes. What matters most to children is how we respond to them – whether we know how to apologise, whether we show a willingness to communicate and whether we are willing to change. This gives our children strength and courage.



# 10 anti-slaps steps



1

Show your child love and warmth as often as possible. Don't worry – you won't spoil it by doing this. You will show the child how important it is to you.

2

Be there for your child when it is experiencing strong emotions that it cannot cope with. This is when it needs you most.

3

Use praise. It reinforces positive behaviour. It makes the child eager to repeat the situation.

4

Set clear, simple rules and boundaries. Be consistent in enforcing them.

5

Set an example for your child by your behaviour. How your child behaves will largely depend on how you behave, because you are your child's first role model.

6

Notice any positive change in your child's behaviour. Appreciate its efforts.

7

Ignore behaviour you do not approve of, especially with a child under 3.

8

Talk about how you feel about a particular negative behaviour of your child and what consequences it has for you. This way your child will know why you don't want it to repeat it.

9

Use humour to manage difficult situations. Laughter is the best way to relieve tension.

10

Allow your child to experience the consequences of their behaviour. Encourage joint decision-making, making choices. Your child, like you, needs to experience that it has an influence on something and that you take its opinion into account.





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