

«The no-spanking how-to»



*If you are parents, you may have noticed how living with a child is a complex adventure for which we are unprepared.*



*Reality seldom reaches our expectations, and after the first few days of our baby's life, as the magic surrounding the birth wears off*



*We may be in for some big surprises.*

*Most of the time, we only want the best for our child.  
At the baby's birth, we usually change our priorities.  
We know that our child is dependant to us and that  
he needs our support and protection.*





*Nevertheless, we sometimes have a lot a difficulties to answer his needs.*



*Our growing-up child defies us, and we are sometimes surprised by our own reactions. Reactions that don't match what we would have wished.*

*In Anger, we may slap, punish or frighten them. We now know that fear is not an efficient teaching method. On the contrary, a frightened child freezes and can not understand what we want of him.*

*The long-term consequences on his health, behaviour, sociability-skills have been proven and are decisive to his future.*

*We have few ways to do things differently; but parents' reflexion and experiences in this field are growing.*

*So here are some ideas issued from books and parents workshops.*



*some ideas*



*Don't think that your baby is manipulating you.*



*Comfort your baby and answer to his needs whenever he is showing them.*



*Never leave your baby cry alone, he needs you to get through this difficult emotion.  
Try to find appropriate answer.*



*If listening to your crying baby angers you or if you feel violence on you, ask your partner or maybe a friend to be there with you to listen to your child*

Whenever possible, don't try to control his physiological needs. A baby or a toddler instinctively knows what he needs, and when he needs it. He knows when he is cold or hungry, he knows it even better when his parents let him have his own experiences.

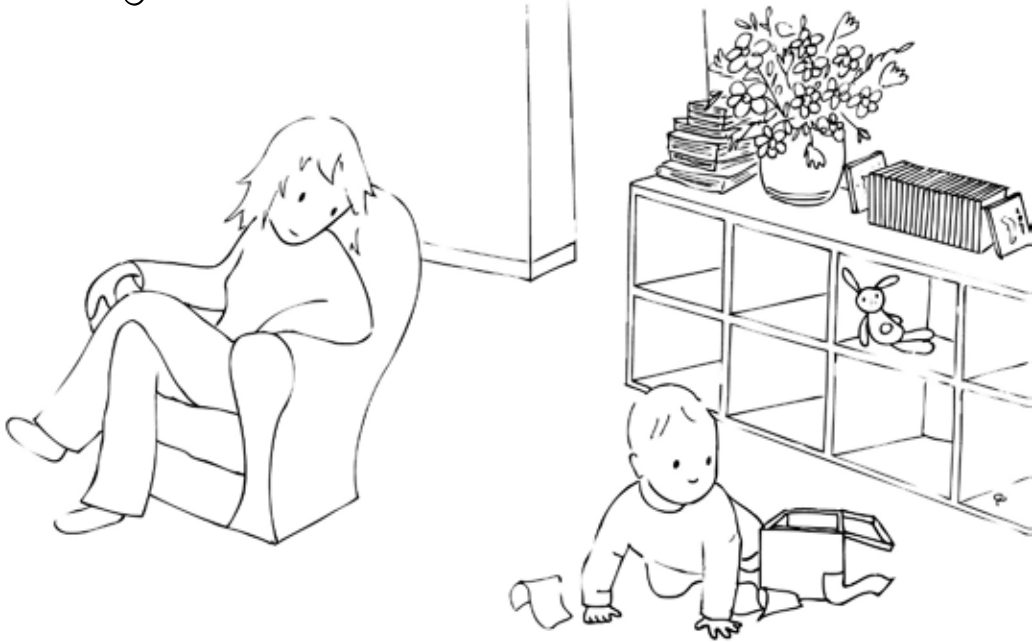
For exemple, a lot of fights could be avoided if we accept that our child are hungry or not during lunch time, and outside lunch hours too.

By convention, we eat at certain times in the day, children eat when their bodies tell them to. When reading some nutritionists, we are now in the right path. About eating time, your role would be to present healthy foods to your child and he can choose what, how much and when to eat.



*Your child is growing and begins to move around.*

*He wants to touch everything, that's perfectly normal, he is doing what we expect of a developing human being.*



*Some parents choose to adapt their houses, and this discovery period is less stressful for them.*

*Some parents didn't want to, and have more limits to establish...*

*Most of them have chosen a medium path, allowing their children to slowly familiarise themselves with breakable objects.*

Confrontations are even more frequent as the child curiosity and mobility grow and push him to discover new world.

Some ideas to help your child to make his own experiences :

- a toddler (around 2 years-old) like to participate to the household activities : cleaning vegetables, learning to prepare them, cut them, swap the floor, clean the windows...

When a child is doing something that he likes, he can be very concentrated, and you will not need to be so watchful.

- When he takes an object that you don't want him to hold, try to find another one less dangerous or breakable, it may be as interesting to him as the other one.

- If he insists in his interest in something precious and breakable, you can firmly but tenderly stop him to get to it.

- He may then cry or throw a tantrum, logical consequence to his frustration. Listening to his intense frustration may be a struggle for you. Most tantrums last for fifteen minutes.



- It is important to protect your child from danger, giving him limits and understandable and brief explanations may help too.



*You will find more solutions by thinking about it with your partner, with your friends raising their children in this same philosophy, with other parents working in support groups. A books selections at the end of this booklet may also help you. Solutions are as plentiful as everyday difficulties. You just need to answer these questions :*

*- what can I do to be non violent, non punitive, non exclusive ? What easy creative solution can I find?*

*Most of the time, that help the ball rolling and as time goes by, we are more and more able to find new ideas, different from our education which unconsciously let us go back to old "methods" and hurt our children.*



## “Good” practices

Each family has its own rules. How to teach them to our child without threatening or blackmailing or punishing them? Difficult question, and here is the embryo of an answer.



Let's take the brushing teeth example.

You may have began to brush your child teeth as a baby with a special toothbrush. Once grown-up, he wants to do it himself. Everything nice.

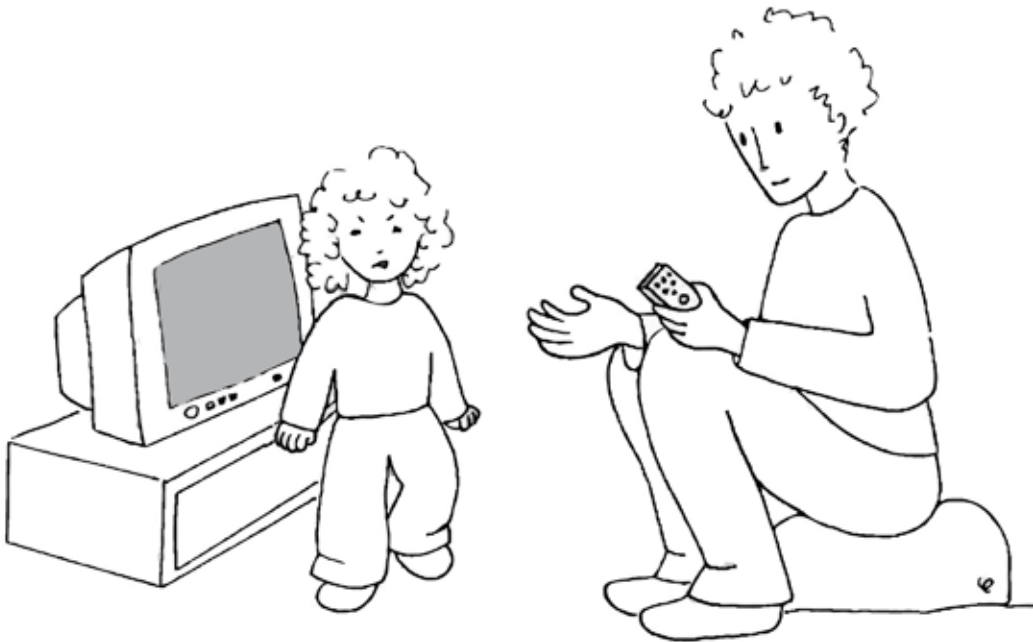
What can we do if your situation isn't so idyllic (more often than not!) ?

You can :

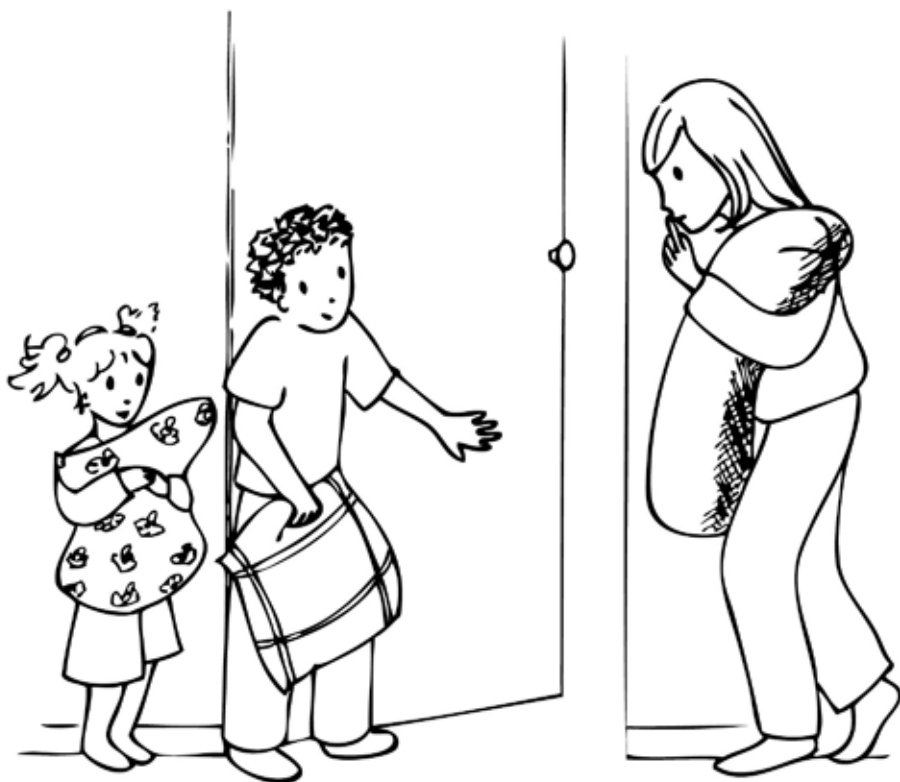
- take him to a dentist who can explain to him why we should brush our teeth and how to do it well. Professional advice are sometime more efficient than our constant nagging.
- Brush your teeth in a playful manner, during a predefine time with a kitchen timer that drill once it's time out.
- Brush your teeth. Children learn mostly by imitating adults.
- Brush his teeth, even if he is an older child in a playful manner. It may become a funny time!
- Let him try to find out a solution with you.

*In a classic limit situation, don't hesitate to say "no" to your child, and in the same time, be prepare to listen to his sadness, deception, or anger afterward.*

*Allowed your child to express a "no", he will learn to find a secure way.*







*When your child do something wrong while playing, exploring or because he is tired or stressed, he can learn to repair. Be attentive that he can do so depending on his age, and be prepare to help if needed.*

*Play as much as possible with him, playtime is a efficient mean to connect and give him the attention he needs from you.*



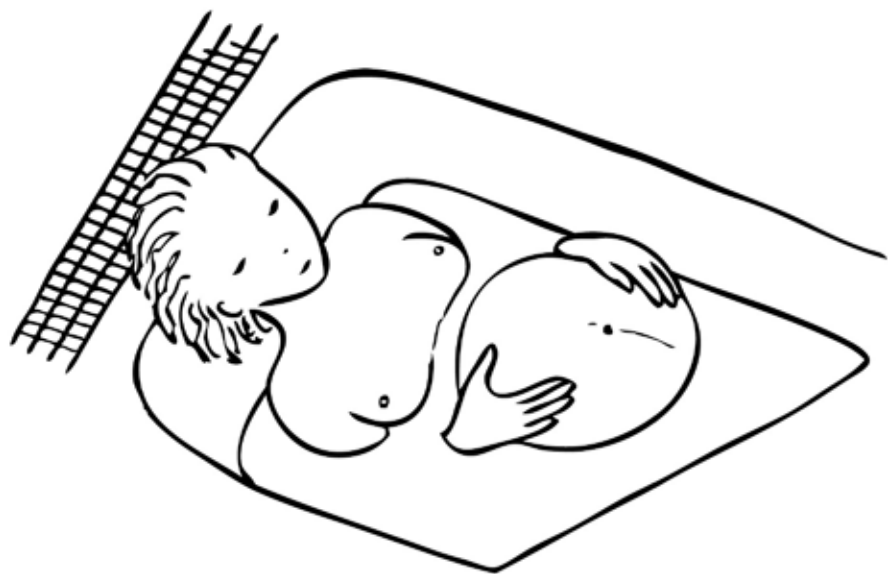
*Think of his needs and yours.*

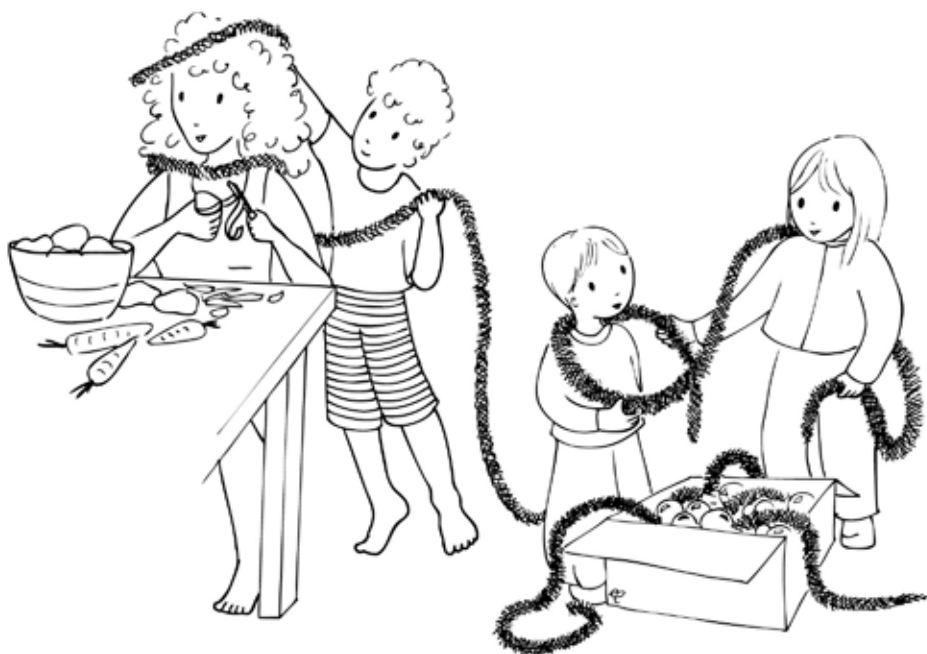
*What can you do if anger is threatening you ?*

- *isolate yourself if possible. Some parents take out their anger by shouting or hitting some cushions, some go out for a while.*
- *Breath deeply*
- *Groan like a wild boar (that may help)*
- *Call a friend and tell him how difficult it is.*
- *Get away from your child if you feel that you are getting violent.*
- *Once the anger wears out, try to understand why so you can try to prevent other crisis.*



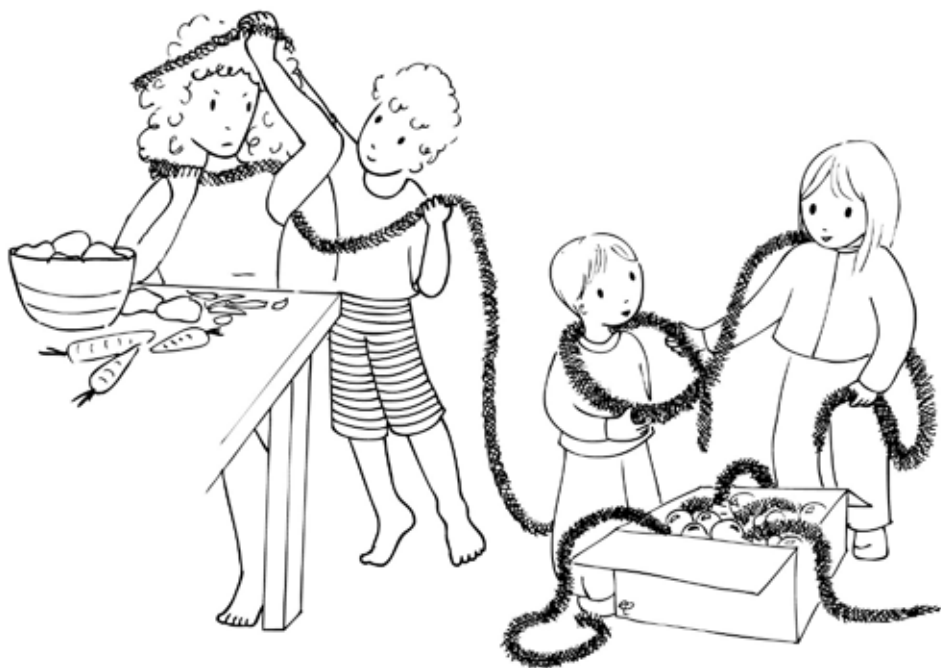
*Take care of yourself.*





*Everyone has a affection reserve.  
When it is full, we have a higher understanding level, we  
live events optimistically and with enthusiasm.  
We can say that everything is well in our life.*

*However, when it is empty, our understanding level is low. We are tired, stressed out by everyday concerns. We are then a lot less understanding.*



*For a child, it is exactly the same.*

*When his needs are met,  
Including attention and contacts needs,  
He is happy and cooperative.  
In opposite, when the reserve is low,  
He has very few means to clearly ask for what he  
need. He will become aggressive, and this is only his  
way to ask for help.*

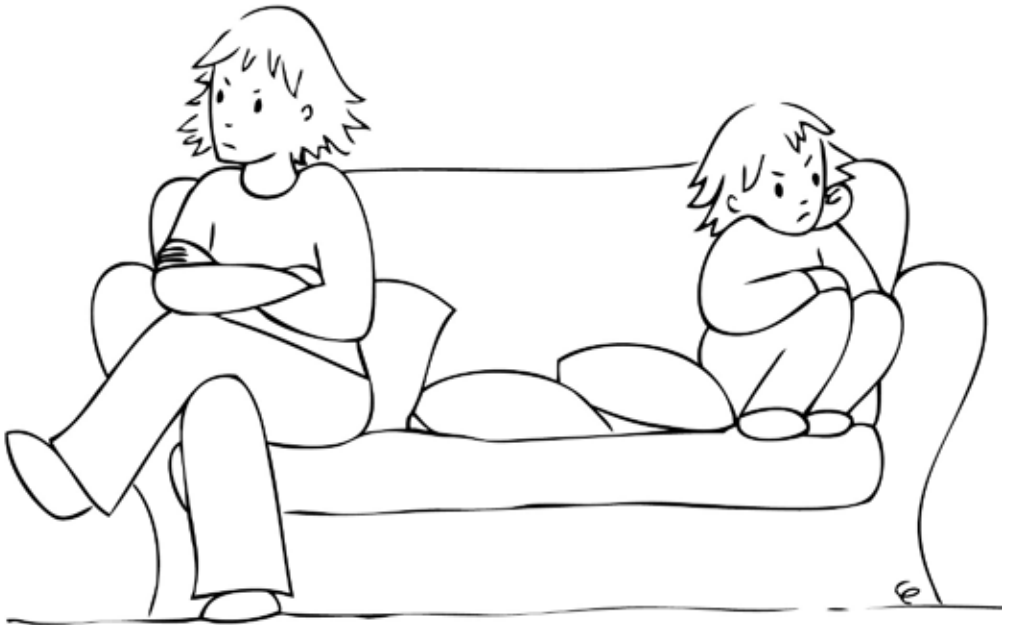


*strangely, he is not attractive when he is the  
more in need.*

Remember...

Don't ask for immediate answer. When we try to establish a relationship based on trust with our child, that we don't hit or punish him anymore, we may think that it is a never-ending task. We are not crushing him anymore, we don't ask for automatic obedience. We are more here to help him grow, and growing does not mean learning to be obedient. It means being in contact with ourselves and others, learning to find the right balance between our needs and others', knowing how to prioritise, being conscious... It takes time to learn the world!

Understand our own childhood.



In her book "Banished knowledge: facing childhood injuries", Alice Miller write that everybody has a dark place in his soul where old monsters are hiding (all our childhood injuries), and she also write that only our children have the key to this place. Our children re-activate old wounds, we then have to identify and work on them as to be freed. Our toddler often make us face ourselves and our own story. Sometimes, it is the right time to understand again what our childhood truly has been.



*Wanting to give them what we did not have can be conflictual and painful.*

*So never forget that you are not alone.*

*Do not isolate yourself*

*Think of your own support and manage it*

*Be confident that you'll be able to find respectful solutions when setting limits to your children.*

*Contact parent-to-parent support organizations which hold meetings. Support groups exist on Internet, and a lot of websites publish articles or really motivating testimonies.*

*Read whatever can help you, look out for information!*

*When possible, learn interpersonal communication techniques.*

*Make the most of your family life,  
time flies!*



## *spanking is counterproductive and dangerous*

*Why spankings, slaps, and even apparently harmless blows like pats on the hand are dangerous for a baby?*

*They teach him violence.*

*They destroy the absolute certainty of being loved that the baby needs.*

*They cause anxiety: the expectancy of the next crisis.*

*They convey a lie: they pretend to be educational, but parents actually use them to vent their anger; when they strike, it's because, as children, they were struck themselves.*

*They provoke anger and a desire for revenge, which remain repressed, only to be expressed much later.*

*They program the child to accept illogical arguments (I'm hurting you for your own good) that stay stored up in their body.*

*They destroy sensibility and compassion for others and for oneself, and hence limit the capacity to gain insight.*

*What long-term lessons does the baby retain from spankings and other blows?*

*That a child does not deserve respect.*

*That good can be learned through punishment (which is actually wrong, punishment merely teaches children the will to punish in their own turn).*

*That suffering mustn't be felt, it must be ignored (which is dangerous for the immune system).*

*That violence is a manifestation of love (fostering perversion).*

*That denial of feeling is healthy (but the body pays the prize of this error, often much later).*

How is repressed anger very often vented?  
In childhood and adolescence:

By making fun of the weak.

By hitting classmates.

By annoying the teachers.

By watching TV and playing video games to experience forbidden and stored up feelings of rage and anger, and by identifying with violent heroes. (Children who have never been beaten are less interested in cruel films, and, as adults, will not produce horror shows).

In adulthood:

By perpetuating spanking, as an apparently educational and effective means, often heartily recommended to others, whereas in actual fact, one's own suffering is being avenged on the next generation.

By refusing to understand the connections between previously experienced violence and the violence actively repeated today. The ignorance of society is thereby perpetuated.

By entering professions that demand violence.

By being gullible to politicians who designate scapegoats for the violence that has been stored up and which can finally be vented with impunity: «impure» races, ethnic «cleansing», ostracized social minorities, other religious communities etc.

Because of obedience to violence as a child, by readiness to obey any authority which recalls the authority of the parents, as the Germans obeyed Hitler, the Russians Stalin, the Serbs Milosevic.

Conversely, some become aware of the repression and universal denial of childhood pain, realizing how violence is transmitted from parents to children, and stop hitting children regardless of age. This can be done (many have succeeded) as soon as one has understood that the causes of the «educational» violence are hidden in the repressed history of the parents.

Alice Miller

This text can be distributed  
without any changes, additions or cuts.

May 22nd, 2003

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Si vous souhaitez participer à la journée de la non violence éducative le 30 avril :

- Joignez-vous à un groupe de parents, toutes les initiatives régionales sont signalées sur le site de La Maison de L'Enfant.
- Animez une réunion et inscrivez-vous sur la liste des organisateurs :  
<http://fr.groups.yahoo.com/group/journeedu30avril>
- Diffusez ce livret autour de vous.
- Pour tout renseignement sur cette journée dans votre région: CONTACTEZ-NOUS!

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