



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Forty-three percent of American parents report spanking or hitting their child within the last 12 months, 37 percent report insulting or swearing at their child, and two percent report having kicked, bit or punched their child. More than 3 million children were reported to child protective service agencies as alleged victims of child abuse or neglect in 1998, and approximately 1 million of these reports were confirmed.

The physical and emotional abuse of children yields harmful consequences for society: a growing body of evidence links child abuse and neglect with drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, youth violence, and chronic health problems. It is therefore critical to focus on preventing child abuse and neglect before it starts. That's what April's observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month is all about.

Placing an emphasis on positive parenting is an important component to the prevention of child abuse. As a community it is essential that we support parents and families. As parents, we must strive to respect and nurture our children.

Here are a few tips on how to be the best parent you can be:

- 1. Be a nurturing parent.** Children need to know that they are special and loved. Educate yourself about a child's development process so you can have reasonable expectations about what your child can and cannot do.
- 2. Help yourself.** When the big and little problems of everyday life pile up to the point where you feel overwhelmed and out of control, take time out. Don't take it out on your child. Take a deep breath, turn on some music. Know where you can turn for help when you need it.
- 3. If your baby cries...** It can be frustrating to hear your baby cry, especially when nothing you do seems to work. Learn what to do if your baby won't stop crying. But, never shake a baby
- 4. Monitor your child's television and computer use.** Watching violent films on TV or playing violent computer games can harm young children. Not only does it scare them, it also teaches children that aggression is a good way to handle frustration and solve problems.
- 5. Spend time playing with your children...** or read to them instead!
- 6. Report suspected abuse or neglect.** Keeping children safe is the responsibility of every adult in our community. If you have reason to believe a child has been – or may be – harmed, call (*insert appropriate information here*).

April's observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month is an appropriate opportunity to remind ourselves of our collective responsibility to prevent the abuse and neglect that robs so many of our society's children of their childhood, their sense of security and well-being, and their future. Together, we really can make a difference.

For more information about how to prevent child abuse and neglect, visit www.preventchildabuse.org (*or insert appropriate local information here*).

Signed,
(Name)
(Title)
(Organization)



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