**Prompt:**

You are teaching a parenting class next year as part of your new job. The topic for today’s class with the parents who have been court-ordered to attend your class is discipline. The topic of “spanking” is raised. One parent says in a loud voice for everyone to hear, “I was spanked as a child and I turned out just fine. What’s wrong with spanking?”

**Response:**

In my professional and personal opinion “spanking” is seen as a form of corporal punishment. There is a large controversy regarding the topic of discipline and corporal punishment, especially with spanking. Typically parents use spanking as a form of discipline with young children under the age of five. During this stage of development children are internalizing the values and morals of people around them. They shape their behavior based on negative and positive consequences. One article I have read states that, “Moral internalization is defined as taking over the values and attitudes of society as one’s own so that socially acceptable behavior is motivated not by anticipation of external consequences but by intrinsic or internal factors and it is thought to underlie the development of children’s social and emotional competence.” When parents use “spanking” as there form of discipline it receives immediate compliance from the child but not because the child understands that the behavior was wrong but because they are afraid of the negative consequence of being spanked.

Attribution theorists believe that power-assertive parenting styles such as spanking will increase children’s external attributions for their behavior and will decrease their internal motivations for behavior. This method of punishment does not teach the child the reason the behavior is wrong, it doesn’t show the child the correct behavior, it doesn’t involve communication between the parent and child, and it may teach the child to “not get caught” in fear of the negative consequence.

Child psychologists believe that an authoritative parenting style is the most effective approach to children. This method involves high control, high nurturance and involvement, high communication between parent and child, developmentally appropriate for child, and parent and child have a joint relationship where the parent doesn’t talk at the child, but with the child. The authoritative parenting style has been shown to be very effective and helps the parent and child develop and maintain a positive relationship with each other. This allows the parent to communicate with the child and instill values. This also allows the child to learn consequences for their actions and the reasons behind it.