

[Not Taking It Out on Kids](#)

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PARENTING

Not Taking It Out on Kids

Positive parenting without swats, threats or screams

Tara Katir, Hawaii

You are out shopping with your child. She sees a treat and thinks she must have it. You tell her, "No." She persists with louder and louder protestations, ignoring what you thought were firm "No's." Finally, you cannot stand it anymore and you angrily strike her, telling her to be quiet. Suddenly you are confronted by a stranger who informs you he is making a citizen's arrest for child abuse, and next thing you know you are sitting in jail. It has happened.

There are worthier ways to raise children. Newborns do not arrive with a set of instructions on how to be peacefully nurtured from infancy to adulthood. Books abound in the United States today giving parents guidelines for intelligent parenting, without hitting. By far one of the best we have seen is by Dr. Katherine Kersey. Professor and Chairman of the Department of Child Studies and Special Education at Old Dominion University in Virginia, she has written a handbook instructing parents how to nonviolently discipline with love. The book's been a hit--Oprah Winfrey glowingly endorsed it.

"It is difficult to learn to be an effective nonviolent parent," Kersey says. "It takes awareness, desire and hard, honest work. It is humbling when we realize that our children become our teachers. They inspire us to develop into healthy, tolerant and loving people." She puts the onus directly on parents--"If you don't like the manner in which your child behaves, take a look at yourself in the mirror."

Kersey believes the first step is creating an affectionate tie of love, trust and acceptance between you and your child. When this bond is nurtured over time, as your child grows to maturity, he naturally wants to cooperate, please you and be like you.

Kersey gives hundreds of suggestions for parents to work with. Not one of them incorporates spanking, yelling or threats. Those techniques do bring immediate results. Yes, out of fear your child will stop. However, Kersey says, by spanking, threatening and yelling we are teaching violence as a problem-solving technique and creating a child who is resentful, revengeful, rebellious, deceitful and believes himself unworthy. Instead, Kersey advocates, treat children and young adults with respect, and they will want to please us and imitate us. Discipline becomes easier, for as the child grows into adulthood he internalizes the rules his parents have placed on him and eventually imposes those rules on himself without our suggestion. We work ourselves out of a job as the child grows into a responsible, loving adult, respecting himself and others.

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