

Who is to Blame?

*Amanda Gross
and Alexis LaPrelle*



“Not only do parents and guardians affect adolescents, but their peers and environment also play an important role in their growth.”

From the time they are born, children depend solely on their caregivers for protection, shelter, necessities for their life and well-being, and most importantly, love. When this love is neglected or taken away, there can be dire and even fatal consequences. Not only do parents and guardians affect adolescents, but their peers and environment also play an important role in their growth. In this document, we will express in detail the effects of parents and other social influences on the development of children and how negative upbringings, such as corporal punishment and social isolation, can lead to disastrous outcomes.

“The first two years of life are critical in this regard because that's when your baby is building the mental foundation that will dictate his or her behavior through adulthood..”

Imagine the brain of a baby as an empty pot and the parents or caregivers of that baby as a chef. The chef has all the necessary ingredients to fill this pot with everything that it needed for delectable, flavorful dish. With all the experiences of the world that a parent shows a baby, it will modify their minds and affect their behavior and cognition. “The first two years of life are critical in this regard because that's when your baby is building the mental foundation that will dictate his or her behavior through adulthood.” (Lipari) “If the baby's brain is the hardware, then you, the parents, provide the software. When you understand the hardware (your baby's brain), you will be better able to design the software (your own behavior) to promote baby's well-being.” (Lipari).



“It is reported that 94 percent of American parents have spanked his or her toddler and continues to do so.”

Parents are essential in the process of shaping a baby’s mind that will influence the baby’s behavior and cognition that will stay with the baby its entire life through adulthood. Babies also learn emotions through their caregivers as well. A baby who has a parent who is nurturing, caring and shows an abundant amount of love will develop into a happy toddler and also have the similar traits of that parent. Parents who prefer to use corporal punishment on their children tend to start at the age of 3. “It is reported that 94 percent of American parents have spanked his or her toddler and continue to do so (Hicks-Pass 71).” At the age of 3, toddlers still have a lot of cognitive developing to do and still depend heavily on their parents to teach them the essential components for life.



“The child who was corporally punished at home who has a poor-child parent relation is more likely to be that child who is selfish and does not like other child.”

By the age of 4, a child who has been corporally punished might start developing minor social issues. At about age 5 a child starts interacting with other children and begins school. The social behaviors and lessons that the parent has taught a child since birth now come into play. The child who was corporally punished at home who has a poor-child parent relation is more likely to be that child who is selfish and does not like other child. This child is at risk for developing depression in later years. At about the age of 4, a child is taught that it is not nice to hit other child, but parent continues to corporally punish the child. This can cause confusion and the child will not know how to handle certain situations when it comes to other people hitting him or her.



“Corporal punishment of children that start school for the first time will have negative effects because that child will not know how to appropriately act in social situations.”

Corporal punishment is also a every ineffective way to discipline young children, “Corporal punishment was an effective in securing short-term compliance but not long term. Even though it installs short-term compliance, it is not the correct way to tell children the way they should behave” (Hick-Pass 3). This is important for when children go off to school, these children will have issues when it comes to the teacher enforcing discipline. Corporal punishment of children that start school for the first time will have negative effects because that child will not know how to appropriately act in social situations, and this will follow the child all the way through middle and high school.



“The first dispute about the morality of corporal punishment is it causes pain that is not necessary and invades the human liberty to bodily integrity.”

By the ages of 8 and 12, a child is not being corporally punished as much as he or she did while in elementary but the effects of corporal punishment are worst during this age period. During this time a child is going through middle school and different physical and psychological changes. As the corporally punished children turns into the corporally punished pre-teen, they become more aggressive and violent since they are in a new and bigger environment with people who are not as friendly. The mortality of corporal punishment also effects pre-teens. , “The first dispute about the morality of corporal punishment is it causes pain that is not necessary and invades the human liberty to bodily integrity.” (Saunders & Goddard 204).



“The facts that children are not able to defend themselves while being corporally punished makes them feel inferior or less of a human-being.”

The facts that children are not able to defend themselves while being corporally punished makes them feel inferior or less of a human-being. This feel of self-worthlessness can cause self-esteem problems and lead to depression which could also lead to suicide. Through these tenders years of development children can evolve into teens that are anti-social, violent, aggressive, and unsympathetic towards other people.



“Corporal punishment in adolescence is associated with a significantly increased probability of depressive symptoms as adults.”

“Corporal punishment in adolescence is associated with a significantly increased probability of depressive symptoms as adults.” With the start of puberty, adolescences are more at risk from the effects of corporal punishment. As their body’s change into a more adult mold, they can experience farther self-esteem issues. A study done my Bryan and Freed (1982) showed that college students who were corporally punished said that their grades were below-average even though they were perfectly fine, shows that corporal punishment effects self-concept. (Turner 156).



“the effects of corporal punishment follow the teen to adulthood and sometimes to their untimely death. The parents who once corporally punished their child have been blamed for the death of their child.”

Adolescents that experienced corporal punishment as children run a risk of becoming alcoholics, stressed, aggressive, depressive, criminals, suicidal, and are violent towards one's spouse. Even though these teens are not currently being corporally punished, the effects of corporal punishment follow the teen to adulthood and sometimes to their untimely death. The parents who once corporally punished their child have been blamed for the death of their child.



“As the child grows into a young teenager, they begin to believe the names they have been called their whole life.”

Unfortunately, corporal punishment is not the only issue these kids have growing up. Other social influences (media, interaction with peers) also have a drastic effect on a developing child. From the time they enter preschool they interact with other children as well as teachers or other caregivers. Upon entering grade school, it is not uncommonly heard a child is bullied at school, or tagged as a “loser” or “outcast”. As family ties break in a home, a child is more susceptible to have low self esteem even without social input. Add that to a group of bullies at school that call the child “stupid” or “ugly”. As the child grows into a young teenager, they begin to believe the names they have been called their whole life.



“Sociologist Emile Durkheim stands behind the accusation that society is solely responsible for a suicidal personality.”

A lot more is expected out of the current generation of adolescents. A combination of how what the media expects and their parents or peers expect leave teens at a high risk of suicide. Sociologist Emile Durkheim stands behind the accusation that society is solely responsible for a suicidal personality. Much of Durkheim's work dealt with how society related to individuals and their reactions under certain circumstances. His goal was to prove how an individual's actions were based on society, which would in turn verify a need to study sociology. Durkheim created the standard for sociological research. His three types of personalities, (named egoistic, altruistic, and anomie) are a reaction to different social situations.



“All of these personalities have one similar characteristic: they all agree the “individual’s actions result from forces to which he/[she] has no control.””

The stereotypical person at risk for suicide is the outcast at school; the person who is completely rejected by his/her peers. This person may have domestic issues or have weak religious ties. They may also have a feeling of isolation or a sense everyone is against them. This is defined as egoistic suicide. The second type, altruistic suicide, occurs when an adolescent is pressured to fit in by his/her peers. This type of personality does not occur as normally as a victim of egoistic suicide. Anomie suicide usually occurs when a drastic change transpires in a youth’s life that affects them mentally. This personality usually leads to alcoholism or other substance abuse. All of these personalities have one similar characteristic: they all agree the “individual’s actions result from forces to which he/[she] has no control”(Smith 540).



“A recent study by the Center for Disease control shows 37% of high school students have seriously considered suicide and 8% have actually attempted.”

So if the teens who decide to take their own life are not at fault, than **who is to blame?** There are on average 14 suicides every day. A recent study by the Center for Disease control shows 37% of high school students have seriously considered suicide and 8% have actually attempted. Though this number may seem small, in actuality this is a significant number of troubled teens. It is tough to say when looking individually at these adolescents if they grew up with corporal punishment, social issues, or even both. But it is proven that any one missing actor from a teen's life either growing up or sudden change can cause drastic and even deadly outcomes.



“As addressed by the Journal of Counseling and Development, in their article centered on suicide in middle schools, “five children under the age of 20 commit suicide every day.””

Teenage years (considered 13-19) are a tough time and a very influential time in one's life. As addressed by the Journal of Counseling and Development, in their article centered on suicide in middle schools, “five children under the age of 20 commit suicide every day” (Pirtle et al 402). This statistic was taken 10 years ago. Based on the economic and social changes over the past 10 years, these statistics have more than likely grown significantly. Just as important as a teen-peer or a teen-parent relationship is a teacher or counselor and teen relationship. In this phase of a developing teen it is vital that they feel support and approval from everyone who is a part of their life.



“If we rallied for teen suicide like we do for other causes, such as abortion or other human rights, we could raise a whole new awareness in the eyes of millions.”

Desirably, we hope to achieve a world where there is no longer death and innocent lives being taken by suicide, especially among adolescents. However unreasonable this statement may sound, there may just be a solution in which these statistics can be dramatically lowered. The strongest advocates of this cause have proven to be parents or friends of these victims. But if we managed to get a whole school involved, or a whole town, or even a whole city, the impression it could make is beyond human comprehension. If we rallied for teen suicide like we do for other causes, such as abortion or other human rights, we could raise a whole new awareness in the eyes of millions.



“According to American Psychiatric Association, four times as many teen males succeed at killing themselves than women; however, three times as many teen females attempt suicide.”

Contrary to popular belief, more females consider suicide than males. According to American Psychiatric Association four times as many teen males succeed at killing themselves than women; however, three times as many teen females attempt suicide. This is due significantly to the current image of females in the media and socially. They are expected to be thin, beautiful, tan, etc. Diseases such as anorexia and bulimia result from teens trying to be like these models and figures in the media. It is both a parental responsibility and a social responsibility to change the face of women in the media. Self-esteem is crucial in a female adolescent's life.



“The great difference between male teen suicide and female teen suicide rates is because males use firearms more to commit suicide than females (who use pills more) and succeed at suicide more than females.”


The great difference between male teen suicide and female teen suicide rates is because males use firearms more to commit suicide than females (who tend to overdose on medication more often) and succeed at suicide more than females. The stress on teen males can at times be just as drastic as women. Men are expected to be tall, tan, muscular, etc. With males having the stress of being confident and a “ladies man” their self-esteem can be just as problematic as females. More important to a male is how he relates to other peers and how accepted he is socially. Although males don’t usually take such drastic measures to enhance appearance, they do try to fit in however necessary socially (drinking, smoking, etc).



“The first years of life are influenced mostly by a parent or guardian, it is critical that a child feels loved.”

So, after assessing a parents role in a child’s life and the social role in a child’s life, what is our role? And if unexpected death occurs in an adolescent’s life, who is at fault? Our responsibility as a peer is not difficult. It is important to not be judgmental of someone, especially based on looks. It is hard to tell what another child has going on at home. As a parent, it’s extremely important from a very young age to develop positive self esteem in a child. As previously mentioned, excessive corporal punishment lowers a child self-esteem and self-worth significantly. Therefore, a parent should always be uplifting. The first years of life are influenced mostly by a parent or guardian, it is critical that a child feels loved.



A photograph of a person with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and dark, worn-in jeans, crouching against a textured, light-colored wall. Their hands are buried in their hair, and their face is obscured, suggesting a state of despair or shame. The wall behind them has the words "Who is to Blame?" written on it in a simple, hand-painted font.

Who is
to Blame?

“Take it upon yourself, whether a parent or peer, or even teacher to make a child feel loved. No matter what.”

Corporal Punishment is defined as physical discipline on a child. This form of discipline has been proven to cause negative effects on children and have carried through their teen years. Although they are not literally being corporally punished as teens, the effects on them can cause drastic outcomes. It tends to lead to social and domestic issues along with low self-esteem and even depression. Some cases of teen suicide can be linked to corporal punishment. However, the social influences in one's life can also lead to this terrible tragedy. No human being deserves to feel unloved or unwanted. Take it upon yourself, whether a parent or peer, or even teacher to make a child feel loved.

No matter what.

