



Stop using the cane

Ayopeju Falekulo

# STOP USING THE CANE



This is a plea to Parents and Educators, all adults at large: **Stop using the cane** as a form of discipline.

I cannot even believe the extent that this evil has invaded our lives. I am so angry that defenseless children are continuously being invaded and abused daily. Yet some of us have the gull to say it is the best way to discipline a child. Well sorry to disappoint you: it is most certainly the worst way to discipline a child.

Children have died, lost their eyesight, been marred for life both physically, emotionally and mentally. What is it going to take for us to truly embrace change. The fact that I was beaten black and blue in school and I am now well-behaved does not make it right. Neither does it mean that I turned out OK just because of those beatings.

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A quick word to **Montessori** school owners and teachers reading this. **STOP USING THE CANE NOW**, or remove the name Montessori from your school name and sign boards! It is definitely not a Montessori characteristic to use the cane. There are better ways to discipline children and Montessori children are known worldwide to be well-disciplined. So the use of the cane is definitely not needed if you know what you are doing and doing it the Montessori way.

Some of us who are quick to defend this form of punishment, will not do so I am sure, if it was your child that ended up dead or blinded by the teacher.

Come to think about it a teacher lost her life just a few weeks ago. Why? Well she flogged one of her students, who went home and reported the incident to her mother. Mum and others ended up beating the teacher and now she's gone forever.

Wake up adult! Just as the art of parenting is no longer something we just do like a headless chicken. Teaching skills need to be learned. Do not think that teaching means controlling the minds, time and life of your wards. They are human beings just like we are and they have rights.

We need to get with the program and get trained. University Professors and Lecturers of Education please take note. With all due respect: what are we teaching the next generation of certified teachers? I read a report where a Certified Teacher was claiming that they were trained how to use the cane on children!!! Goodness what is wrong with us? Review this thing now and get it right!

A lot of people are scared that if the use of the cane is banned, our children will get really bad, undisciplined, unruly and uncultured. Well most of them are already that way and it is not because the cane was not used.

There is actually a Biblical parallel here: If you cast out an evil spirit (which is a good thing) but do not bring in the good to replace the vacuum, then do not complain when the situation ends up worse than it was in the beginning.

So what am I saying? Do not remove the use of the cane and replace it with nothing and hope that the children will just know what to do and what not to do.

In every family we should have family values that we instill in our children, through daily actions, teachings and practice. Also in our schools we should have values we want to instill in our wards. What are your desires for them? Where do you see these children in the next fifteen, twenty-five years? I know what I want for the children in my care. So we work on it daily, intentionally, they learn what is right from what is wrong daily. Step by step. Start from the beginning, the very early years and never stop teaching, showing by example and guiding these bright lights of our tomorrow towards their potential destinies.

Don't wait till there is a fire to put it out. Be intentional. The use of the cane is no longer an option.

Please stop!

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Instead put structures in place to help our children learn how to behave right.

We the adults on the other hand need help with the following:

Parenting

Classroom Management,

School Discipline,

Managing Challenging Behaviours in the Classroom

Anger Management

and lots more besides.

Please in 2018 let us resolve to **stop using the cane** and help ourselves to change this bad culture, and back it up with adequate training and implementations so our children learn how to behave right. If children learn to behave properly, then the job is done.

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Wow! What a contentious issue.

I am so glad we are having this discussion.

I respect that a lot of people strongly feel that from the Biblical point of view, using the cane is acceptable. Some of us feel that doing away with the cane as a means of correction will make the African child a rude and morally deficient being. We could go on and on about the fact that the other side of the coin considers the use of the cane as abusive and old fashioned etc. etc. etc.

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Today though, our discussion will focus on how to build good behaviour practices in the child, without the use of the cane. Now, before we start getting angry over this, let me say from the onset, I am not talking today about how to manage challenging behaviour in children. We are talking about what to do from the onset.

Removing the cane has not worked in the developed world, because nothing else was put in place. We cannot afford to do that, instead we should learn from their mistakes and do it right.

First thing though as adults we need to have the right attitude if we are going to make this work. You need several new attitudes:

1. Be proactive and intentional in helping children learn good behaviour.
2. Be patient with children. 'Rome was not built in one day', they may not be getting it the first try, but recognize that they are making an effort. They will get it eventually.
3. Be consistent, don't make rules you cannot keep yourself.

Here are a few things that should be done.

1. From the onset parents must take responsibility to teach children what is right from what is wrong. Teach by example, this is a saying that I am sure we know very well. 'Children will do what you, do not what you say!' One of reasons why we have problems with discipline among our young ones is because there is truly a lack of great role models to copy. Children watch us, they copy us. If we are great role-models, we will find that they will learn to behave well because we behave well too.
2. Pre-empt what they need to know and teach it. Simple example: a child has just started talking and we say to the child, 'When we go out and meet people we greet them. Or when people come to our home to see us, we greet them.' Then we go ahead and teach the child what to say. We must follow this through with doing likewise and greeting people instead of waiting for them to greet us. Your child is watching, listening and will follow your example. Giving instruction is very important, teaching and training is key helping children learn and understand good behaviour. If we have not spent time doing this then how can we expect a child to behave correctly? We falter greatly here because we wait for the child to miss behave then we lash out. Teach and train and you will get better results. Teaching is by showing, explaining and telling the child what to do. Training is by practicing with role-playing (playing out the situation like a game) so that they get to act it out and experience what you have been teaching them. Then they can actually get to practice the right behaviour in real life. If they make mistakes, we need to take it in our stride and correct to start with, by showing them again the right way to do it. It is amazing how we expect children to get things immediately! They won't, but shouting at them when they are trying to learn the right way to do things will not help issues. Of course if there is naughtiness and defiance involved a spank or two will call the child to order.
3. Parents and schools should have a list of character building activities they want their children to learn and have a plan to teach children these principles. Be proactive and intentional and you will be able to groom and mentor the children to become healthy well behaved individuals.

Now you have 3 important action points to follow, let us break this down a bit further:

Learning good behaviour starts from the home setting, "Charity begins at home". So what exactly are the right and wrong behaviour parents need to start instilling in their young ones right from the onset?

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1. Again just to make this point, you are the role model babies learn how to behave by watching you. You are their first teacher. You have a responsibility now. Behave and do things right.
2. Children before a year old need you to communicate with them, but be aware that their language acquisition is limited. Keep them safe and if they are crawling watch out for danger areas. They may not understand the word 'No' at this time, but they can tell when you say no, that you are not happy.
3. Definitely after 1 year old you need to set boundaries with language for your child. Boundaries are important. What they can and can't do. Like playing with the electric socket, pulling your hair or hitting you! A child that age is not doing it because they are naughty they are simply learning how to use their hands, but if you do not stop them now then the problem will be compounded because there were no boundaries. So say, 'No, don't do that, it hurts.' If they don't get it a little spank on their hands will put a stop to it. You will be surprised the next time you say 'No, don't do that, it hurts', your child may just stop immediately. Follow the process. If a 2 year old is hitting their parent and is told not to and continues you need to stop it by a spank on the hand to start with and if it does not stop three spanks. Usually they get it and don't need an all-out beating to stop this bad behaviour. Look out for reasons why the child is lashing out as well. Is there a need or problem that they cannot express that is a play here? What are the common factor situations or triggers that set off the bad behaviour? There is no smoke without fire!
4. Children between 2 and 3 throw tantrums, the world revolves around them, they do not understand and care much about others but they understand easy commands like 'Yes', 'No', 'Stop', cause and effect and empathy. You can use these in different measures to help your child behave right. They do not like sharing but need to start socializing. Schools we cannot have a large class of children, say 24 of them and yet we have only 9 crayons between them. The children do not understand sharing or waiting their turn. Please make the work of the teacher easier by understanding the developmental stage of the child and work to meeting their needs. This will help. As teachers we must not punish the child for something they cannot control. We can talk to the child explain to the child, at this stage they won't get it. You can plan ahead though and remove toys that may create a problem, have a spare toy available for your visitors' child, (if that is what is causing the current tantrum) and you may distract the child's attention with something else you know they love. Usually children out-grow these periods.
5. You may want to use what is popularly known as Time Outs or what we call The Quiet Corner in the Montessori setting. Set a small corner aside in the classroom if this is a school. At home it may be in their room. You send the child to stay in the quiet corner for just 2 minutes if he is 2 years old and 3 minutes if he is 3 years. The time should be minutes according to age. They will calm down and behave. The more you do this the better the situations work out. Let the child know what kind of behaviour that would earn them the time outs. This is cause and effect. It works!

I hope that this has given us a few pointers of what to do without using the cane. A spank at worse does the job. I know that this is a general behaviour guide and some of us need to deal with more challenging bad behaviour. This is not an issue that can be dealt with in one or two posts. We will talk about the other important and pressing issues like managing challenging behaviour, in detail in the next couple of days.

## Find Out About us

Ayopeju Falekulo is the Director of Studies at Addlo Montessori Training Center, which is your one-stop home for all things Montessori. We help both Educators and Parents get the full benefit of the Montessori Method through our various platforms

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