

Clinton congratulating Dr. Alvy for an Award for Enhancing the Status of Parents, National Parents' Day, Oval Office, 1995

Dr. Kerby T. Alvy has decades of experience in clinical child psychology. His approach focuses on preventing [child abuse](#), drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and other problems--often intertwined--in which parent-child relationships are deemed a crucial factor. It is important to note that 2 million kids were abused and neglected in the U.S. in 2008 (1).

Thus, Dr. Alvy, an advocate of the welfare of children, is the executive director of the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring (CICC), based in North Hollywood, California. The Center provides help to more than 20, 000

[parents](#)

a year. Dr. Alvy lends his expertise on child rearing on a regular basis to government and civic bodies. He also appears on television and radio programs on child, family and parent training issues. In addition, he serves as a consultant to governmental agencies, corporations, news departments, film and television companies on these matters. He is a frequent keynote speaker and workshop leader at events nationwide.

Over the years, Dr. Alvy has created, delivered and disseminated model parent training programs. All of the activities and projects of the CICC are designed to bring coherence and strength to the nationwide Effective Parenting Movement in order to improve the overall quality of parenting in the United States. He and his organization work primarily with African-American and Latino children.

Dr. Alvy has been a Principal Investigator on research projects sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the U.S. Office of Juvenile

Exclusive Interview With Dr. Alvy Ph.D in Psychology

Written by Patricia Turnier
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Justice and Delinquency Prevention. He designed and advocated a federal government-led effective parenting initiative which he presented at a White House Briefing in December 2006.

Dr. Alvy has founded and directed several community service projects to increase parental effectiveness and reduce [child abuse](#), drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, school failure and gang involvement. His projects have gained the support of various state and local funding agencies, and the support of over 75 private foundations and corporations, including the Ford Foundation, AT&T, Xerox, Annenberg, Mattel and Hearst.

Dr. Alvy was previously affiliated for seven years with Kedren Community Mental Health Center in the Watts area of Los Angeles where he was the Director of Children's Services and with the Los Angeles Campus of the California School of Professional Psychology for 17 years where he served as Professor and Dean for Academic Affairs. He also taught at other institutions such as UCLA and the California State University at Los Angeles.

Dr. Alvy's writings have appeared on the editorial pages of metropolitan newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times* and in professional journals such as the *American Psychologist* and the *Journal of Community Psychology*

. Dr. Alvy is a prolific author of books and articles on parenting, parent training, child development and

[child abuse](#)

prevention. His written works have been translated in other languages such as Spanish and Khmer.

His major publications include: 1) Parent Training Today: A Social Necessity, 2) Black Parenting: Strategies for Training, 3)

The Power of Positive Parenting

, 4) his latest book:

The Soulful Parent: Raising Healthy, Happy and Successful African American Children

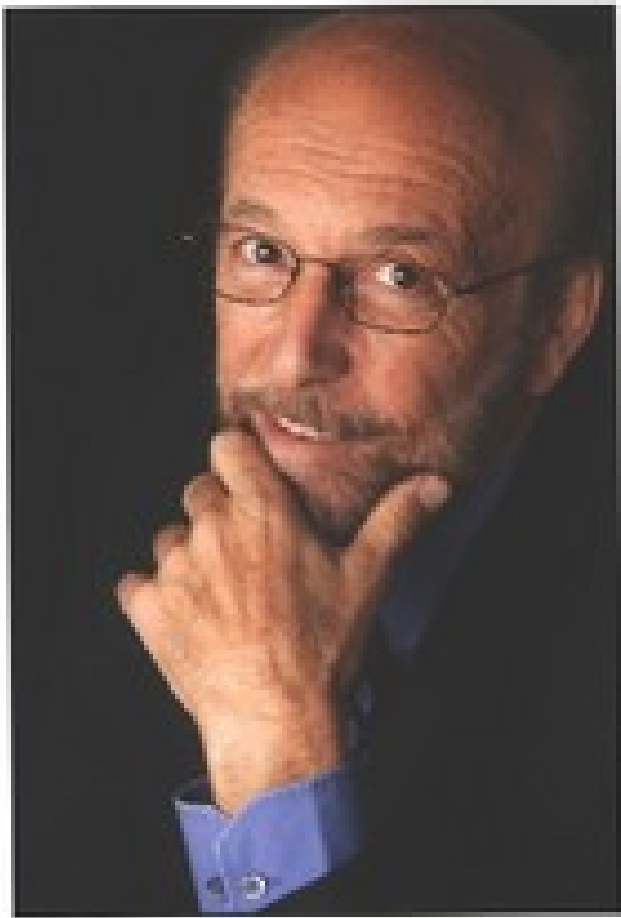
. The latter talks particularly about the program Effective Black Parenting. The Soulful Parent provides tools such as a point system chart where parents write points for the good behavior of their children, for instance putting the clothes away, making the bed and so on. The cover of the book is an illustration of a beautiful picture of an African-American family showcasing unity of three generations à la the Huxtables from

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The Cosby Show.

On a more personal note, Dr. Alvy was born in New York. He has Spanish and Jewish origins. He was married to Mary Alvy, a teacher, for 30 years. The couple has two adult children, Lisa and Brittany. *Here, Dr. Alvy talks to us about his latest book and shares his expertise in child rearing in the African-American community.*



PATRICIA TURNIER, LL.M TALKS TO DR. ALVY, Ph.D

P.T. How did you feel when you were honoured by the White House in 1995 as part of the First National Parents' Day Celebration?

Dr. A. It was a joyous event and a great recognition. It was the first celebration regarding the

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contributions of parents to the future of this country. This event took place after the passing of legislation to recognize the last Sunday of every July as National Parents' Day to highlight the importance of parents in the growth and development of America's children.

I was happy to be honored at the White House for my work and my organization's work in improving the capabilities of parents through our parent training programs, and especially for our programs for parents of African American children.. It was a great experience to be there, to talk to the President Bill Clinton and the First Lady, Hillary Clinton. I enjoyed visiting the highest office of our country during this celebration of the pivotal role of parents, a celebration which brought their importance to our nation to the attention of the public.

P.T. How did you become interested in working with the African-American community?

Dr. A. Social justice was always important to me. I strongly believe that people should be treated fairly. There are groups historically that have not been treated equitably in our country and other countries. When I got my doctorate in psychology at the State University of New York at Albany in 1970, I made a career decision to focus on the African-American community. I chose to work in the inner-cities of L.A. because families there were most in need of support and assistance in raising their children. African-Americans historically have had to face discrimination and racism in our society, which has made it harder for them to raise children who are successful in school and the workplace. It felt right for me to be involved and put to use my professional knowledge. In fact, I decided to continue to be involved in assisting the African American communities because I already had professional experience with African-Americans before I completed my doctorate. To summarize, it was a combination of my commitment to seeking social justice and my personal interest to participate in the betterment of the African-American community.

P.T. In your latest book, The Soulful Parent, you wrote you feel that there is a common bond between Blacks and Jews. Besides having a PhD in psychology, can you elaborate on how your Jewish and Spanish origins helped you to relate to African-American culture?

Dr. A. Both Jews and African-Americans have been historically rejected by the mainstream. In other words, both communities share a history of rejection, blatant discrimination and genocide. It affected the psychological foundations of the groups: what they think about themselves, how they have to work harder, etc. There is a natural strong bond in terms of

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having been discriminated against by the larger society. For instance, my father could not get a job in the engineering field when he came to this country decades ago. Often in newspapers, in the job offers sections it was written "Gentiles only" at the time. My father, like many of his compatriots, had to face anti-Semitism.

Both groups fought. For instance, there were Jewish people who helped African-Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, historically African-Americans had to build their own institutions such as universities and hospitals as a remedy to counterpoise inequities. Jewish people likewise had to do the same in the U.S. and in other western countries. Therefore, I see a lot of similarities, and this is what attracted me as a Jew to work with the African-American community. I felt that I could relate to the African American community as a member of Jewish people who had their own share of obstacles tainted with prejudice and injustice.

P.T. I agree about the similarities; however, I think what is amazing about Jewish people is the fact that they didn't lose their language and heritage before the creation of Israel in 1948. Wherever they were in the world, their culture remained intact which is unfortunately not the case on the African continent and among the people of African descent.

Dr. A. This is an interesting point.

P.T. There are Black Jewish people. Did you have to work with them in your practice? If so, what were the main problems that you observed regarding their children's rearing?

Dr. A. This is a very interesting question. Almost all the work that I have done was in the poor sections of the Black community in health centers of South Central L.A., including the Watts area. I mainly worked with low-income and low-level education in this community. I don't recall for at least the last ten years that I met through my work a Jewish African-American family. In answer to your question, I am sure there would be some interesting issues in that context to look at, however, I don't have clinical experience with this group so I can't comment, since I haven't been involved professionally with Black Jewish people.

P.T. You have encountered resistance from some members of the African-American

community with your approach. How did you gain their confidence and what kept you interested in being involved in the Black community despite some hurdles?

Dr. A. The biggest hurdle was to be seen as a White man being involved in the African-American community. During the 70s, at the Kedren community mental health center, there were fifty members, including two White people, one of whom was obviously myself. Therefore, I stood out in the Black community [laughs] like my daughter now where she works as a volunteer in Botswana for the Peace Corps. She is the only White person in the village where she stays. To go back to myself, the biggest issue which was raised was what's this White man doing here [laughs]. I was in children's services helping families. I played an important role there; I did family therapy. I was respected for this work. When I founded the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring in 1974, I started to be known as someone who promoted positive approaches in child rearing, especially in setting limits, including disciplinary technics. At first, it raised controversy because there were African-American parents who used corporal punishment. There was some resistance to learning different methods in rearing from a White professional. So, my whiteness was controversial, and the different approaches in disciplining that I was introducing were questioned. What helped me to work successfully in the Black community was the fact that I never operated alone. I always collaborated with amazing African-American professionals: social workers, psychologists, educators and scholars. They were excited to work with me on developing programs for African-American families. They had their concerns at first. The African-American intelligentsia raised questions. But they saw with time, that my interest was genuine and I wanted to help the people in the Black community who needed support to improve their family lives by raising healthy children with the goal of planting the seeds for success in the future. So, afterward the suspicions disappeared or lessened.

I have been able to continue my work until this day with the African-American community, thanks to the Black professionals. The parenting skill-building program that my organization created, Effective Black Parenting, has successfully educated hundreds of thousands of parents of African American children nationwide, through the local instructors who we have trained to deliver the program. The program has really helped the families. The kids became more cooperative, and the parents less stressed by using more positive approaches. Moreover, they observe encouraging progress in their children. What kept me interested to continue my work with the Black community is what I said before, the historic similarities and bonds that my community has with African-Americans, and the practical success of the program we created. So, this is how I have been able to remain involved in the African-American community for over thirty years.

P.T. What has been the public (the mainstream and the African-American communities) response so far to your latest book?

Dr. A. The people who read the book have been very enthusiastic about it. However, I thought that this enthusiasm would translate itself into more people who would be interested to be trained and to run the program in their community. It hasn't happened to the extent that I was hoping. The book provides many tools in rearing children. Adults of all ages have used the program for decades: grandparents, etc. and some of them testified in the book. Therefore, with these personal stories I thought it would make more people interested in familiarizing themselves with the program.

It is important to mention that I am not the only one who wrote the book. Three excellent African-American journalists were involved: Earnest Harris, Lisa Nicole Bell and Hassahn Liggins. They interviewed fifty instructors and parents from all over the country, and they wrote the really personal and heartfelt stories of the program's impact. My role was to organize the book, write the Introductory and ending chapters including the beginning of each chapter. I am very proud of what we came up with. The book is now being used in the parenting instructor workshops we deliver all over the nation.

P.T. Each chapter of your book begins with an African Proverb. Choose your favourite one and share with us why it is the most meaningful to you.

Dr. A. My favorite one is related to positivity. It is an Ethiopian Proverb: "When the heart overflows, it comes out through the mouth". Each proverb presented in the book is related to a skill which is being taught in the program. When you are feeling wonderful toward your kids, you have to let them know about it. You have to express it. We introduce the concept of positivity in the chapter which covers the praising technique where we teach positive reinforcement. In this regard, we encourage parents to acknowledge the good behaviors of their children. It is important to let them know that you are appreciative of that.

We used the proverbs in the book to make a connection with the wisdom and the teachings of the African elders. It is a way to honor their African roots, traditions and their ancestors. We want to keep what the African ancestors promoted and their precept is still relevant in 2012. It is apropos that we started the program with the African proverb from Ethiopia: "He who learns, teaches". The book starts with the powerful Congolese proverb: "Children are the reward of life". With the right skills and approaches, it is definitely a rewarding experience to be a parent. This is what our program is about, providing new or additional skills in child rearing. Therefore, this is how the different proverbs are used in the Effective Black Parenting program.

P.T. There are some parents who used to oblige their children (instead of using [corporal punishment](#)), when they misbehaved, to read financial publications, for example *The Economist*, or other type of publications (political and so on). When some of these children grew up, they became very successful professionals. Some people think this method can create an aversion to education in kids who learn to associate reading with punishment. What is your professional position about this?

Dr. A. I think that it is a very creative form of discipline, the consequences of misbehaviour is to become more knowledgeable in a certain domain. It helps the child to take a more constructive path. I don't see a real problem with this method which is educational. I don't think it would create an aversion to reading as a whole.

P.T. I could add an example regarding one of the greatest lawyers of all time in the U.S., Thurgood Marshall. When he used to misbehave at his school, his educators asked him to read the Constitution of the United States and we all know that he later became a prominent jurist.

Photos: The top chart shows the correlation between parents who use corporal punishment with teenagers and the nation's average IQ. The bottom chart shows the more [spanking](#), the greater the likelihood of post-traumatic stress symptoms. Source: Murray Straus, University of New Hampshire.

Source : http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/booster_shots/2009/09/spanking-iq.html

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P.T. In 2009, the Sociologist professor Dr. Straus (the head of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire) and his colleagues looked at corporal punishment practices in 32 countries by surveying 17,404 university students. The analysis found a lower average IQ in nations in which spanking was more prevalent. The strongest link between corporal punishment and lower IQs was for those whose parents continued to use corporal punishment until their adolescence or later years. His study reported that children in the United States who were spanked had lower IQs -- by 2.8 to 5 points -- than those who were not spanked. Strauss suggested that the chronic stress caused by regular spanking creates posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They also found that PTSD is linked to lower IQs. What is your professional opinion about this Dr. Alvy?

Dr. A. I know Dr. Straus very well. He's one of the most respected researchers concerning corporal punishment toward children worldwide. It doesn't surprise me that the survey (mentioned in your question) showed a strong correlation between corporal punishment and lower IQ. The corporal punishment usually stops the behavior, however it doesn't require a lot of thinking. It doesn't stimulate the children to reason. Most of the time, they will avoid getting hit and it won't go beyond that. It creates also all kinds of negative emotions such as fear, mistrust, submissiveness or subservience and so on.

Most of the time, in the U.S., corporal punishment is used in the early years of the child when they are about 4 or 5. In the study that you quoted, it demonstrated that when the parents continue the corporal punishment in elementary, middle and high school years it creates kids who are less intellectually acute. It is a very primitive way to gain the cooperation of your kids. Other approaches need to be used and this is what our program teaches. It is part of our program to use approaches which encourage the thinking of young people.

P.T. You talk in your book a lot about the physical punishment of kids and its impact. Physical punishment rarely comes without psychological violence. Can you share with us the impact of psychological violence on the kids' psyche with the lack of positive reinforcement?

Dr. A. A good source of information on that is again Dr. Straus' studies which show that corporal punishment can have a lot of negative effects. The worst effect is when it is used with psychological rejection. I am talking about verbal abuse, denigrating or belittling the children, being sarcastic, telling them they are stupid and so on. It can be definitely detrimental and leave the kids with a feeling of unworthiness. It can create chronic scars for the child. His/her self-esteem can be destroyed and he/she might not have the confidence it takes to make it in

this world The child can also develop conflicted feelings (ambivalence,...) toward his/her parents until adulthood. This is my assessment.

P.T. I heard that over 70% of people who ended up in prison have been abused during their childhood.

Dr. A. Definitely! If people want to observe the ugliness of the effects on individuals regarding abusive behaviors, they just have to look at the prison population. There are killers who responded in a criminal way to the wrongs they endured as a youngster. So, to prevent serious crimes in our society it is important to give tools to parents (who need them) from the early years to help them be more humane and effective in raising kids. This can diminish the rate of people who end up in prison later in life. There is definitely a correlation between being assaulted as a kid and an increasing of bad behavior during childhood and later in life. Many of Dr. Straus' research relate to that. The kids who have been physically abused are the ones who have the most difficulty in getting married, employed. In addition, it is not easy for them to learn how to get along with people, in other words they lack social skills. They are the ones who are most susceptible to be violent toward their wives and eventually their own children. The cycle of violence is being perpetuated. Our program aims to prevent these kinds of problems and it is more effective if the parents get help early.

P.T. Can you talk about other damage corporal punishment can have on children in the short and long-term?

Dr. A. In the short-term, it can leave children for instance with physical scars, insomnia, nightmares (about being hit for instance) when they sleep, lack of appetite and so on. In most extreme cases, there are children who die. The psychiatrist, Dr. Poussaint in his article "Spanking Strikes Out" referred to the National Center for the Study of Corporal Punishment and Alternatives which made a clear connection between spanking and rates of child abuse. Dr. Poussaint cited Sweden which is a country that made spanking illegal in 1979. Sweden went from a family violence-related child death rate of 18 percent in 1970 to 0 percent in recent years since the law was passed. This speaks volumes.

Some studies also found out that there are not necessarily damages in the short-term, but it is more in the long-term. The children learn that it is fine to hit people that you love and this is susceptible to create unhealthy relationships with people. It can provoke psychological wounds. Some people want to kill themselves, others can have masochistic relationships during their

adulthood. These researches are compelling to show negative long-term results as a consequence of corporal punishment.

P.T. You can correct me if I am wrong, but kids who are being hit by their family members won't necessarily understand that this behavior is abnormal and it can put them at risk if they are being hurt by people outside their homes. It is susceptible to create confusion in them and they won't be protected because they won't know that they have to denounce their assaulters.

Dr. A. This is definitely accurate. It is one of the negative consequences. These children learn that it is fine to be hurt by people who love you. Fortunately, on a national level there is a decrease of 30% (since the last two decades) in the statistics concerning the parents, across all groups who hit their children, but there is still a lot of work to do.

P.T. I believe also that the fact that the skin of a Black child who's being spanked won't have apparent redness, so the parents who do that have the illusion that it is not that bad to hurt the kid since the scars are not visible most of the time. In addition, there are parents who have outside stressors (for instance, being unemployed...) and they end up taking out their frustrations on their children who have nothing to do with their parents' problems.

P.T. What is your opinion about the power of the media on individuals? Images and words are powerful. We saw, for example, the impact of media propaganda used by Hitler and the other Nazis toward the Jews during WWII. Some nations historically used the media as a tool to incite people to create wars. In the media, we seldom see nurturing images of African-Americans relating to each other as couples and with their children. In addition, we observe racially-devaluing propaganda in some venues. Do you think that the lack of positive images reinforce a distorted idea of African-Americans' identity in the Black community and in society as a whole? Can the media make an individual internalize negative images (for instance showing Black people engaging in criminal activities on TV instead of showcasing Black scientists) and have an impact on creating dysfunction among some Black families?

Dr. A. I think this is changing a little bit with a greater emphasis on showing positive aspects not only in fiction but also in real life. The presidential couple is the best example that I can give. We can see that they appear to be wonderful concerned parents. This is definitely a positive image of Blacks raising Blacks. This is pretty big to see these images.

P.T. This is a great example. I could add that the Obama family seems united and three generations are in the White House right now. It is maybe the first time it ever happened in U.S. history.

Dr. A. Definitely! On TV, we had the amazing sitcom *The Cosby Show* even if it was many years ago. It showed African-Americans with liberal professions. The psychiatrist Dr. Poussaint (from Harvard) who was one of the brains behind this situation comedy became one of our major consultants for our program from our center -- Dr. Comer from Yale was another physician involved. In this show, the parents were sensitive to the development of their children, they could always get their collaboration through healthy communication. They were involved in their lives, wanted them to get a great education, and they did. I think for today, there are positive images on Black parenting on TV, however there are still a lot of negative ones. The media can reinforce good and negative ideas in child rearing and as a society we need to be careful. Monitoring is required. Being exposed to negative images through the mass media can create a distorted perspective of the group. The latter can internalize these images and have a distorted perception of themselves. In addition, demeaning representation of a group is detrimental to our society at large. It can affect the psyche of people of all origins.

P.T. There are Blacks who have been “hypnotized” or “brainwashed” by a system of negative thinking that is the result of centuries of conditioning by a mindset that, although it has been weakening in strength, basically still says that white is good and black is bad. You talk in your book about the negative connotation which was given to the black color. Many Blacks have escaped or broken free from the bonds of this mindset by the dint of their own efforts. They also developed positive beliefs passed on to them by loving parents and leaders in the community that offset or cancel out the negative ideas imposed on them by a ruling white ethic mindset. For others, however, the negative effects of the conditioning still exist today, yet in more subtle ways. How does it affect child rearing in the African-American community?

Dr. A. Well, “the white is right” ideology has been challenged more and more in the African-American community with the Civil Rights Movement and now we have a Black president. The ultimate glass ceiling has been broken. However, there are still subtle ways to communicate what we call black self-disparagement. Historically, all the groups who have been

oppressed take on the oppressors' tactics. This is called "identification with the aggressor". That is why there are Black families who continue to use corporal punishment. This is how their ancestors were treated during the slavery period.

There are other subtle negative connotations which still exist. I just talked about black self-disparagement. It is also called ethnic put-downs. It is not as pervasive as before, but it still exists. Some parents use *colorism* (including the hair texture and so on) toward their children and it can damage their self-esteem. *Colorism* is the preference for light skinned people, a heritage of the privileged status accorded to light-skinned Blacks during and after slavery. These things can be changed via education. These issues are discussed in our program. It is one of the advantages to have a culturally specific program. It permits the discussion of specific issues among ourselves.

P.T. In your book you talk about the link between slavery and the spanking used by some African-Americans. Can you share with the readers your main opinion about this issue and talk to us about P.T.S.S (Post traumatic slave syndrome)?

Dr. A. Many Black scholars such as the psychiatrists Dr. Alvin Poussaint and Dr. Phyllis Ross were the first to introduce and address the issue of P.T.S.S. to the public's attention in the 70s and 80s. They said that slavery still had a profound effect on Black America today. There is a correlation between slavery and the use of corporal punishment in many forms: spanking (with belts for instance, which replaced the whip used by the masters during slavery), beating with instruments and so on. We have to remember that one of the worst conditions that enslaved people had to live under was the constant threat of sale. Their humanity was denied. In addition, slaves could be sold as a form of punishment. The parents had to teach their children how to hide their feelings to escape retaliation. Even if they were never sold, slaves had to live with the constant threat and fear that they could be. Their lives were regulated by domination and forced labor. The paternity and maternity of Blacks were denied during slavery. So, Black people had to develop mechanisms to protect themselves and their families. Black America had to adjust from centuries of slavery and the main way used by the masters to control this part of the population was by using extreme forms of corporal punishment which could be lethal. Unfortunately, it has been perpetuated over the centuries. Slavery created consequences in different types of relationships including the parents-children ones, and this is how the Post traumatic slave syndrome was addressed by scholars. In the book, I cover the lack of praise in some parents' rearing and again this aspect has components of slavery. When a master saw slave children behaving well, the parents didn't praise their kids to protect them. It was their way to do everything possible to prevent their offspring from being sold by saying to their masters that the child was shiftless for instance. It was not in the interest of Black slaves to let their master believe that their kids were capable and forceful.

P.T. This is really deep!

Dr. A. This is how there are Black families who learned to hold back the praising of their children. The slavery experience contributed to many negative ways of rearing Black children today. It is very important to look at that closely, and there are healings from this traumatic experience which need to take place to prevent the perpetuating of unhealthy behaviors. Our program was created in the 70s and it was always a major issue discussed, I am referring specifically to the impact of slaving on child rearing. Our program is innovative because we addressed this issue since its beginning and we created concrete tools to combat this. Therefore, the historical educational part of Effective Black Parenting is critical.

P.T. It is important to know the roots of where the issue you raised came from. I mean the correlation between servitude and corporal punishment.

Dr. A. Absolutely! It is really wise that you are mentioning this because to evolve as a human being you need to grasp the problem in its entirety and significance. Inflicting pain on a child reinforces the notion that the strong have a "right" to dictate to the weak and this power struggle definitely has its roots in slavery. The masters used violence because it was an effective way to force people to do what was expected from them. It was all about power and control.

P.T. There are people in the Black community who still believe in corporal punishment and think it is the only method to use to discipline children. This was probably part of the resistance you encountered when you became involved in the Black community. Can you share with us one testimony of parents who realized that there are other ways to discipline their children?

Dr. A. If you remember earlier in this interview, I mentioned that one of the main resistances that I encountered was the fact that I am White and there were Black families not used to positive approaches in child rearing. This was new to them. I am going to share one powerful testimony: "One thing that really hit me close to home was the fact that I was raising my children under a form of slavery. I thought that discipline was punishment, that spanking was the only way. I'd react immediately with my hand. Now I am able to communicate. I have a method that increases behaviors I want to see. My son is more open, more affectionate. He'll pass me in the hallway, he'll grab me and hug me, and tell me, "I love you, Mom." This quote

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from a parent captures so much the evolution between a discipline used under a form of servitude to moving in other ways of rearing which created a more healthy relationship with the good behavior from the child who is more affectionate toward her. The parents want the bad behavior of their children to disappear. Our program brings out the behavior you wish to see (the politeness, the cooperation) not just stopping what is disruptive. We encourage the parents to acknowledge when their kids behave well. The more they do it, the more the kids will continue to behave appropriately.

P.T. In the past, I did an interview with Dr. Ben Carson. In his best-seller Think Big, the readers learn that when he was a kid, he used to pressure his mother to buy expensive attire. She made him go through an educational process with his brother by giving them money for a month and it was up to them to manage it by making sure that all important expenses were met. After this experience, her children never asked her to buy expensive things.

Dr. A. This example is great. It was a very wise and smart way used by the mother to teach her children the limitations which come with a small income. Parenting requires creativity and the first educators of children are parents.

P.T. Do you have a final message for families who want to raise their kids in a way to insure that they become healthy and well-adjusted adults? In addition, can you give tips to parents who want to use positive reinforcement in their children's upbringing?

Dr. A. Parents need to make time in their lives to use positive and not violent approaches toward their kids. It is not everybody who can be a parent, it requires a lot of patience with the children. They have to make it a priority to learn creative and positive approaches for their kids. My latest book can serve as a learning process to acquire new methods in child rearing. Their job is raising kids to be winners. We focus a lot also in our program to find time to praise the children: be physically and tenderly close to them, hug them, read to them before they go to sleep, tucked them in, play with them. Look at them directly in the eyes, smile and say nice things to your child, such as "you know it is wonderful that you have put the dishes away, it is helping mommy and daddy". This is an example of how a good behavior from a child can be praised. It is powerful when you valorize your kid while they are doing something praiseworthy. Everyone wants to feel valued. Adults expect that in their workplace for instance, and there is no difference for children. Most kids want approval from their parents for good behavior. So, it is very important to acknowledge when they behave well. They will feel appreciated and they will want to do better. As a general rule, I think corporal punishment must not be used and other alternatives are required. Whatever form of discipline a parent chooses to employ it must be healthy and consistent. In addition, the nurturing must be proper. Show that you care by being involved in the recitals of your children for instance.

In summary, I provide in my latest book important skills and the readers can find 16 very practical guidelines to become a Positive Parent:

1. Give Children Warmth, Acceptance, and Respect
2. Enjoy Your Children's Development and Be Alert to Special Needs
3. Use Firm and Fair Leadership
4. Avoid Corporal Punishment and Verbal Aggression
5. Start Early in Preparing Children for School
6. Create a Home Environment That Supports Education
7. Be an Active Partner with Your Child's School
8. Manage Your Child's Obesity and Eating-Related Problems if these occur
9. Teach Children about Their Own and Other Cultures
10. Teach Children about Substance Abuse
11. Teach Children about Sexuality
12. Teach Children to Be Financially Successful and Giving
13. Manage Your Children's Exposure and Use of Media and Technology
14. Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle
15. Nurture the Relationship in Which You Are Raising Your Children
16. Set a Good Example of Life long Learning

P.T. Thanks Dr. Alvy for this great interview and for sharing your expertise!

A large, vibrant photograph of a multi-generational family of six people sitting together outdoors in a park-like setting. The family consists of a mother with curly brown hair, a father, a young boy, a young girl, and two grandparents. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

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