

# *Parenting Without Punishing*

by Norm Lee (c.) 2002

*Parenting Without Punishing* by Norm Lee (c.) 2002, is a free publication for those seeking happier and easier ways of bringing up children.

## Chapter 1

---

### **What These Chapters Are All About**

Here we'll be talking about discipline, responsibility, self-esteem, learning right from wrong, the causes of violence, family dysfunction, and alienation; why children resort to drugs, crime and gangs; and finding specific steps to take toward peace and happiness in the home and community. This is not opinion, not theory. What you will read here is solidly founded on more than 40 years of scientific research and proven practice in childrearing.

It's a tall challenge, one that cannot be accomplished in one issue, or several. But here's where we must begin: First steps in the right direction.

We have in mind parents-to-be, and parents with children ages birth to 12 or so years, although the principles set forth here apply to any age. "Do unto children as you would have them do unto you" is sound advice for anyone in dealing with others, and especially so in dealing with children.

With the wrong start, things get harder as children grow older. It is doubly difficult if parent and adolescent have already developed an adversary relationship. Fifteen years of power struggle can do much damage. Yet it is never too late to begin developing respect and kindness, and for courtesy and caring. Trust can grow, but not without right effort and conditions.

[\* Slightly revised, May 2000]

### **The Happiness Factor**

Any serious talk about parenting must include ways to achieve peace and happiness, ways to avoid conflict and suffering. The efforts we put into being good parents are aimed at happiness for the children, to be sure. But parents need - and deserve - to be happy too. Indeed, it is hardly possible for children to be happy if their parents are not. So the first thing to think about involves happiness for parents.

We realize that there is little happiness for either us or them if we feel we are constantly sacrificing for the children, because that can lead to later demands for

emotional payments for what we have given up for them (And haven't we all seen that happen?)

What we must aim for is sufficient satisfaction in life apart from the parent role, though we know that our chief satisfaction is in seeing the children living happy, successful lives. We have all seen that there are few keener disappointments than seeing the children in a constant struggle with hatred, confusion and despair.

So it comes down to this: What under-standings, what qualities, what methods, what skills are needed to achieve happiness and to avoid suffering for myself and my family, and how can these be acquired?

Addressing these questions - and more - is the purpose of this publication. And you will find a first step suggested in the pages of this first issue.

### **From Victims, Victimizers Are Made**

Some time ago a Harris survey revealed that some 85% of Americans had the vague feeling of being victims. To be a normal human, at least an American human, is to have been a victim of violence as a child, at the hands of one's own parents. Hardly a wonder, then that we are the most violent "civilized" nation on earth.

Research in family violence has shown that in excess of 95% of us were spanked, slapped, and otherwise humiliated as children, experiencing the horror and trauma of being physically attacked by the very grownups upon whom we had no choice but to depend upon for love, protection and survival.

-----  
"Spanking does not teach inner conviction. It teaches fear, deviousness, lying and aggression."

Dorothy Corkhill Briggs

-----  
That trauma, therapists tell us, is buried deep in our 'under-brain" (my term, not theirs), for most of us, where we don't have to face it consciously. But it smolders, or festers, negatively influencing our attitudes and behavior nonetheless, often in hateful and violent ways. For some, given the circumstances, it explodes, generating the shocking stories we read in the papers.

-----  
A first step to feeling happier: Stop all punishing, and hold a family meeting to discuss alternative ways of relating, and governing family behavior.

## **Waking Up**

In 1956 I sat in the back row in a classroom at Syracuse University, near the door, with my German Shepherd, Rex, at my side. As a veteran, returned from combat in Korea and occupation of Japan, I had cultivated a "no-nonsense" attitude.

The graduate student instructor was explaining how, when a child misbehaves, we should, instead of punishing, seek to understand the reasons and feelings causing the offending behavior.

"Mr. Jalbert," I smirked, "when Rex misbehaves I just hit him with a folded newspaper. That straightens him out, and he loves me for it."

He quietly walked to face me, with a concerned expression on his face. I remember the moment vividly: Then he bent down and said softly, "Mr. Lee, is it asking too much to distinguish between a dog and a child?"

My own stupidity, my gross insensitivity, loomed before me, and I knew my attitude had to change. I silently resolved I would prove to him that I could, indeed, make that distinction, and that I was worthy of becoming a teacher of children. Surprising myself, I even made a career of teaching teachers of children.

It's been a comfort to me that my friend, Don Jalbert, who died of cancer three years later, lived to see a change in my attitude.

## **Carrot and Stick**

Most of us were brought up, trained according to behaviorism, Skinnerian, carrot-and-stick, crime-and-punishment methods, and believing that since that is how our parents did it, it is therefore right and good, and that we should do likewise. It has occurred to few of us that there might be better, more effective, more enlightened ways to deal with children.

The first objection to punishment is that it doesn't work. It fails to serve our purpose: that of reforming the child. Outward behavior may temporarily change so to avoid further punishment, but the humiliation is internalized, only to break out later. Punishment almost without exception makes things worse, whether or not it is immediately apparent.

---

## TOP TEN MYTHS ABOUT PUNISHMENT

1. It reforms the culprit
2. Punishment never hurt you
3. It is the duty of parents to tame & train children with rewards & punishment
4. Punishment teaches discipline, prepares children for life
5. It is necessary for their safety
6. It helps them remember the offense
7. It hurts you more than it does them
8. It is sanctioned by the Bible, by God
9. It builds good character
10. It makes the child strong, courageous, and responsible.

-----  
Most people believe in the effectiveness of punishment because it gives the appearance of control. But in suppressing hostility it encourages lying, deceit, and hypocrisy - and worse. Many parents believe in punishment as fervently as they do their religious tenets, and even protest that God himself ordered them to not "spare the rod", to use the carrot-and-stick method of teaching children.

In a recent lecture to a group of parents, I opened a book and read aloud: "Start discipline early; make clear rules, enforce them promptly and consistently. Reinforce obedience with, 'Good boy, that's a nice girl,' together with pats and hugs. After disciplining, tell them you love them, but it was for their own good."

There were unanimous nods of agreement, some voicing approval quite heartily. But when I showed the book's cover, they gasped in shock:

## HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DOBERMAN PINSCHER

In their beliefs about methods of treating children and training dogs, there was not a smidgen of difference! It is as if America had learned its parenting skills at the American Kennel Club's obedience school. Is it any wonder that the nation's children are screwed up? A dog's nature is to be servile. But a child's nature is to be free.

### **What This Is Not About**

This is a good place to say that we are not recommending permissiveness. That is neglect, and as such, is yet another form of child abuse, just as harmful to the child as slapping and shaking. Nor are we into parent-bashing, either this generation or those past. In our view, parents are modern-day heroes, struggling against huge odds to raise decent children in an indecent society.

Nor are we intent on supplying ammunition to either side of America's War On children. We won't be suggesting new, Draconian strategies to keep children "controlled", "managed", or otherwise suppressed, seen and not heard.

The purpose of this newsletter is to explore methods of effective parenting that result in happier children, happier parents, happier child-parent relationships, happier family life. And to show how easily that can be accomplished, given insight and persistent application. The result will be seen - and here's the money-back guarantee - in the rising level of happiness for the parents and the children, now and as your and their lives unfold.

-----  
Punishment is ineffectual in the long term as a technique for eliminating the kind of behavior for which it is directed.

- Research results in Sears, Maccoby & Levin: Patterns of Child Rearing  
-----

### **Four Truths**

**Truth #1:** We live in a violent world, a society that is dangerous and deadly; there are serious unresolved problems and conflicts in our communities, in our families and in ourselves; we see evidence of serious deterioration of ethical and moral standards at all levels; dysfunction of families is now common; and alienation, affecting youth and grown-ups alike, has become the sickness of the age;

**Truth #2:** Each and all of these problems have causes; they didn't just happen. There are roots and conditions that have given rise to the difficulties we face;

**Truth #3:** Because those causes can be identified, defined, we can gather information, learn more about them, and thus understand how they came about;

**Truth #4:** With sufficient information, insight, determination and with the right approach, we, together, can reduce or eliminate the causes, the conditions, that bring us these difficulties, this suffering. And we can begin with this PWP chapter.

-----  
**TOP TEN FALLACIES ABOUT CHILDREN**

1. If the "rod" is spared, the child will be "spoiled".
2. Children need to be taught lessons to prepare them for life.
3. Punishment is administered for the child's own good.
4. Children learn discipline by being punished.
5. The only way children learn is by being taught.
6. They'll never learn unless reinforced by rewards, and threatened with penalties.
7. Too much attention and affection spoils them.

8. Children naturally resist learning what they need to know to get along well in life.
9. They'll be grateful later on for being "disciplined" now.
10. Children are naturally uncivilized and undisciplined, with an innate need to revolt and destroy.

The arrival of a new millennium offers us an opportunity for a new start, a new mental paradigm. Unusual times call for unusual, different measures. As we are hurling down a mountain on a runaway train, it is crucial that we jump off on the side that resolves the problems, not make them worse. It is clearly imperative that we employ gentler, saner approaches to child rearing. The times require it, and the ways are already known for putting them into effect. We need only discover them for ourselves, and put them to use.

#### We Agree On Goals and Values

We believe in traditional family values: honesty, responsibility, kindness, respect, courage, freedom, patience, self-reliance.

We believe in self-discipline - for parents and children alike. We believe that the Ten Commandments should be our premier guide, and that the Golden Rule of Childrearing belongs on the refrigerator doors of all parents - and teachers, too: "Do unto children as you would have children do unto you."

We believe that brute force is uncivilized, that might does not make right, that peaceful restraint, not superior power, is the way to happy relationships. We value children, see them as blessings, gifts beyond price.

Whatever our religion, we believe that Jesus taught us to be loving, patient and compassionate, and to leave punishment up to God. We believe in freedom, and the right of all, including children, to pursue happiness.

Childrearing can be an emotional subject. In the military there was an unwritten rule: to avoid trouble, don't talk about religion, politics, or mother. But here, as in any serious discussion of children's upbringing, we cannot avoid reference to any of the three. So we have to be grown-ups and work together, remembering that our basic values and goals are identical.

I will provide here the results of research, that convinced me that punishment - all forms of punishment - does such deep and lasting harm that no child should ever have to suffer it. And no taxpayer population should ever have to bear the burden of the billions of dollars in costs to repair the resulting damage to humans and to society.

When Violence Is a Traditional Value Methods of childrearing have changed little in the past 500 years. The fundamentalists among the Judeo-Christians and Muslims insist that the views and treatment of children practiced centuries ago

are still right and good today, denying the massive information and understanding acquired about children, even in our lifetime.

"Conservative" Christians are notorious for their attempts to justify child-bashing as the will of God, and claim it is even approved of by the gentle and loving Jesus. Yet no one, "Christian" or not, can imagine Jesus spanking a child, or shaming, or humiliating in any way, or even assigning a "time-out". We cannot reduce crime, violence and suffering by continuing to smack and smite children. Expecting to reduce violence and incivility by treating children in violent and uncivil ways is insane as well as brutal. It comes down to - (or up to) - this: "Treat children exactly as you want the children to treat you." I don't claim this as an original thought, this rule for achieving peace and happiness. I just know that this, alone, works.

-----

## **WHAT PUNISHMENT DOES TO A CHILD**

1. It teaches that violence & intimidation is the way to power, control, respect & maturity
2. It produces feelings of resentment & rage; it turns children into bullies
3. It makes the child feel guilty & unworthy; undermines self-esteem
4. It prevents the child from maturing, & accepting responsibility
5. It kills spontaneity, humor, good will, & the joy of childhood
6. It diminishes the ability & capacity to love
7. It psychologically binds the child to the punisher in a guilt bond, destroying independence & breaking spirit
8. It undermines courage & confidence, causes timidity & cowardice
9. It induces fear & anxiety, usually life-long
10. It deprives the child of the experience of freedom, & the right to a happy childhood.

## **TRUE NARRATIVE**

### **The Day We Fenced the Yard**

Henry and Russell were ages 3 1/2 and 2 respectively when we moved into the farm-house. We had come to my new teaching job at a college in rural Upstate New York, and the boys were excited about getting out into the countryside to live.

The old farmhouse, big and rambling with ceilings ten feet high and oak trim around every inside door, was set back - for ease of snow removal -only a few feet from the macadam county road. Milk trucks and farmers in their pickup trucks sped by; it was clear the first day that the boys couldn't play alone in the



grassy front yard. But that was precisely what they wanted to do, every waking moment. We called a family meeting.

What are we going to do about this problem? To little Russell the solution was simple: "Mommy can watch us." But Mommy had lots of work to do inside, every day, even after unpacking and settling in the new home. Would they settle for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon?

No way. Henry was firm: They wanted to go outside whenever they wanted to, for as long as they wanted to. As parents, we could have invoked the Health and Safety Rule, but - we had previously agreed - that it could be enacted only when no safe alternative could be found.

Suggestions were made: Can we play out back? Too much tractor traffic between house and barns, besides they could be neither seen nor heard from the kitchen. "Let's build a fence!" said Henry.

"We're short of money now," Daddy objected.

"We can build a cheap fence!" Henry was persistent, a gifted negotiator. "And old Rex can play there too!" That would be a good solution, all agreed. But where can we find a cheap fence? The meeting ended with an ad hoc committee: Henry, Russell and Daddy would research the market for inexpensive fencing.

None appeared in newspaper ads or yard sale postings. Then a Sears flyer showed a special on wire fencing. How much do we need? We measured the perimeter of the front yard. After agreeing that no more than 4 foot height was needed, we calculated the cost. "We'll need fence posts, and they're high priced," Daddy objected.

But a search of the back yard uncovered a pile of steel posts by the barn. "Sure, take what you want," said the farmer, and we dragged them out, finding spiders and snakes and rodents, all exciting.

What about a gate? "Who needs a gate?" said Mommy. "Our front door is the gate. We use the side door to come and go anyway." Good point. No gate, free posts, free labor, no problem. Off we went to town. The next morning we went to work putting up the fence that would make constant super-vision unnecessary.

We had a wonderful time, the three of us, measuring the placement of posts, driving them in, unrolling the wire, fastening it to the posts. At lunchtime we could talk of nothing but the work we had done together.

A couple years later the boys announced that they didn't need the fence anymore. Family council considered, and agreed. But even now, over 30 years later, we remember The Day We Fenced the Yard.

---

*Parenting Without Punishing*

Chapter 2

---

Chapter # 2: Letter to an Expectant Father [Summer, 1986] Dear Patrick :  
Your excitement in anticipation of the birth of your first child - I heard it in your voice yesterday as we talked on the phone - took me right back 22 years when I, too, was about to become a father. So I admonished you, as I do all new parents, "Don't ever punish that child!"

When I said that our two sons had been brought up successfully without punishment of any kind, you asked me to write about it for your magazine [John Holt's "Growing Without Schooling"]

Just As I was thinking, as you are now, what kind of parent I was going to be, and agonizing over the "duty" of "correcting behavior", something happened that changed my life: a copy of A. S. Neill's incredible book, SUMMERHILL - A Radical Approach to Childrearing, fell into my hands. Neill taught me how extraordinary the possibilities when we really respect children, and place our trust in them and the democratic process.

As a victim of severe child abuse at the hands of a brutal "guardian" in a freelance "foster home" (this was in the back hills of Vermont in the 30s), I could see, at first, few alternatives to "a good slap" or "a sound thrashing", when "needed". I had known no other. Abandoned by my mother at age four and by my father at age seven, I was "farmed out" to work for my keep.

For five years I labored, serving as a front for a criminal abortion racket. I was beaten regularly and severely with a hardwood stick - for the "sin" of being a child. My indoctrination in the hellfire and brimstone of Christian fundamentalism forced the belief that, having been born in sin, I deserved the frequent beatings, the shaming and humiliation. Endure it without complaint, and my reward will be in heaven. Expect no happiness in this life.

In college courses I discovered there were other ways of controlling a child's behavior. Yet, as a philosophy student, I was rankled by the question: Control for what purpose? And for whose? Later, as a public school teacher, I never used punishment, never sent a pupil to the principal, and yet had no problem with

discipline. Nonetheless, as I approached fatherhood I assumed I would have to spank, determined as I was to be a "good father". (Such is the strength of the roles society assigns us.) But I couldn't accept that. Is there no better way of treating children? I asked.

So I researched the psychology literature, and could find not one alternative to the behaviorists' reward and punishment, carrot-and-stick, conditioning. Any suggested alternatives to assault amounted to subterfuge, trickery, or outright lies. All seemed manipulative, exploiting advantages any adult has over the innocent and trusting. To me, those were all unethical, disrespectful, demeaning, and certainly harmful. If we can't make ourselves worthy of the child's trust, I asked, then who are we? If a child's faith in our word and our protection is not sacred, what is?

Then I learned that almost all Americans, to some degree, have a deep emotional investment in dominating and exploiting children to meet their own emotional needs. And the reason they do, though not consciously, is to suppress the horrible memory of their own victimization as children.

My own gulag-type experience, I saw, was no different in kind from 95% of all other children - only in degree. Nearly all children are either attacked with sticks, switches, paddles, and other weapons, as I was, or they were slapped, spanked, shaken, pinched punched, and kicked. All were yelled at and suffered humiliation and indignities and told it was not only good for them, it was by Biblical command.

Some children today endure "only" face slaps, spankings, "go to your rooms" and the now-popular "time-outs". Others, like me, barely escape with their lives. The list of those who don't survive it grows with every edition of the news. Despite the headlines, our ghastly tradition of physical and emotional violence against children continues.

-----

Little children love the world. That is why  
they are so good at learning about it.  
For it is love, not tricks and techniques of thought,  
that lies at the heart of all true learning.  
Can we bring ourselves to let children  
learn and grow through that love?  
- **John Holt**

-----

A few years later, my college students, future teachers and parents, vehemently defended their "right", their DUTY, to force children, "in any way necessary", to submit to authority. Otherwise, they feared, the inmates would take over the home, the classroom, and/or the asylum. My sons, they argued, must be

exceptional, or over-conditioned "robots". Or that I had exceptional patience, (a charge which invariably provoked laughter). Nothing would convince them that punishment was not necessary - until I brought my pre-school boys and their mother into the classroom. Henry and Russell, by their naturalness and authenticity, brought all argument to an end. Just by being genuine, they charmed their pants off. To go back: I began with vowing NEVER to use physical punishment. And for good reason: I could not risk releasing on children the rage within me, internalized by my earlier beatings. Then I became intrigued by the philosophical question: How can ANY punishment of children be justified - ethically or otherwise? I searched the literature for months - and could find no valid justification. The pro-punishment argument came down to this: The child must submit to our will, because children are born bad, and we must shape them to suit us and society. That, clearly, would not stand as valid on any grounds. When the babies came I realized I knew nothing. So I looked to them to teach me who they were, how they learn, and how they should be treated. Then my real education concerning childrearing began, for my sons taught me the most important things I know. My FIRST surprise came in discovering how EASY it is to raise children if they are not "taught lessons". I had imagined I would have to develop patience - of which I had not an ounce. To my astonishment, it didn't require any. The alternatives to punishment now seem obvious to me, and so much fun! The SECOND surprise was how well behaved, how spontaneous and enjoyable and lovable children can be when not living under the threat of violence or humiliation or "correction". And how they naturally search out what they need to learn - without lessons, without teaching or preaching or any sort of coercion. No "preparing for life," no "bending the twig," no shaping and forming. No authoritarian control. The THIRD big surprise was how HAPPY our family was in contrast to the suppression, the competitiveness, and the underlying resentment so evident in other homes, those heavy vibes that kill spontaneity and warmth. On witnessing the callousness and incivility dealt children in stores, homes and the street, my sons would whisper in shock and horror, "Daddy, why is that lady hitting that boy?" The FOURTH surprise to me was how quickly and eagerly they assumed the responsibility for their own behavior, how mature they were compared to others their ages. This quality is what impressed my students most. And the FIFTH and biggest surprise was how a simple change in my view and thinking - that is, dismissing as an option all punishment - brought about a positive and remarkable change in me as a person. Unburdened of father-authority-punisher self-concept, I was rapidly becoming a more understanding, a more compassionate, a more loving person. My colleagues and friends began commenting on it; I was a lot more enjoyable to be around, they said, - what happened? I felt better about myself, more self-accepting and approving, therefore I developed more tolerance, more compassion. I had more self-respect, confident now that I was not the kind of person who would exploit or harm any child. And I was greatly unburdened of the internal conflict between loving my children on the one hand, and inflicting pain in the name of "parental duty" on the other. I am now convinced that letting go of the punitive mentality can rapidly make any person happier, more self-accepting, and more understanding, even if

they have no children of their own. Comes the inevitable question: So what did you DO instead of punishing, instead of spanking, say, for "disobeying" by running into the road? (Why is this always the example? It is the universal justification for walloping children - "for their own good".) Their mother and I recognized that punishing does not teach safety, it teaches fear. And all punishment forces the burden - sometimes life or death - squarely on the child, conveniently allowing the parent to avoid responsibility for the safety of the child. (I TOLD him not to run into the road!")

The boys and I decided to install an inexpensive three-foot high wire fence (see PWP issue No. 1) around the front yard where they could play in safety, in view and within earshot of the kitchen. During the times we walked near traffic, we held their hands, with no fear-talk about getting run over, killed, so forth.

Instead of the bedtime tantrums we saw in other homes, we developed an evening routine of clean-up, sitting on laps and story reading plus music listening. In our weekly family meetings, bedtime was negotiated, arrived at by consensus. With shared authority, there was no problem. The clock, not the parents, announced time for bed. No tears, no hassle.

In family meetings, everything was fair game for questioning, for discussion and negotiation - with one exception: Health and Safety. Here we, as parents, reserved dictatorial control. The message was clear and firm: "We are responsible for your growing up safely and in good health. It is our job to protect you, even from yourself if necessary, and we intend to do a good job of it. But unless we can justify a given instance as a matter of either health or safety, no one has a right to interfere with your chosen activities."

-----  
European Countries That Forbid Any Form of Physical Punishment of Children:  
Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Cyprus, Croatia, Latvia, Germany,  
Italy  
-----

The boys readily accepted that - indeed they were delighted with limits that made sense, combined with a general freedom to follow their interests. We sometimes explained dangers, but without instilling fear. We rarely announced rules to obey. What few rules there were came out of family meeting decisions. The boys were then able to enjoy their childhood, with its serious business of play, and know the security of parental care.

The alternative to punishment is not neglect, as so many parents assume - and even seem to wish. It is not "permissiveness", the claim of those who know only the extremes of punishment and neglect. The alternative to punishment is accepting the RESPONSIBILITY of providing a growing-up environment free from fear, free from hazards, and free from domination, and not forcing it on the children with punishment.

Don't forget to send me a birth announcement. If you ever think it "necessary" to inflict punishment in any form on your child, give me a call first. - Norm

UP-DATE: Henry and Russell, now ages 35 and 36, live happy and fulfilling lives with their respective successful careers and families. Both earned college degrees, neither went to jail despite all the dire warnings from friends, colleagues and students that they would tear out the drapes, dump paint in my typewriter, and set fire to the cat.

P.S.: Henry and his wife have made me a grandfather. To all of us, the idea of punishing little Charlotte is unthinkable.

### Why We Can't Wait

I AM PUBLISHING THESE CHAPTERS BECAUSE we need to get serious about making changes in how children are viewed and treated. We cannot wait yet another generation to reduce the hatred and violence in our fast-deteriorating society, and because the price of punishment is too high in human suffering.

For most of my life there was at least the excuse that we didn't know any better. But serious large-scale research on the long-term effects of punishment began in the 1940s, and during the past 25 years overwhelming evidence has been amassed showing the counter-productive nature of punishment. The cost in human suffering is beyond calculation, the cost to taxpayers amounts to billions of dollars annually in medical care and therapy responses to spouse-bashing, mental illness, large-scale clinical depression, plus a justice system to deal with nearly every adolescent criminal offense from date-rape to murder. America's War On Children has gone on far too long.

-----  
**PUNISHMENT DIMINISHES OR DESTROYS:**

1. the child's love for you
  2. self-esteem, self-respect, self-acceptance - the child's, and yours
  3. the child's respect for you
  4. the child's capacity to live a healthy life with minimum stress and internal conflicts
  5. the ability to accept responsibility
  6. the capacity to love another person, or themselves
  7. the right to a happy, loving, home, safe from fear
  8. the child's creative drive, learning - , and later, earning - power
  9. the chances of growing up to be non-violent parents and spouses
  - 10 their parents' chances of evolving into happy, stress-free human beings
- 

NETWORK NEWS & NOTICES Websites worth visiting: [www.nospank.net](http://www.nospank.net) is Jordan Riak's organization, PTAVE (Parents And Teachers Against Violence in

Education). His booklet, "Plain Talk About Spanking" has been read by thousands nation-wide. His non-profit and the one below are vital supporters in our local effort during April.

The Annual Spank-Out Day - April 30 - is sponsored by EPOCH-USA's Center For Effective Discipline ([www.stophitting.org](http://www.stophitting.org)).

---

### **Continuing Narrative: The Strange Case of the Children Who Were Not Punished**

Crayons on the walls.

The lovely old farmhouse we lived in had beautiful oak frames around each door. Henry and Russell had just begun drawing on them when I happened by. "Orange door frames?" I asked. "That won't do."

But how can we draw on the walls with our crayons? Henry wanted to know.

"Well let's figure out how that can be possible," I said. The discussion ranged from coloring books, to large sheets of newspaper on the dining room table, to maybe bidding on an easel at an auction, if there was an auction with one and no one else bid on it. But the discussion always returned to the desire to draw "standing up" and drawing large-scale. Admittedly the wall was perfect for that. "How about if the wall has the paper on it?" someone - I think it was I - said.

"We don't have paper big enough", came the objection.

"Then where can we find big-enough paper?"

Further talk brought us to newspapers again, but it was already "drawn on" - with ink. What about newsprint, newspapers before it was covered with ink? Where can we find some? The newspaper printing plant! A quick search in the phone book, and fast phone call gave us the information we needed: Yes, they had "end rolls" of newsprint they'd give us cheap. A trip to the plant and \$3 got us all the paper we'd ever need.

We began on one corner of the dining room, exactly the place they had begun drawing on the woodwork, and proceeded, masking-taping our way, all around the room, skipping the doorways, of course. Then the entire family joined the "crayon party". After a week or so we tired of looking at it, tore it down, put up fresh paper, and did it again. What a great time we had!

That went on for several days. When it was over, it was over. They never again wrote or drew on the walls, or even mentioned the idea.

---

### **The Harm That Good People Do**

We each of us have complex reasons for doing what we do, but no reader of these chapters intends deliberately to do harm to children. On the contrary, we are all intent on doing what's right for the children. It is one of the chief purposes in life for all sane and decent people. When we fail, we feel terrible about it.

But the sad truth is, we are all supporting members of a society that treats children with the casual cruelty given the slaves of 200 years ago. For the overwhelming majority of us (well above 80%) it is not only acceptable to spank, slap, and shake children, and even whack them with paddles, whips and belts, but most of us rationalize this abusive treatment as our duty as parents, duty to society, and duty to God.

Let us state it clearly: hitting another person is abuse. Hitting a child is child abuse, and as such, it is a contemptible, cowardly act. Decent people don't hit children. Period. End of story

Long ago, laws were passed to protect citizens from assault, soldiers from beatings, sailors from flogging, war prisoners from torture, and the elderly, sick and insane from all forms of hitting. It is shocking to find that, in year 2000, there still remains the only instances where bodily assault is legal are in self-defense, and child "discipline".

In a letter to the Seattle Times, a reader put it this way: "If you strike an adult, it's called assault; if you strike an animal it's called cruelty; if you strike a child, it's called discipline."

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, a time we need to be mindful that all physical punishment of children is, by definition, abuse. The movement to abolish corporal punishment in schools and homes is a phenomenon whose time has come. In recent years every country in Europe has passed child protection legislation by denouncing and banning all forms of corporal punishment. We are now working toward similar action in the governments of Great Britain, Germany, and certain countries outside Europe, like Canada and the United States.

---

What is physical abuse? It includes slapping, shaking, pushing, beating, kicking, hitting with an object, throwing objects at the victim...

- Arizona Governor's Office for Domestic Violence Prevention, & Arizona Community Foundation



-----  
In the U.S.A., 27 states have banned CP in public schools. Yet the majority of Americans still ask, "What harm does 'a good slap' or 'a well-deserved paddling' do? It didn't hurt me, did it?" One answer to that is, It has made our country the most violent in the "civilized" world, and it has made you the kind of person who would physically assault a child. Think about that for a while.

In this world of victims and punishers, it is the choice of decent, moral and compassionate people not to be on the side of the punishers.

### **HOW BAD IS IT?**

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that 2,500 children are beaten EVERY DAY in the U.S. public schools. Of the above, African-American children, (who make up 17% of the U.S. pupil population,) received 39% of the CP. The worst states are Mississippi, Arkansas, and Alabama. These and Arizona are among the 23 backward states that still permit hitting children in public schools.

### **WHAT RESEARCH TEACHES US - SOME SAMPLES:**

One key ingredient, but rarely acknowledged, is at the very roots of the violence in our society: spanking and other forms of hitting children.

1. In 1940, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck began the study of delinquent and non-delinquent boys. They discovered that spanking in early childhood influences children to develop antisocial, aggressive, violent behaviors. They found that the earlier and the more severe the punishment, the worse the aggression later on. The first signs predicting adolescent delinquent behavior often appeared as early as age three, long before the babies ever heard of gangs and drugs.

The Gluecks also discovered that the least anti-social behavior is always associated with children who are raised from infancy in attentive, emotionally supporting, non-violent and non-spanking families.

LESSON: the single most important factor in raising a crime-free child is a non-violent home.

2. Dr. H. MacMillan and his six researchers surveyed 4,888 adults in Ontario, Canada, and found that "those who were spanked or slapped had increased rates of anxiety disorders, anti-social behavior, and depression." 28% developed anxiety or major depression, 13% had alcohol problems, and 17% were into drug abuse or suffered [clinical] anxiety disorder.

3. The Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, August '98 issue, reports that spanking is linked to aggression, and makes children behave even worse than they did before the punishment.

4. Maurer & Wallerstein, '87: "Flogging in the Navy for drunken or disorderly conduct was abolished in 1853 ... Military instructors now may not touch the person or the clothing of a recruit ... Slavery and involuntary servitude was maintained with whips, but that disappeared with the Lincoln Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

"Spousal abuse used to be called, 'reasonable chastisement', presumed necessary to maintain the sanctity and stability of the family. All states now have laws against such assaults...

"Today, physical punishment is considered too severe for felons, murderers, criminals of all kinds and ages, including juvenile delinquents; too demeaning for soldiers, sailors, servants and spouses. But it remains legal and acceptable for children who are innocent of any crime."

-----  
"I am positively and actively and outspokenly in favor of [banning corporal punishment].... I thought we human beings were trying to get rid of these afflictions. In some countries they have. Why not in ours?"

- Karl Menninger  
-----

5. Dr. Murray Straus, with a team of researchers in his Family Research Lab in the University of New Hampshire, found that:

a. ordinary spanking is one of the chief predictors of wife beating;

b. CP is related to an increased probability that the child will exhibit sibling attacks, juvenile delinquency, depression, impaired learning, distorted sexual behavior, occupational failure, and lower income throughout life.

c. CP predisposes our society in use of aggressive and punitive methods in dealing with social problems, including long prison sentences, capital punishment, and militarism.

6. Sears, Maccoby & Levin ('57) found that 99% of 5-year-olds had been hit; in a Los Angeles study of infants age 1-6 months, as high as one-fourth were currently being spanked. Of those 6 to 12 months, nearly half were currently being spanked.

Dr Straus' researchers later found that small children were being hit, on average, more than 150 times during the course of twelve months. At least 2.3% mothers of toddlers hit them three or more times a week.

In another famous study, the Straus team showed that spanking and "normal" hitting stunted the intellectual development of the 900 children examined.

7. The Gluecks, after their 1940 studies, returned in 1950: "The most marked difference between the disciplinary practices of the parents of the delinquents and those of the non-delinquents is found in the considerably greater extent to

which the former resorted to physical punishment, and the lesser extent to which they reasoned with the boys about their misconduct." .

-----  
"Battered children will batter others, punished children will act punitively, children lied to become liars themselves, protected children learn to be protective, respected children learn to respect others weaker than themselves. "In the short term, corporal punishment may produce obedience. But it is a fact documented by research that in the long term the results are: inability to learn, violence and rage, bullying and cruelty, inability to feel another's pain, especially that of one's own children.... unless there are enlightened, or at least helping, witnesses on hand to prevent that development."

- Alice Miller, Ph.D., author of FOR YOUR OWN GOOD - Hidden Cruelty in Childrearing And the Roots of Violence.

-----  
8. Dr. Bruce Perry, chief of psychiatry, Texas Children's Hospital, At the 11th Annual Child Abuse Prevention Conference in Mesa, Arizona said [he found that] children' brains are forever changed by neglect, abuse, and even by witnessing violence. That can lead to drug abuse, school failure, and sleep disorders, among other serious problems.

9. The American Academy of Pediatrics, following a thorough study of research on corporal punishment and its effects on children, distributed these guidelines for its member pediatricians:

- (a) Raising children works best in an atmosphere of love, affection, and warmth.
- (b) Desirable and appropriate behaviors should be encouraged with attention and support.
- (c) Undesirable and inappropriate behaviors should be discouraged by ignoring, and through negative consequences such as reprimands, time-out, and removing privileges.
- (d) Corporal punishment should never be used ... spanking leads to greater behavior problems and more aggressive behavior.

### **FURTHER RESEARCH RESULTS**

The National Center for the Study of Corporal Punishment at Temple University: A large research project asked grown-ups why they believed as they did about paddling, pro or con. Nearly all supposed they had taken their beliefs through logic. Actually, the research found the deciding factor was their childhood treatment. "Those who had been spanked, paddled, switched, whipped, etc. tended overwhelmingly to believe in [paddling]. Those who had not been hit, and had attended non-hitting schools, did not believe hitting did any good, or were shocked and dismayed by the very idea."

Dr. Murray Straus' landmark book, BEATING THE DEVIL OUT OF THEM - Corporal Punishment in American Families (1994): In Part II he provides the data supporting the theses that physical punishment is causally connected with:

1. depression and suicide in later life (Ch. 5)
2. physical abuse of children (Ch. 6)
3. delinquency and aggression in adolescence (Ch 7)
4. wife beating and criminal activity as adult (Ch. 7)
5. violent sexual practices (Ch. 8)
6. alienation, maladjustment (Ch. 9)
7. lower job success and earnings (Ch. 9)

Dr. Ralph Welsh, after examining over 2,000 teenage delinquents, reported, "The recidivist male delinquent who has never been exposed to the belt, extension cord or fist ... is virtually non-existent. As the severity of corporal punishment ... increases, so does the probability that he will engage in a violent act."

### **THOSE WHO KNOW THE MOST ARE THE MOST EMPHATIC:**

Ashley Montagu, Anthropologist:

"Any form of corporal punishment or 'spanking' is a violent attack upon another human being's integrity. The effect remains with the victim forever and becomes an unforgiving part of his or her personality - a massive frustration resulting in hostility which will seek expression in later life in violent acts toward others."

B. F. Skinner, behavioral psychologist:

"I believe that there is no longer any use for corporal punishment in schools and much to be gained by suppressing it."

Plutarch, circa 46-120 A. D.:

"Children ought to be led to honorable practices by means of encouragement and reasoning, and most certainly not by blows and ill treatment."

Sid Leonard, retired principal, Toledo, Ohio:

"The same ones kept coming back for more. It wasn't working. Hitting children did not seem to improve their behavior. It seemed in fact to be reinforcing the very behaviors I was attempting to eliminate."

Daniel F. Whiteside, M.D., Assist. Surgeon General, Dept. of Health & Human Services (Reagan admin):

"Corporal punishment of children actually interferes with the process of learning and with their optimal development as socially responsible adults."

Gordon Moyes, D.D., Pastor, Uniting Church, Supt. of Wesley Central Mission, Sydney, Australia:

"I have always been an advocate for the total abolition of corporal punishment, and I believe the connection with pornography that is no oriented has its roots in our tradition of beating children."

American Medical Association, House of Delegates, 1985:

"Infliction of pain or discomfort, however minor, is not a desirable method of communicating with children." The Christian Science Monitor, 3/21/89:

"The fundamental need in American education is to find ways of engaging today's children in the thrill of learning. Fear of pain has no place in that process."

Rev. Thomas E. Sagendorf, United Methodist Church, Bexley, Ohio:

"The much-touted 'religious argument' to support corporal punishment is built upon a few isolated quotes from the Book of Proverbs. Using the same kind of selective reading, one could just as easily cite the Bible as an authority for the practice of slavery, the rigid suppression of women, polygamy, incest and infanticide.

"It seems to me that the brutal and vindictive practice of corporal punishment cannot be reconciled with the major themes of the New Testament which teach love and forgiveness and a respect for the beauty and dignity of children, and which overwhelmingly reject violence and retribution as a means of solving human conflicts."

#### TOP TEN BENEFITS LIKELY TO RESULT FROM BANNING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

[from Straus, Beating the Devil Out Of Them, Ch. 11]

1. Better behaved children,
2. Less stress for parents and children, fewer problems, therefore easier job of parenting,
3. less juvenile delinquency
4. When grown, children will not likely abuse their spouses and children; fewer violent marriages
5. Family members will be happier with each other, closer bonding between parents and children
6. Less alienation, depression, and suicidal tendencies among citizens
7. Lower crime rates, fewer violent crimes,
8. Less public moneys expended to control and treat crime and mental illness.
9. More caring and humane citizenry, improved general health
10. Increased economic production, and increased wealth.

-----  
"Some people find the memory of [being physically punished] so unpleasant they pretend that they were trivial, even funny. You'll notice that they smile when they describe what was done to them. It is shame, not pleasure, that makes them

smile. As a protection against present pain, they disguise the memory of past feelings. In an attempt to deny or minimize the dangers of spanking, many spankers have been heard to argue, 'Spanking is very different from child abuse,' or 'A little smack on the bottom never did anybody any harm.' But they are wrong ...

[Most] victims of food poisoning recover with no apparent, lasting ill effects. But who needs it? The mere fact that the person is likely to survive is hardly proof that the experience is beneficial."

Jordan Riak, director, PTAVE (Parents & Teachers Against Violence in Education ([www.nospank.net](http://www.nospank.net)))

-----  
CONTINUING REAL-LIFE NARRATIVE:

## FURTHER ADVENTURES IN GROWING WITHOUT PUNISHMENT

### Russell Chairs the Family Council

With a brother nearly two years his senior, Russell had a view from the bottom of a very tall totem pole. He was not the first to play with other children, the first to catch a fish, the first to work with Daddy with real tools. While it was not the most admirable position to be in, there was one aspect of life where he had equal standing: as a rightfully participating member of the family. This was most clearly shown at the weekly family meetings. Here would be brought up for discussion and resolution the week's accumulated grievances of each member.

It happened that it was Russell's turn to act as chairman on one particular day that I meant to voice some objection or other, now long forgotten. Russell was four years old; his brother, Henry, was six.

On the previous Tuesday the boys had been doing something I didn't like, and as was our practice, instead of interfering I jotted down notes about it for Sunday's meeting. I had settled in my kitchen chair pulled the notes from my back pocket and was noisily opening the crumpled paper, when - BANG! BANG! BANG! the pounding gavel snapped me to attention.

Russell was standing at the tiny chairman's table, gavel in hand, looking at me pointedly. "The meeting will not begin," he intoned in a loud, dignified voice, (but with a slight lisp), "until Daddy thtops ruthelling hith paperth!"

I made not another sound, but paid respectful attention. "Now Mommy, you may thpeak"....Then, "Henry, your turn...." Each commented on their observations, after which, in deliberate slowness, Russell turned my way in the exquisitely imperial manner befitting his office: "Daddy, there ith thompting you wish to thay?"

I stood, thanked the speaker, and, having been duly disciplined, respectfully expressed my grievance.

Can you imagine what that experience can do for a child needing confidence and self-esteem, living under the shadow of a talented, skillful and strong-headed brother who could do "anything"?

## LETTERS

You have written very persuasively why we need to stop saying, "Don't hit children too hard" and say instead, "Don't hit children ... at all." - Nadine Block, chairwoman Center for Effective Discipline/EPOCH-USA (End Physical Punishment of Children) Columbus, Ohio [[www.stophitting.com](http://www.stophitting.com)]

Just read your paper today. Was very good. I believe the key for us all is to rid ourselves of our punitive tendencies. Had we all been able to do that, we would not see children at risk. - Jenene Maybury, CASA, Graham Co, AZ

I really appreciate all the trouble you've taken to learn the Internet, and the in's and out's of e-mail. You must have worked hard ....What does your organization say about the Bible's admonition that to "spare the rod, spoils the child" and "he that loves his child, chastens him" (Proverbs 13:24)? - Laura Meidinger

\*\*\* We go with the gentle teachings of Jesus, over the harsh, authoritarian advice of Solomon, who evidently was passing on the abuse - (considered enlightened at the time)) - that he himself experienced as a child. Jesus' message was to humanize and replace with compassion the brutal practices of 2,000 years ago. That's the short answer to your question. (Also see above quotes from clergy.) Later on we expect to take up biblical discussion in more depth. - N.L.

Thank you very much for your newsletter, with the wonderful letter [from] a father. I love his sentence: It is so much easier without hitting! Of course it is because you have not to deal with a wounded person that can no longer trust you, that is in defense and fear and expecting the next humiliation. Why is it so difficult to understand the most obvious things?... Maybe we should publish [more] letters like that, personal reports of people who once were beaten and managed however to see through this lie ... people who first hit, and then learned to change ... My best wishes, Alice Miller, [author of FOR YOUR OWN GOOD - Hidden Cruelty in Childrearing and the Roots of Violence], Geneva, Switzerland

Great newsletter. ... what about youths that are in gangs, many whose parents have abandoned them .... It's a tough area that I know little about, but they need help and their parents need advice. - I. Neal, Beaumont, TX

\*\*\* After working with troubled and troublesome youth, I found that the work must be done at the infant/toddler/level. That's when the damage is done that we see exhibited in their adolescence. The Gleucks' studies of delinquency show that the parents emotionally abandoned them at the 0-6 age; it is not until adolescence that they are able to escape to seek a "family" among peers. - N.L.

---



**What does "home" mean?  
A Refuge From Danger, a Place Free From Fear**

Children's World Learning Centers, in a recent survey, showed that our number one concern as parents is to keep the children safe. That purpose, indeed, is what homes are fundamentally meant for--not only to keep children safe, but to be sure children feel safe. No one needs reminding that this is a dangerous world. It is a scary world, even for grownups. So it surely can be a terrible and terrifying world to a child. Home may well be the only place in the world--and childhood the only time in life--where a person can feel free of the threat of attack.

Providing these essential rights of safety and security is a sacred trust, betrayal of which can result in the child carrying physical and emotional scars throughout all of life. In his book, *Going Home*, Thich Nhat Hanh says, "There are so many young people who are homeless. They may have a house to live in, but they are homeless in their hearts."

When the time comes that they venture into the world as adults, there may be little we can do for them. But while they are here as children, we can do the two most important things of all:

- (1) provide a home free of hazards, child-proofed and accident-free, and
- (2) refrain from instilling fear of being hit, shamed, or humiliated.

The very meaning of home implies protection, a special place for safe nurturing, growing and learning. It is tragic if the child is accidentally harmed. It can be even more disastrous to the child if deliberately hurt by the very people he or she must depend upon for protection. Yet, this is the case in over 90% of American homes--pain (as in spanking) is intentionally inflicted by well-meaning parents determined to "teach lessons."

There is a natural, instinctive contract, the essential civilizing understanding between parent and child, "written" at birth in the unconscious, tribal memory, that parents will protect the child from harm and fright. That contract, that trust, is broken the moment the child is spanked, or otherwise hit, yelled at, or threatened. Home is for protection from attack and fear; if it is not, the child is denied a basic, sacred right, and the parent has failed.

The social contract disintegrates when the security of love and approval and affection is made conditional on pleasing and obeying the parent. When the social contract between parents and children disintegrate, the contract between parent and society breaks down. To see that, we need only read today's paper.

With very little effort, and a little understanding, the risk of harm to children can be greatly reduced. In these chapters we will show how to lessen the likelihood of children being hurt by accident, and how they can be spared the hurts inflicted on them with willful intent by those entrusted to them

??Slapping Hands, Other Punishments, Make Children Responsible for Their Own Safety The National Safety Council reports that accidents are a leading cause of children's deaths. Every year over two million children in the US are killed or injured by accidents in the home. Nearly all accidents could, given a bit of time and thought, be prevented. Too often parents assume their responsibility ends with simply issue orders: "Don't go into that room," "Don't ever touch these sharp knives." "Don't ever play with matches." "Don't run with scissors." Such admonitions place the burden on the child, conveniently allowing the parents to dodge their own responsibility. This is the most common set-up for the tragedies that are bound to occur with irresponsible, authoritative parents.

#### CHILDPROOFING YOUR HOME

Young parents have been heard to declare, "We're not going to change our lifestyle, make over the whole house, just because we have a baby." Yet this is precisely what is required unless the baby is to run a high risk of being injured or killed. Parents with that infantile attitude are not yet mature enough for parenthood.

The good news is that the physical changes to the home need only be temporary. As the child grows, new hazards, new precautions arise, as well as other new challenges. (Some say that the constant changes are what make childrearing fascinating--as well as tolerable.) So the role of parent REQUIRES a change in attitudes consistent with the change in responsibilities.

Conscientious, informed and loving parents decide and accept, before the arrival of a new baby, that the childless lifestyle is past, and the house must be literally redesigned and reorganized to accommodate the baby. They understand that without this radical-sounding measure, they are placing the baby, the crawler, the toddler, the pre-schooler, in danger of being accidentally hurt or killed. Anything less is immature and irresponsible parenting.

What is imperative is to examine thoroughly, on hands and knees, every area of the house. (This is exactly what THEY will soon be doing!) For example, the glass figurines on the coffee table can be placed out of sight--or at least out of reach--for a few months. The coffee table itself, with its sharp corners, can be

placed in storage, or the corners and edges padded. Mature, responsible parents keep doors to forbidden rooms locked; they keep sharp objects, matches, lighters, poisons, etc., out of reach of little hands. We're talking about mere inconvenience and appearances here. For parents, it's time for a value check: Is prevention of life-threatening injuries of highest priority? What is more important?

## **Hazards To Eliminate: A Home Safety Checklist**

### **1. Falls**

- \* Carpet or pad under bassinet, changing table?
- \* Secure crib gate?
- \* Gated stairways--top & bottom?
- \* Stairways carpeted?
- \* Window & screen locks?
- \* Ladders inaccessible?
- High chair straps?

### **2. Burns**

- \* Guards or barriers around stoves, floor heaters, air vents, fireplaces?
- \* Water heater below 120°?
- \* Safety knobs on stove, or removed entirely?
- \* Pot handles kept away from stove edge?
- \* Matches, lighters inaccessible?
- \* Smoke alarms installed?
- Fire extinguishers in place?

### **3. Suffocation**

- \* Baby not left on waterbed?
- \* Garment & shopping bags, light plastic kept out of reach?
- \* Balloons kept from baby?
- No pillows, stuffed toys in crib?

### **4. Drowning**

- \* Toilet seat secure, or hook-&-eye lock above child's reach on door?
- \* Swimming pool gated?
- Water/cleaning buckets removed or securely lidded?

### **5. Cuts**

- \* Locks on cupboard doors?
- \* Sharp knives, etc., inaccessible?

- \* Coffee tabletop glass figurines, treasured objects out of sight, out of reach?
- Use paper or plastic cups, never glass?

## **6. Electric Shock**

- \* Outlet caps installed?
- \* Cords concealed as much as possible?
- \* Extensions stapled, connectors out of reach?
- \* Floor, table lamps stabilized?
- \* Cords not available for chewing?
- \* Proper grounding of circuits?
- \* Bulb sockets have bulbs, & tightly secured?
- \* Hair dryers, appliances not left in reach?
- Sinks, tubs & pools free of near-by electrical tools, appliances?

## **7. Choking, Strangling**

- \* Removed all loose buttons, ornaments from upholstery & playthings?
- \* Keep candy, nuts, popcorn, small edible objects out of reach and sight?
- \* Removed coins, beads, small objects that can be swallowed?
- \* Drapes & blinds cords that can strangle out of reach?
- Crib slats narrow enough?

## **8. Bruises, Punctures**

- \* Sharp, pointed objects out of reach?
- \* Eye-level table corners & edges padded?
- \* Colored tape on glass doors?
- \* Electric fans out of reach?
- \* Spring-loaded lid on toy box?
- Towel over door-tops to prevent full closing?

## **9. Poisoning**

- \* Medicines secured, cabinets locked?
- \* Poison control center number by phone?
- \* Ipecac syrup on hand?
- \* Latches on cabinet doors?
- \* Under-sink cleaning solvents, powders put out of reach?
- Plants removed--both inside home and in outside play yard--if unsafe to chew or ingest?

## **10. Gunshots**

- \* Guns unloaded, ammunition in a different, safe place?

- \* Guns have trigger locks?
- Guns in locked cabinet, key inaccessible?

### **11. Other:**

- \* Emergency phone numbers posted by phone?
- \* Babysitters, relatives briefed & trained

More Info: This is but a beginning; it is not a complete list of dangers. In play yard, in autos, on the street and in stores are more situations to prepare for. Complete and expert help can be provided elsewhere. Nothing is more important than finding and heeding it.

FREE CATALOGS for hard-to-find safety products:

- \* Perfectly Safe: 800/837-5437
- \* The First Years: 800/533-6708
- \* National Safe Kids Campaign, 111 Michigan Ave NW, Wash DC 20010, [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)
- \* FREE BOOK: For a free copy of Your Child's Health & Safety, call 303/526-3410, or write: Children's World Learning Centers Attn: Health & Safety Guide, 73 Park Point Drive, Golden, CO 80401
- \* INEXPENSIVE BOOK: THE PERFECTLY SAFE HOME--Practical Advice From a Child Safety Expert, By Jeanne Miller. Paperback \$9.95

### **Continuing Narrative: Growing without Punishment**

We experiment with electrical outlets.

It was in early 60s, before the days when those safety caps for electrical outlets were readily available. Like most parents we had underestimated the children's capacity for curiosity and experimentation, that compelling need to find out everything about the world as fast as possible. "Whatcha doin'?" I asked, happening by the two scientists at work by a baseboard outlet. A short wire stuck out of one side of receptacle, and Henry held another short wire in his hand. "We're seeing what will happen." Can I play? I asked them. "Sure, Daddy."

"I think we'll need leather gloves for this, and insulated pliers," I said, and we got them. "Now--looks like you wanted to put this second wire in the other hole, and then touch the two wires?"

"Yes!" they replied in excitement.

On the slightest touch the sparks flew and the boys gaped, greatly impressed.

"Anyone else want to try it?" They thought not, and drew back their hands. "I'll do it one more time," I said, and held the wires firmly together. Fiercely sparking fireworks, and a sudden blackout.

"Now what?" Nobody knew. So we talked about wires on electric poles, electrical circuits in the walls, what made lamps light, and finally fuse boxes. They listened, fascinated. Then with flashlight in hand we traipsed down the dusty cellar stairs and opened the fuse box door. There we shutoff the main power switch, compared the blackened fuse with a new one, and made the replacement. The boys took note of how respectfully cautious I was in working with the electrical equipment. "I don't want to touch the wrong things, do I?"

"Oh, no!" they quickly agreed. Returning upstairs, the lights were on again, and I returned to my typewriter. There were no more experiments with electrical outlets. Still, they seemed to be free of fear about things electrical. By the time they reached adolescence, they were doing their own electrical repairs, and even house and barn wiring, always respecting the power of electrical currents. If they ever got shocked, I never heard about it.

---

### **Discipline Is Not Punishment Where Is this Much-Taught Discipline?**

A week doesn't go by without a telephone call from some stranger wanting to speak to someone I never heard of. Why so many wrong numbers? Is the simple discipline of finding the correct number and pushing the phone buttons accurately too much for grown people to handle? After their having called the wrong party, they rarely apologize. More often, it is an angry demand, "Who's this?!" They are affronted by my answering the phone instead of the party they wanted.

Obviously the much-touted, constantly-applied "teaching of discipline" in homes and schools is not being learned. The admonitions, the sermons, the lessons, the threats, the shaming, spanking, and battering are not working.

While the methods of teaching basic disciplines like telephone use and every-day manners are defective, there are yet shrill demands for an escalation of the very "remedies" that have consistently failed to produce satisfactory results.

Is it not worth our considering new approaches to bringing about self-discipline and civility? And can we, in the process, perhaps save our crumbling society from having to choose between anarchy and a police state?

What Is Meant by "Discipline"?

Any local or national poll about childrearing and schools will show that what people want is "more discipline." What is meant is more coercion, more restrictions, more policing, more punishment, more fear. Above all, more fear. Such mean-spirited sentiment is behind the popular notion of discipline. But it is anti-freedom, anti-children, and anti-education. For fostering self-discipline is not possible in a climate of fear.

What most people mean by "discipline" is this: "Do what you're told by authority, do it without hesitation or question, regardless of what you think or how you feel; Do what is expected of you, do it cheerfully because a child's duty is to please

grown-ups; Take your medicine, accept your punishment without complaint, because it is good for your soul and good for your character.

"If you fail to do what you're told, when you're told, and how you're told, there is something wrong with you. The remedy for your wrongness is to humiliate you with punishment. This will make you righteous. Now be grateful; the pain I give you shows I care about you--it's for your own good, you know.

"If you think differently, have a different vision or entertain creative ideas, if you persist in exploring your own interests and in learning in your own manner, or even (gasp) in taking charge of your own life, you will be shamed and punished until your spirit is broken, and you conform to our notion of who you should be--dependent on bosses."

Every child who is not thoroughly brainwashed and/or reduced to abject cowardice recognizes that message as the Big Lie, perpetrated on children by those who exert control over them. The pity is that such barbaric treatment is fully supported by the community.

It is thought to be "discipline." when in fact it is not discipline at all; it is undisciplined, unrestrained bullying, plain and simple. It is enforced submission to the arbitrary interests of those wielding the power to do so. It is "traditional discipline"--conditioning identical to that used by the American Kennel Club.

Punishment kills discipline--it cannot grow and mature under threat of force. Those who think it can are too dangerous to be allowed around children; they are suited more to swatting terriers and pit bulls into blind, knee-jerk obedience.

### Discipline Is Natural, Inborn

Authoritarian types sincerely believe that discipline cannot be acquired except under compulsion, the more unpleasant the better and by brute force if necessary. Yet all around them are highly disciplined skateboarders, trick bicyclists, garage musicians, shade tree mechanics, expert chess players, and sidewalk lemonade entrepreneurs. There are pool sharks and merit-badge-earning Boy Scouts and NBA-bound basketball players, none having been punched or conned or battered into their chosen disciplines.

Children are born with the drive to acquire discipline in their own way, as with all learning, and would do so even if raised by wolves. Especially so. Self-discipline is a survival skill, instinctual. Only persistent punishing can discourage its maturation.

A baby begins acquiring discipline at the moment of birth, perhaps before. It is how they learn how the world works. Babies and toddlers will naturally follow the very steps scientists use to discover new truths. They examine an object, do



something to it, observe what happens, reap unsatisfactory results, then try something else until they hit on the answer that produces the results they are looking for.

In time there arises an eagerness to make a positive difference in their world. In the process they deepen their understanding of the world and how it wags. This is exactly the approach used by Nobel Prize-winning scientists.

Discipline is learning. It is maturing, growing up, which every child is bent on doing, as fast as he or she can do it. Discipline is developing the skills required to accomplish goals. It is working to get what they want, and to go where they want to go.

Children respond easily to discipline of the team type. Even in a pick-up ball game there is a discipline structure; where rules of play are lacking, they are made up and agreed to on the spot.

Aversion to discipline is not inborn, nor is sin, or badness. Resistance to force, being robbed of the right to freedom--that is inborn. A child's natural direction is to acquire the discipline necessary to be free and happy.

Adults like to see orderly progress. That way they can measure it, evaluate it, exert control over it. But self-discipline does not work that way. It begins internally, progresses in fits and starts, in leaps and plateaus, in zigzag or spiral fashion.

Before indoor pools and ice rinks, there was a popular saying: "We learn to swim in the winter and skate in the summer." After a summer of trying to swim and failing, come the following spring the child jumps in and does the Australian crawl across the pond. All winter something was happening inside--call it "discipline"--that was "teaching" him or her to swim.

But adults delude themselves into thinking that nothing can be learned unless it is taught, and tested at every step. They think they are "teaching" by "reinforcement"--the A's, gold stars, and praise; and by punishment--the scowls, the shaming, the ridicule, and the swats. Add to this the blind belief that a credentialed authority must teach it, otherwise it won't be properly learned. This is destructive, idiotic nonsense. These are the shock troops in the War Against Children.

Children incarcerated in schools need desperately to escape the compulsory life. Kids by the millions are involved after school and on weekends in disciplines the school tells them they can't master for lack of official lessons and for lack of discipline. Witness the dozens, the hundreds of games and skills that millions of kids are engaged in, from roller-blade acrobatics, rock bands and rock climbing and rock collecting, the list is endless. (The clamor is now on to take control of

these informal after-school activities too, on the theory that limiting freedom will reduce crime.)

No one who has seen the X-Games can doubt the existence of natural discipline. No one who has seen, as I have, a 10-year-old quickly master a computer that has baffled for months one of my generation. They are drawn to them because computers give them immediate and honest answers without praise or punishment, they demand neither obedience nor worship, and they are impartial absolutely.

Self-discipline grows by pleasing oneself, pursuing ones' own happiness. Authoritarian parents and schoolmasters kill discipline and destroy the spirit of freedom, then complain that there is something wrong with the child. "She's unmotivated." "He 'suffers from' a behavior problem." And the current favorite, "He's has Attention Deficit Disorder." But somehow the ADD disappears the moment school lets out.

### The Key to the World

Inner discipline is self-chosen, and develops by self-direction. Within this, a child of 6, 7, or 8 chooses the rigors of ballet discipline, because she loves the beauty of it, or loves the ballet teacher, or loves her dancing mother. A boy or girl can choose the discipline of karate for their own reasons. It is a question of who does the choosing. Little success can be expected if it is imposed "for their own good."

What is needed from the adult world is trust. Faith, first, in the fundamental goodness of the child. Unless he is punished, shamed, disrespected, he will not disappoint you. Given a passable role model, he and she will grow to be a genuine, authentic person. To demand anything other is an affront to their integrity.

For discipline to develop, there must be fearlessness. It can grow only in freedom. Discipline takes us to levels of excellence realized nowhere else. Discipline is the door to the joyful experience of living. When we see that, we take delight in our practice. Our direction is right and we are on our way. The way we have chosen. We can learn from mistakes; we cannot learn from hounding and flogging.

Inner wisdom tells the child that discipline is the key to the world.

### Many Disciplines, Many Kinds of Discipline

While there are many disciplines, author John Holt talks about these three kinds. At first there is the discipline of nature, of reality. Waving of arms, kicking of legs grasping at objects calls for adjusting to the laws of nature--without their being taught. When beginning to walk, the disciplines of body motion and gravity come

into play. Babies must--on their own--develop the discipline needed to function in the world.

It is said that if babies were taught how to walk, most of us would still be crawling around on our hands and knees. The most important things we've learned, we have taught ourselves.

Play is children's serious work, that of learning and practicing self-chosen disciplines. Hold the cone upright, or the ice cream drops. Hit the nail squarely, or you can't build the doghouse. Keep the bicycle rolling, or you fall over.

Next there is the discipline of culture, of society. This is the collection of customs, habits, rules, expectations and agreements that glue society--its people--into a community. Children are eager to become participants, so they watch very carefully to understand adult interaction so they can imitate it. They want dearly to do things right. And whatever is modeled for them defines what is "right." Much of this stays with them all their lives.

We know now that children will do things "right" until authority punishes them, saying, "Do as I say, not as I do!" From then on, "right and "wrong" are simply rules arbitrary enforced by hypocrites. The difference between "right" and "wrong," then, depends on who's bigger, or who gets caught.

Thus enters the discipline of superior force, the brutish power of the animal realm. It is the bully, the dictator, the control freak. It is the sergeant to the private, the cop to the criminal, the school principal wielding the paddle over the cringing child. It is the mother with the strap. They all say the same thing: "Submit to my will or I'll make you suffer until you do."

Under such control, the natural discipline of the child, natural morality, can be suppressed or caused to wither away in despair, along with courage, independent spirit, and all hope for a satisfying life. Just as it retards the maturation process, punishment prevents learning.

All punishment is harmful. Even the apparently innocuous "time-out" has serious effects on a small child's sense of identity, emotions, feelings of security and acceptance. It happens to millions of children, day after day. It has happened to the great majority of Americans, disgruntled and stressed-out, who are now leading lives of not-so-quiet desperation while busily destroying the dignity and spirit of their sons and daughters and classroom students. This ugliness and suffering--of adults and children alike--need not be carried over to the next generation.

#### Self-Discipline for Parents

Beethoven's father tried to beat him into being a concert pianist, like Mozart. But Ludwig adamantly resisted superior force. Knowing he could not create without

freedom, he resolutely marched to the beat of his own drum. He learned piano because he liked piano discipline. He sought out the exquisite discipline of composition teachers like Haydn and Salieri.

Hitler's father beat Adolf mercilessly to "discipline" him. The boy sought the discipline that art offered, but was rejected by the art school. His brief time as a soldier was not the kind of discipline he needed. The result was that he never acquired discipline, only indulgence in his hatreds. He knew only victimization, and having had his fill of that he set out to victimize the world. (No disciplined leader would have invaded Russia with winter approaching.) The rest is history: he started the war that killed over 50 million people. Fifty million people.

Parents and teachers and life-hating types try to mold the child into an inhibited, fearful, obedient inferior who will devote his life to duty and "don't give us no trouble." Strict disciplining is self-hate, projected by self-defined failures trying to win success vicariously.

To them, children are property, without lives of their own. Those pathetic parents, said A. S. Neill, "were never allowed to live and love, were made to submit to humiliating punishment, and are frightened by freedom." They heartily support paddle-swinging official bullies to beat their children, schoolmasters "hired to do parents' dirty work."

The "disciplinarian" robs the child of the responsibility of developing self-discipline. He or she takes over the discipline job and forces the child's dance to conform to authority's tune. It leaves the child with an unpleasant experience and a negative view of "discipline."

It is tragic for any child to be denied the chance for self-discipline to develop. Millions suffer it because of brutal and stupid parents and teachers. The result of our society's reliance on the punishment of superior force is a society that now teeters on the brink of anarchic chaos.

Continuing Narrative:

Discipline by Ice Cream and Maple Syrup

It must have been during the July berry season that the boys and I one day suddenly decided to make ice cream. Why not? We had already acquired a motorized six-quart freezer from Sears, and could get heavy cream from the landlord farmer, from whom we got our milk every day.

Out came the cookbooks to find the right recipe. We'd try a different recipe each time, we decided. In the end we stayed with the French vanilla, and simply added whatever berries we had picked that day.

At first there was the problem of arriving home with enough berries to make a batch. It was Henry, I think, who proposed the rule: For every berry we ate, a berry must be put in the berry can. That worked quite well, plus it gave us lots of giggles in its enforcement.

After the picking, and after the walk to get the heavy cream, we gathered in the kitchen to cook the egg yolks, sugar, cream, and vanilla in the double boiler. Then came the ice and salt packing, and the exciting freezer watch for the exact moment for party time to begin.

A long, cold winter in the North eventually brings spring thawing days, and the sap began to run in the maple trees in the front yard. With plastic gallon jugs and a dollar's worth of spiles from an auction, we tapped the trees and collected the sap. Soon we had to borrow 20-gallon milk cans to hold it, for the boiling-down session had to wait until Saturday.

The evaporation process made serious demands. For one gallon of syrup to be harvested, 40 gallons of water had to be boiled off. So to get only a few quarts of the sweet stuff from many milk cans of sap, a great amount of hardwood needed cutting and hauling and splitting.

Henry and Russell participated, as they did in every step of the production. The outside incinerator had to be cleaned out, and the huge evaporating pans washed. No one complained. No one thought in terms of "work," or that we liked one job and hated another. It was all one syrup-making process, from tapping trees, collecting and cutting wood, boiling down, finishing off, cleaning pans, and eating the sweet-laden pancakes. What's not to like?

No one was "unmotivated." Or was struck down by an "attention deficit" problem. We were three guys immensely enjoying a common purpose. And nobody thought the boys were "learning discipline." Until recalling it years later.

Only in the final state could the boiling be done inside, on the kitchen stove. Sometimes the boys stayed up after bedtime to help, and more than once Daddy stood all night at the pans and kettles for the finishing.

In an especially prolific season we excitedly packed jars of the hard-won stuff to send off to relatives, proudly sharing the product of our labors. Even today, some 30 springs later, Henry and his wife work at evaporators in their sugar bush, in their owner-built sugar shack, making maple syrup to send to Russell and Dad for Christmas.

-----

## **The Discipline of Childrearing**

We have arrived at a time in the evolution of our society for the introduction of a New Discipline, one that takes into account the new insights and understandings that have been accumulating during the past generation. It must be a discipline that both meets the needs of the children, and meets the challenge of the growing problem of alienation, as manifested by the random violence in our homes, schools, and streets.

The concept of "discipline" has broader, more flexible uses than commonly supposed. To many it means simply "punishment," with ostensible intent to train, correct and control. In the context of the Discipline of Childrearing, it is recognized that there can be no meaningful discipline for children in the broader sense without parents learning and practicing a discipline for themselves.

Childrearing discipline is another field of study and self-transformation, along with other disciplines in the arts and sciences such as journalism, music performance, dentistry, ballet, and medicine. These are all special learnings designed to bring about the changes required to make an individual fit for specific responsibilities.

In George Washington's time, medical knowledge had not advanced beyond bloodletting, then a traditional and perfectly acceptable treatment of illness. In our time we have seen that the outmoded authoritarian reward-and-punishment method of bringing up children is not only ineffective for helping a child achieve happiness and success in life, but that traditional treatment has been clearly proven by research to cause inestimable harm to the child, as well as to society.

### **A New View**

There is the additional moral aspect: the shaping and conditioning of a child is motivated by purposes other than the child's own. Claims that it is for the child's "own good" does not change the fact that the goals are not of the child's own choosing. Philosophers like Kant have held that it is immoral to treat another human as a means to an end, however "good" that end might appear. Each individual has a natural right to grow in self-direction, and develop mastery over his or her own life.

The discipline of childrearing requires that parents, teachers and child caregivers adopt a fresh set of views concerning 1) the nature of a child, and 2) the role of those given responsibility over them. Emphasis needs to be shifted from parents' efforts to make children conform to preconceived models of "good children," to the adults transforming themselves into understanding, accepting, compassionate human beings worthy of associating with and being responsible for youngsters.

There is the need for those caring for children to develop the maturity to act as appropriate role models for those children. We all know that children learn the best and most important things by observing good role models, and the worst things by praise-and-punishment methods. A certain discipline characterizes the best role models.

Discipline without Punishment: Basic Principles 1. There is fundamental trust in the natural goodness of the child. Seeing a child as one "born in sin," inherently a sinner, leads to the view, unconsciously or otherwise, that he/she is "full of the devil," and thus deserving of punishment. On the contrary, every child's true nature is good, loving, affectionate, and joyfully responsive to gentle and caring treatment. Anything "sinful" in the child is a projection of--or caused by--the viewer. The child is innocent, born with natural goodness and love, needing protection and caring nurture.

2. The home is child-centered, not parent-centered or authority-centered. This means that the home exists primarily to meet the needs of the child. Parents (by definition) have already taken the trouble to see that their own needs have been sufficiently met to free them for focusing on the child's needs. Responsible, mature parents certainly place the needs of the child ahead of their own.

3. The role of the parent is that of provider and protector--not controller or teacher or shaper or "preparer-for-life." Life is now, not in the future, in adulthood. Responsibility includes making the home safe, free from danger, threats and fear. It is making a secure place where children can explore and play, and learn about themselves, their siblings, their parents, their world. The protection aspect includes guarding against the many kinds of exploitation by those seeking to use the child for their own purposes, whether emotional, political, criminal, governmental, religious, commercial, media, or well-intentioned neighbors and relatives.

4. Teaching is done by example only, unless specifically requested by the child. The instilling of values, attitudes and character is done by role-modeling in any case; preaching, do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do admonitions teach only hypocrisy. Parents mindful of their vital roles as models of character must needs spend time examining themselves, learning to grow as self-actualized persons: physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, culturally, and spiritually. In the New Discipline the parent strives not so much to do as to be.

5. The child is recognized as the expert on what and who a child is, what childhood is like. Others need but to observe and be open to understanding what this child is about and why, instead of trying to force the child into a mold. This requires basic trust in the child's inherent goodness. The child is the teacher, the one from whom we learn. In time, we may learn that the child is blessed with a certain wisdom of his or her own which, when recognized by sensitive, mature and compassionate parents, is respected, treasured and preserved.

6. The child comes equipped with a drive for self-directed learning--with a fierce eagerness to understand the world and everything in it--but on their own terms and at their own pace. Therefore "child's play" is the child's serious work, to be respected for it's central importance in that self-education. The essential need is to provide a safe place for doing that exploring, discovering, and experiencing, free from fear of reprimand, rejection, threat of punishment or risk of hurt. Parents follow the child's lead in the quest for self-teaching, and avoid directing or controlling, but rather stand by to assist and facilitate when asked to do so, and to acknowledge the new knowledge.

7. The harm done by all forms of punishment is recognized, and prohibited absolutely. Once punishment is sincerely renounced, there is no more impulse to punish than there would be to inject heroin into the child, or force him to drink Drain-O.

The curing of the punishment habit of thought does not require patience, as is commonly supposed. The benefits of non-punitive parenting are so immediately evident, and the surprising boost in self-respect is so helpful, that parents ask themselves how they ever indulged in the punishment mindset to begin with.

8. The child's self-esteem is protected as carefully as their physical wellbeing. Respect for this developing individual, his or her unique self-identity, is paramount. There is no down-putting, no "bad girl" and "bad boy," nor is there praise, as in "good girl" or "good boy" judgments.

With this approach, the rewards are thrown out along with the punishments. What is needed is to discard forever the praise-and-punishment system of control, the conditioning, the exploitive, suffocating methods of childrearing.

Praise and put-downs are equally harmful to self-esteem, since both place the praiser or punisher in the position of power, of judge. Anyone who can praise can, in the next breath, condemn; both diminish the child's assessment of her- or himself. A child senses this, but can rarely articulate it.

9. The child is a mirror, reflecting the viewer's attractive qualities as well the negative. That which we hate in ourselves, unconsciously, we tend to see in the child. The liar is furious when his/her child tells a fib; the shoplifter is outraged



when the child takes what is not his. To be mindful of that is to forgo punishing, seeing the unfairness of making the child suffer for one's own character defects. The upside is feeling the joy of seeing love and affection reflected in the child. Then resolving to work on our own self-improvement, instead.

10. The political structure of the family is democratic. This departure from the autocratic or dictatorial form, unfortunately, is never seen in TV sitcoms, or children's stories and rarely even in parenting literature. In virtually all American families, (as on TV) the family is organized with all authority in the parents; leaving the children to fight for rights, respect, and a measure of self-direction.

If the child is to grow in responsibility and discipline, he or she must enjoy the rights of full membership in the family organization. Denied this, there is the feeling of disempowerment that leads to conflict in a struggle for power. Jefferson's dictum is to be taken seriously; all people are created equal, with respected rights, though differing responsibilities, roles, and functions.

Since family democracy is the governing body, there is no commanding, no issuing of orders, no meting out of rewards and punishments by the boss. In Democratic Discipline, grievances are heard at family meetings, rights protected, disputes resolved, and recommendations and suggestions made, usually by consensus. We cannot expect political freedom to be maintained by a people that have never experienced it.

#### Democratic Discipline in Action

How does this democratic approach play out in a family of young children, practically speaking? Within the framework of the ten principles above, the governance of the family is centered in the weekly family meeting. Primarily and ostensibly its function is to encourage and foster communication and understanding of matters that affect the family members, the relationships and interactions between them. Here is where the decision-making power of the family resides, and where problems and issues are resolved.

#### The Family Meeting

The functions of the Meetings are several, among which are:

1. Provide a regularly scheduled, dependable time when the members meet to communicate, voice complaints, and iron out differences.
2. Strengthen the bonding of members to each other and to the family unit.
3. Affirm and legitimize the full membership status of the chairperson.
4. Gives each member practice in leading and supervising a meeting.
5. Supports the self-confidence and self-esteem of each family member in turn.

6. Fosters respect for the democratic process, and legitimate, authentic authority.
7. Provides a view from authority's perspective, as opposed to that of the controlled.
8. Guarantees the right to speak one's mind, without fear of ridicule, suppression, or punishment.
9. Empowers each member as an individual with defensible rights, with dignity, and with respect in the eyes of self as well as of fellow members.
10. Create and enforce a rule where one is absolutely necessary to control dangerous or intolerable behavior.

#### The Caucus

When the inevitable occasion arise when a ruling is called for during the week between meetings, the caucus provides a means to settle the matter, or at least bring agreement to suspend decisions until meeting time.

Any member may at any time call a caucus, at which time all members present are obligated to drop what they are doing and support the process, which is usually defending the rights of an aggrieved member.

This must be a very brief and temporary measure that keeps the peace and asserts democratic control where there otherwise could be a breakdown of domestic order.

#### The Health and Safety Proviso

The one exception to democratic rule has to do with instances relating to health or safety. Here, the parents' say-so holds sway, not to be challenged. At the initial family meeting, this is made clear. (In actual experience, it has never been questioned, but, rather, welcomed for the security it affords.)

The one overriding general rule is this: Any behavior is acceptable so long as it hurts nobody--including yourself. In practice, even though the health-and-safety proviso gives dictatorial control in issues such as bed times, they can be decided by the democratic process in family meeting. Meal times and bath times need never be issues if they are routine and enjoyed as times with Mommy and/or Daddy.

Absolute freedom is not welcomed by a child; it is too much responsibility for a youngster to bear. The extremes of freedom constitute license, which is criminal neglect.

More Characteristics of Democratic Discipline Children brought up in this kind of discipline are never intentionally caused to feel fear. Having never been spanked or shaken, yanked around or stood in the corner, sent to their room "to think about it" or made to sit in "timeout," they do not live under threat.

Similarly, there is no talk of monsters, of boogiemens, ghosts, or threat of police coming to carry them away to jail or to a fiery hell. Manners and etiquette are not taught directly, but learned by example. There is no direct teaching of behaviors such as "wave bye-bye" or otherwise told how to act. They are expected to act like themselves, to act as they genuinely feel. Parents, too, yell when their foot is stepped on, for there is none of the ever-so-careful worry that the children might be traumatized by someone's cry of pain.

The children are not protected from reality, but dealt with in responsible fashion, and trusted to observe and participate in this benign but not pandering world they are born into.

(Henry and Russell were never told to say "please" and "thank you" and "excuse me." Yet people remarked at how courteous they were, and today remain among the most considerate of people. Had they been taught to be polite, one wonders if they'd be so gentlemanly.)

Who's in Charge?

The emphasis in Democratic Discipline is not on a struggle for dominance, as is so common in families. The parental mindset is always: What needs of each child are not being met, and how can we meet them? No child misbehaves when his or her needs are being met.

Repeat: Misbehaviors are the result of unmet needs.

The best approach is to understand the youngster's needs and see that they are met--before misbehavior occurs. When a child is angry, or whiny, or defiant, or a thousand other negative behaviors, they are simply trying to meet their needs. They are children.

Most behavior problems are caused by parents themselves, like giving them too much sugar, or being late for nap-time. Giving orders and demanding obedience is the sure way to create defiance and rebelliousness. If a child is respected, is included in the family decision-making and rule-making process, he or she is not likely to become an adversary in a contest for power.

Ideally, no child is ever be punished in any way for any reason. That is what parents can strive for, and this can be achieved so quickly they'll be astonished at their parenting power. Skeptics should know that this ideal has already been proven and demonstrated in the "real world" and is achievable by anyone, given sufficient understanding, a few simple skills, and a certain attitude shift

concerning the proper work of children and parents. Every parent can begin today to take the steps leading to that ideal.

Continuing Narrative:  
Dining Room Basketball

It began with a basketball and hoop set at Christmastime. Outside the weather was windy and snowy, inside the garage and barns it was just too cold to play ball. Together we pondered the facts: In the old farmhouse the "dining room" (really the old-fashioned "front room") was the largest in the house and had a ten-foot ceiling: A perfect basketball half-court. We always ate in the kitchen anyway, and who "entertains" any more? Spring would soon pass, as, indeed, would the time when young children can be enjoyed. The landlord had no objection, and the gig was on.

Meantime the catalyst: The Harlem Globetrotters came to town. Their dazzling performance still lives in our memories, these three decades later. Henry and Russell could not believe their eyes at the magic the Trotters could create, and their antics with the mock-serious authoritative referees made them giggle until I feared they would choke.

Back home, up went the hoop above the locked outside door, taking care not to deface the lovely oak trim. The green window shutters we removed and installed inside. Then to the cellar, where we propped up the floor with timbers for a firmer, safer court for dribbling.

So while during the fall it had been "go long for a Roger Staubach pass," that winter we heard cries for Wilt the Stilt to make a foul shot.

No one talked of the discipline the Trotters demanded of themselves to do perfect those skills. No such "lessons" were needed; the boys understood, simply by playing with the basketball. They were not sent to YMCA and made to take instruction, making play into work. Yet they acquired experience in disciplined behavior--without the pain.

-----

### **Self-esteem Is Central to Intelligent, Ethical Childrearing**

On a Northern Exposure TV show, adolescent Ed told the Native American shaman about his struggle with low self-esteem. "You know," said the wise mentor to his protégé, "low self-esteem is the cause of nearly all the suffering in the world."

In any approach to childrearing that is intelligent and ethical, self-esteem has to play a central role. It is the child's feeling of self worth--high or low--that determines, more than any other factor, the lifetime happiness or misery for that child. Parental awareness of the critical importance of the child's self-assessment is essential for understanding his or her behaviors, and the most effective ways to deal with them.

The growth of self-respect and authentic identity is so vital to happiness that, in *Your Child's Self-Esteem*, Dorothy Corkille Briggs says it is the central framework in relating with children of any age and at any stage.

#### Words to Parent By

Parents have long searched for a focus, a simple guideline by which to raise their children, just one essential thought to keep in mind. They've asked for a single quotation to post on the refrigerator door as a reminder in times of stress and conflict and confusion in day-to-day childrearing.

As long ago as 1970, Dr. Briggs gave us such a quote. Readers may well stop right now to post it on the door of the fridge:

"Self-esteem is the mainspring  
that slates every child  
for success or failure  
as a human being."  
--Dorothy C. Briggs, PhD

The fundamental childrearing rule of thumb is: Take care that your child grows with a strong appreciation of self, a healthy, positive attitude about who they are, a confident feeling of self-worth.

Self-respect amounts to healthy and realistic attitudes about identity:

I am lovable; I have value in simply being myself; I am worthwhile; I am competent, having something valuable to offer. By age five, a child has formed a basic view of himself as a person. He or she has had to decide on answers to the most important of questions: What is my worth as a person? Am I lovable or unlovable? Am I worthy of care and attention and affection? They know the answers by how they are treated.

No single factor, event or experience determines totally the self-assessment. It is derived from accumulated feelings, directly from experience.

What Self-Esteem Is Not

In the term "high self-esteem" we do not mean conceit, or bratty, attention-demanding behavior that describes the temper-tantrum-prone, the tyrannical. Those are the "spoiled" children, the ones who are suffering the painful consequences of neglect. Such behavior is symptomatic of the low self-esteem that comes from being deprived of sufficient care, attention, and affection. A chronically "difficult" child is very likely one who is starved for a feeling of self-worth, of being valued, of being lovable, and so is frantic to meet their need for approval, even at the risk of rejection.

"The small child reasons,  
'These all-powerful gods treat me  
as I deserve to be treated...  
what they say about me  
is what I am.'"

--Dorothy C. Briggs

"The worse the child's behavior, the greater his cry for approval. The more withdrawn or obnoxious, the more he needs love and acceptance. The higher his defenses the more starved and alienated he is," Briggs pointed out. The problem is, that sort of behavior tends to drive away the very acceptance and love he needs. It is this syndrome that ends so often in institutional custody, such as in psychiatric hospitals and prisons. And hundreds of thousands of them, from infants to aged, are living on the streets.

Where Are the Parenting Schools?

As we read the paper and watch the evening news, it is not difficult to see that the child who feels lacking in self-worth is capable of the most horrific anti-social acts. With a bit of insight we can also understand that his acts are born of his own pain, that the violence and mayhem is his misguided struggle to compensate for that self-contempt.

Because their own upbringing fell short of adequate emotional support, most parents unthinkingly raise their children in ways that place priority on meeting their own needs. This unfortunate fact is at the root of nearly all the problems of child-rearing, and, by consequential extension, it is the fundamental cause of the most serious problems we must deal with in our society.

In this child-abused-growing-to-be-child-abuser syndrome, there are two great and serious gaps: Parents' self-esteem needs are not sufficiently met, and they are not prepared to meet similar needs of their children.

Indeed, the learning of childrearing skills in general is left mostly to chance. In place of up-to-date information on understanding children and their proper care, there is often harmful and dangerous mythology, misleading information and outright lies. The parent-education gap is abundantly filled by opportunists of all stripes, from political to psychological, from religious to commercial, from medical to educational.

It is shocking to learn that the kind of treatment and care that makes the difference whether a child enjoys a lifetime of health and happiness, or suffers an existence of violence-ridden poverty and misery, is largely a gamble. Meantime, unskilled parents and teachers spank, batter and humiliate children, believing it "builds character."

#### The Extremism of Praise and Punishment

The permissive parent, usually out of guilt for being neglectful, is likely to be over-generous with praise, thus feeding the child's ego with unrealistic notions of his or her importance. Or the child compensates for neglect with inflated ideas of superiority over other children in intelligence, social status, talents, etc.

The authoritarian, on the other hand, doles out both punishment and praise. But parenting requires a good deal more than that dichotomy. Both extremes are harmful to the child. Both bind the child in a dependency that prevents healthy self-reliance and self respect.

The knowledgeable parent throws out the praise along with the punishment, and seeks a middle, sensible path that uses neither extreme. What is needed--by parents as well as children--is a parenting approach that is neither suppressive nor manipulative, one that is both respectful to the child and self-respecting for the parent.

#### The Authoritarian Approach

The authoritarian parent makes all the rules, does the enforcing, makes the judgments, and exacts the punishments. His word is law.

The authoritarian parent is God, seeing the child as a blank slate on which to write programming information. The child is clay, to mold into a preconceived

form, a twig to forcibly bend to a desired shape, to hold for the life of the child. The parent is Creator, and therefore infallible, One whose authority is beyond challenge. Rearing a child is God at work, and God-the-Parent is all-powerful. It can strike terror in a child.

In the authoritarian (often called "disciplinarian"), method there is little trust in the child's capacity for self-directed growth or independent learning. The child is constantly reminded, by the denial of meaningful decision-making power, of their lack of worth. Where parents rule, the child is controlled by the dispensing of rewards and punishments, always according to what pleases or displeases authority.

#### The Struggle for Control

There are four basic choices in forcing compliance to parental law: 1) nagging; 2) punishing; 3) rewarding; 4) giving up.

1. Nagging, or "keeping after them, " eats away at the relationship between parent and child. It is a practice that leaves both exhausted and wishing to avoid each other.

2. Punishing methods can read like a laundry list of meanness: yelling, scolding, isolation or time-out, withdrawing privileges, withdrawing love, and outright violence: assault as in hitting, hairpulling, kicking, spanking. The punishment approach is limited only by the creative hatred of the punisher.

3. Bribery and praise, a disguise for yet another play of power, must be added here. It is the more insidious for its manipulation behind the pretense of "love. "

4. Giving up is the "wit's end" cop-out on parental responsibilities. The beleaguered parents throw hands up in despair, complain that "nothing works," and turn their backs on their job of parenting. All are futile, or counter-productive. Yet all can overcome by parenting classes and counseling.

Effects of the Authoritarian Method (Strict) on the Self-Esteem of the Child: 1.

Makes child dependent on authority, fosters feeling of powerlessness

2. Discourages child's growth in assuming responsibility, lack of control of life

3. Creates resentment and hostility in child due to feeling of being property, being a thing "owned"

4. Lack of self-confidence, since trust must be in authorities instead

5. Undermines child's self-trust, and strength of character, authenticity

6. Delays emotional growth; results in feeling of unworthiness, self-respect



### Permissive Neglect

The permissive parent is afraid to see that rules are obeyed. They feel guilty if the child's demands for material things cannot be met, like the latest toy craze, or clothes not up-to-the-minute in style. The child generally rules the home, her wants are presented as needs.

Parents themselves confuse wants and needs, bowing submissively to the child's demands, fearful that the child will grow up feeling deprived, and resenting them. The inevitable result: parents' low self-esteem, and suppressed anger at being exploited.

The permissive (unskilled) parent fails to establish reasonable rules, or even guidelines, and is reluctant to use their parental power. The role of parent, they suppose, is to sacrifice their own rights and happiness to "serve" the child, providing far beyond needs to include all wants and desires as well.

The likely consequence: the child is "spoiled" in expecting the world to submit to his or her whims and wishes.

Effects of Permissiveness (License) on the Self-Esteem of the Child The suffering such a view brings on--for both parents and child--is not difficult to imagine:

1. child acquires a distorted, self-centered view of the world
2. instinctively knows this is not true caring, but rather serves to compensate parent's fears of guilt
3. likely to result in a disturbed child, lacking true parental love
4. eventually must lead to rejection of the child when parents cannot tolerate any more of child's self-centeredness or their demands

Self-Esteem and Democratic Discipline Who's the Boss? The key is in the distribution of power in the family. The oft-asked question, "who is the boss here?" is best answered, "There is no boss; we are self-regulating; this is a democratically-run household."

Our country was founded on the principle that people have a right to a fair share of power in the decisions that govern them. Yet it is a rare family that operates on a democratic basis. Some believe they are, saying, "I listen to their input, then decide what is best for them." But that is not democracy, that is benevolent dictatorship.

Too many families view the children as the not-so-loyal opposition, who, if management power were shared, would take over the asylum. Or the inmates would overpower the warden. Such thinking lacks both an understanding of the democratic process, and trust in the fairness, the goodness, of other family members.

Children who are trusted and respected very quickly learn to accept the responsibility to comply with fair, agreed-to limits and, indeed, earnestly appreciate them.

One problem is that we Americans have contradicting values--some say hypocritical. We'll don a uniform and go to war to defend democracy, but come home to deny it to our children. Sad to say, most homes in America are run in autocratic/dictatorial fashion, in style a century ago in central Europe, but now grossly inappropriate and outdated for today's society.

Also to important consider: How can democracy survive where the young live under totalitarianism the first 18 years of their lives?

Sharing family decisions does more than make our country stronger. It makes for individual happiness by strengthening self-confidence, building self-reliance, and encouraging individual responsibility. It can be summed up in a word, Self-esteem. And that goes for the parents as well as the children.

Effects of Democratic Discipline (Self-Regulation) on the Self-Esteem of the Child: The immediate effect of Democratic Discipline on a child is the feeling of responsibility and self-worth.

1. It raises children's self-respect; their views have real power-sharing status
2. With self-respect comes respect for others' rights, views and feelings
3. Appreciation of others' viewpoints broadens & increases fair-mindedness and cooperation
4. Empowerment comes from having a measure of control over one's own life
5. Responsibility for one's decisions grows as a result
6. Self-discipline strengthens, as it must in a democracy
7. Respect for legitimate authority in-creases, the recognition of the need for society's regulations
8. Diminished need for youthful rebel-ion results when self-regulation is a factor

9. Less aggression and violence, brings more emotional stability, less conflict

10 Less resentment, depression, mental illness, physical and mental illness and crime are among the benefits to individuals and society.

#### Self-Esteem for Parents

Every parent has an obligation--to their family as well as to themselves--to work daily at raising their own feelings of self-worth. Our job is not to lavish praise on the children, or dream dreams of grandeur, but to develop more appreciation for self and other family members.

A. S. Neill said, "No happy parent ever punished a child. No happy child ever required punishing." Nothing is more supportive of happiness than healthy feelings of self-worth. It is as essential for emotional wellbeing as oxygen is for physical maintenance.

The key to successful parenting is helping children grow in self-appreciation.

Although parental demands to be a different person are unreasonable, a child does not question it. The parent is all-knowing. The child only feels terrible at his/her own inadequacy to "measure up" to expectations.

The child's self-assessment is much determined by how early an age and how speedily the demands to change are made. As we look inside ourselves we may see that some of our expectations and demands come from our craving to satisfy our own unmet childhood needs.

The parent is the child's mirror. The child says, "I must build my self-concept, my identity, from what I see, what I hear, and by the ways I am treated."

The quickest and easiest way to grow family self-esteem, cooperation and harmony is to stop all punishing at once, and hold regular family meetings in which to work out rules all can agree to.

To let children be who they are, and to grow through behavioral changes, that is discipline. It is self-management. The real challenge for parents is, instead of striving to change the children into people they are not, to find the inner wisdom and strength to change themselves.

#### Continuing Narrative:

##### Beethoven at Bedtime

Every evening at our house was devoted to children's time. The pre-bedtime activities included bath-taking, story-reading, and music-listening.

In their nighties the two freshly-tubbed boys scrambled into Daddy's lap just as he was listening to the Great Composers. One evening, after a story, they

demanded a hearing of Bob Dylan's funny "Maggie's Farm" (where the singer "ain't gonna work no more,") to which they sang along lustily.

Then a clamor arose for "Alice's Restaurant, " where, Arlo Guthrie promised, "you can get anything you want." Somehow that led to Gilbert and Sullivan's "Pinafore" and "Mikado, " with lots of clowning self-importance.

Their first interest in Beethoven came when they heard his Sixth Symphony, and it quickly became routine crazy time. Following the first movement's "Arrival in the Country, " a reverie "By the Brook, " and the peasants' dance, rumblings of thunder creep into the percussions, and then the terrible crash of broken clouds and lightning sending the dancers scurrying for cover. This was Henry and Russell's cue to run around the room screaming "Rain! Rain!"

Just then a used-bookstore discovery proved fortuitous: the complete orchestral scores of all nine of Beethoven's symphonies, plus the 38th to 41st of Mozart's. Together we learned to follow the orchestra through their repeats and skips, then to follow certain instruments as they each took up the theme in turn.

In following the horns in one movement, the woodwinds in another, and the cellos in yet another, they soon began to anticipate familiar approaching segments. Then it came to excited cries like, "Here come the horns, Daddy!"

There was no instruction involved in this fun we had together, (though I secretly hoped they'd become classical musicians). They simply saw how much their father enjoyed the music, and wanted to join in the fun.

Since then my sons have enjoyed three decades of music, ranging from classical to Pete Seeger to bluegrass to Leonard Skynard to the Grateful Dead.

When the clock indicated bedtime, it was Henry who chose the falling-asleep-time music. He chose, always, one of Beethoven's symphonies. And I chose, always, the quiet andante movement.

---

### **Parents Have Needs, Too Happier Parents Have Happier Children**

One of the best things we can do for children is to find ways we can enhance our own self-appreciation. To do this, we need to acquire certain insights, then make a commitment to change. The first task has to be in taking charge of our own lives. Failing that, there lurks behind every tree, bush, and cactus some opportunist, or some organization--from political to religious to commercial--who will take charge of our lives for us. Children whose parents have defaulted on directing their own lives are already at sea without a rudder before they leave the house.

Parents who allow their lives to be controlled by others usually try to solve the problem by controlling someone else--and the most convenient and vulnerable ones to control are, of course, the children.

In the process of developing direction and purpose in one's life as an individual, satisfactions grow, personal needs are met, and the compulsion to live life vicariously--through the children--recedes to a realistic perspective. Then the burden is lightened, and the children can grow confidently, living their own lives for their own purposes.

In a word, freedom. In more words, respect for the rights of self and others to be who they are. If parents allow themselves to be jerked around by every demand made of them, if parents haven't a sense of personal freedom and independence, the pattern is set for the children to be exploited, taken advantage of, in the future.

#### **Stress Rises as Our Grasp on Life Slips Away**

The pressures of trying to make a living and raise children in these problem-ridden times often show up in anxieties that can drain away the joys of family life, if not sanity itself. Researchers at University of Indiana found that more than 33% of Americans have teetered on the edge of a nervous breakdown, and 7% of them had been diagnosed with serious mental health problems. (Highest in frequency were young white single mothers with low incomes.)

Examination of the accumulated stress leads to the source of it: the feeling of depression and anxiety due to lack of control of one's life. Frantically trying to meet demands from every direction--traffic laws, bills, school requirements, social obligations, job deadlines--can result in a negative, victim-minded mode. The next step may be self-pity, with lashing out at little things--and the little things are most often the children. Moral: So long as the parents' needs are not met, neither are the children's. Inasmuch as our lives are controlled by others, they are not our own. When others are in charge, life is very stressful.

Most parents want to be kinder, more understanding, more loving, but they are just too rushed, exhausted, and stressed out. Attempts to change the children into the model kids we have in mind for them can get very intense indeed, Punishment is resorted to at "wit's end", only to be followed by feelings of guilt for "losing patience".

No sane parent feels good about punishing, perhaps because they know inside that punishment works both ways: that it is, invariably, self-punishment as well. There has to be a better answer than forcing children into a mold, one that (we're told) will satisfy some institution, agency, organization or authority.

The reality is that no person can change another person without their cooperation. If there is to be any change, each parent and child has to affect the changes themselves. How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? Only one--but the light bulb has to want to change.

It is not the children who need changing so much as we adults. Children are, after all, closer than we are to that original natural goodness, while we adults are further along the road of deterioration from our innocent beginnings. We need to ask ourselves just what "improvements" we want to make in a given child, and why we want to impose them. We need to examine to see where the "faults" might better be self--corrected, and where shortcomings are really reflections of our imperfections. We can all agree, surely, that creating a calmer, slower, more relaxed, accepting and tolerant lifestyle can benefit both parents and the children.

What about parents' self-esteem?

In the last chapter we talked about how important it is that a child's self-esteem is preserved and maintained. These are not, of course, mutually exclusive. In fact, there can hardly be self-esteem fostered in the child if the parents feel inadequate, little self-worth, feels a failure in life, and habitually thinks in negative patterns about themselves.

It is a truism that a great deal of the punishment meted out in US families originates with parents' need to feel competent in the job of childrearing. While the intentions are good, the parenting skills are deficient.

The place to start is with yourself.  
Each move toward meeting  
your own needs and accepting yourself  
is an investment in the welfare  
of your family.  
--Dorothy C. Briggs, PhD

Much of amateur parenting advice now flooding the marketplace urges mothers and fathers to commit esteem-destroying and even violent punishment against children, practices long proven to cause hideous damage to their progeny--all in the name of "doing a good job of raising the children." Child abusers of the Sally Jesse Rafael and Dr. Dobson stripe easily find ready audiences with their "get-tough-with-discipline" diatribes. The "tough-love" and "difficult child" crowd, child-haters all, contribute on a grand scale to the awful suffering of children, and their parents too.

Their boot camp, revenge-rooted advice is not the answer to intelligent, caring childrearing, despite their claims of "hitting with love" and their self-righteous claims of "it's for their own good." We must not put the child-resenters and haters in charge of our lives and our children's lives.

#### Gaining Control Over Our Lives

As A. S. Neill said, no happy parent ever punished a child. The key to successful parenting is found in becoming a happier parent. It is the dissatisfied, depressed, low-esteem parent who nags, threatens, humiliates, and swats a child. Such treatment most often is the consequence of the parents having suffered identical treatment long ago, when they had no voice in their own lives.

Sometime, somewhere the cycle of abuse must be broken. Now we are faced with the happy choice: we can either be part of the problem, or part of the solution.

Parents who have not taken the responsibility of meeting their own needs cannot expect to meet the needs of children. So the question becomes, Where can I begin to resolve my own problems--the deep internal conflicts as well as the daily, external challenges?

Following are three problem areas in which a beginning can be made--TODAY--in taking over control of one's life. Said Mark Twain: The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking the complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one.

#### I. Less Law, More Order Structure For Daily Life

Helen and Scott Nearing, authors of *Living the Good Life*, did only four hours' "bread labor" to meet their food and shelter needs; then four hours' writing and

researching; and four hours teaching visitors how to live better and happier lives. Scott lived to age 100, Helen to near 90. Masters of organization and efficiency, they wrote and published dozens of books, hosted thousands of visitors, and inspired millions of people to have courage, take control, and "live the self-reliant good life."

In taking on too much and demanding perfection of oneself, life quickly becomes a frantic rat race. What works: Developing tolerance for oneself leads to more tolerance for the children's "falling" short of perfection, too. Conversely, more acceptance of the children's shortcomings brings increasing understanding of our own mistakes. Compassion begins with self-appreciation, and self-forgiveness.

### 1. Organizing Stuff

Clutter problems can be solved by the triage method. Sort all the stuff into three basic categories:

Trash--or give away to friends all that you haven't used in the past 12 months. Options: for items of value, hold a yard sale or get the tax advantage in giving it to charity Store--items truly useful to you in coming year. Store keepsakes, objects of sentimental value separate from merely utilitarian stuff. Keep--handy only that which you use daily, weekly or monthly. Better to list what you have stored and use rarely, and keep list handy instead. Option with children: accept the mess, this is the time in life to enjoy the chaos--until they grow up and leave.

### 2. Organizing Time

List priorities: What is of most--and least--importance? Apply the 80/20 rule: Spending 80% of energy, time, and resources on lowest 20% of priority list calls for adjustment in time allocation.

Trust persistent efforts toward clear goal; 1/2 hour each day accumulates to over 180 hours a year. In this way, John Holt (Never Too Late) taught himself to play the cello at age 55.

Don't work faster; don't work longer. Work smarter. Delegate responsibilities: one secret of success is to find out what you don't do well and delegate it to someone who is good at it. One secret of failure is dodging criticism by trying to please everybody.

### 3. Money Management

1. Get rid of credit cards; hold one bank debit card. If you must have one credit card, pay the balance promptly every month.



2. Keep a record of expenses in a small notebook for 2 or 3 months; a study of expenditure patterns may bring surprises in where the money goes. Again: apply the 80/20 rule.
3. Calculate total annual net income, deduct all regular monthly bills for one year
4. List and schedule payment of major routine bills--taxes, car insurance, membership dues, gifts
5. Trace where the rest of the money goes each month (approximately)
6. Design the monthly budget (factor in emergencies, savings/investments, car repair, medical emergencies, etc.)
7. Get a disciplined hold on indulgence spending by planning every shopping trip, carrying a list, and sticking to it.
8. Heed the Nearings' motto: Pay no interest, and pay as you go.
9. Use direct deposit to money market account, consider DRIP investments (Dividend Re-Investment Programs). Rule: Pay yourself first--10% of income.
10. Idea: use two checkbooks: First to pay monthly bills, (utilities, food, mortgage), the second use as a savings account for non-routine expenses like gifts, travel, emergency car repair, etc. This helps to avoid luxury purchases by credit card.

#### 4. Managing Family

Family management is much less problematic when the home operates on democratic principles. This way responsibilities are shared by delegation, lot, or choice, and all are working toward agreed-upon common goals. Find out how in chapter 6.

#### II. Maintaining Health

##### Physical Exercise Discipline

Galloway's Book on Running, by Jeff Galloway (Shelter Publications, Inc. Box 279, Bolinas, CA 94924 \$8.95) tells how to start a running program:

1. Walk 1/2 hour daily "until it feels easy"
2. Move to brisk walking; check heart rate every five or so minutes
3. "When comfortable" with that, "insert a few jogs of about 100 yards"

4. As strength builds, gradually add running and lessen walking time, but not at the cost of discomfort
5. Adjust exercise time to 40 minutes, three times weekly
6. Increase to one hour, by one workout for three weeks.

See also: Body Bulletin, 33 Minor St., Emmaus, PA 18098. Monthly: \$14

#### Nutrition Discipline

Conquer the three white poisons: sugar, salt, and bleached flour. consumption of these by the ton has given millions of Americans hypoglycemia and worse health problems. Sugar alone can drive children crazy, leaving school people to diagnose the problem as Attention Deficit Disorder, and parents to punish "hyperactivity" as offensive behavior.

Following junk and sugar control:

1. Go with natural, organic foods
2. Eat raw vegetables and fruit when possible, and lots of it
3. Eat several small meals instead of three large ones
4. Eat a good breakfast, include some fruit
5. Whatever your present consumption of meat, reduce it
6. Drink alcohol and caffeine beverages only in moderation if at all
7. Consult Dr. Andrew Saul, naturopath: [www.DoctorYourself.com](http://www.DoctorYourself.com)

#### III. Renewing Strength And Spirit

##### Our Daily Break

The Chinese Army learned they could march night and day indefinitely so long as they took a break every hour. Secret to survival: regular rest breaks. Similarly, college students' grades were higher among those who, during study periods, took 10 min every hour to stretch, walk outside for air, and look at the mountains.

For the householder, stress can be managed with the 30-minute centering break once or twice daily. That which is invested in renewal is gained in efficiency, health, and quietude.

Relaxation can save you

Nap-taking is becoming popular even in industry, where enlightened management discovered that work efficiency rises with the nap break. Workers

lay pads on the floor, remove shoes, and nap for 30 minutes on company time. In countries with the tradition of siestas, there is far less heart disease.

Breathing break at home: lie on back on floor, arms outstretched, feet apart. Fix eyes on spot on ceiling, center mind on breath, rising, falling, rising, falling. Each time you notice the mind has wandered, simply and persistently lead thoughts back to air: rising, falling. This can help slow down the internal dialogue, the self-judgments and anxiety about past and future.

Persistence is the way, not struggling for success, fighting for control. It's practice, like piano scales. Just keep doing it and don't be concerned with thoughts of failure or mistakes. Or success. Just do it. And be sure radio, TV, stereo, and phone ringer are off.

Saunas, steam baths, hot tubs, and sweat lodges: all have traditionally provided relaxation to cultures from Finland to Siberia to Japan. Next best is to draw a hot bath at home and have a leisurely soak.

Back rubs: For a few minutes have your partner or professional gently work your neck and shoulder muscles, then the large back muscles parallel to the spinal column. Alone, you can work out the tension and pain around your neck, temples, face, chest, arms, legs. Be gentle with yourself; do not overdo.

#### Stress Control Discipline

1. Say no without guilt--you cannot, like St Paul, be all things to all people.
2. Leave 10 minutes early; that's all it takes to end the rushing, the fretting about being late. You can arrive quiet and composed and smiling.
3. Create routines: those tasks that must be done frequently and the same way every time can be done efficiently, when assigned a time and place to do them.
4. Do what you can as best you can, then stop. Don't worry about falling short of your goals. W. S. Maugham, nearing age 90, said, "The greatest thing I have learned from life is to regret nothing."
5. Things to avoid: talk radio, violent TV, "action" movies, aggressive people.
6. Take time in speaking, take time in listening. Surprisingly pleasant things happen.
7. Welcome change--might as well, it's the law. Every cat knows that if it relaxes and stays alert, change will bring opportunity.
8. Confront and stare down the "victim" thoughts in your mind, the "sacrifice" role.

9. To the strict teacher on your shoulder saying, "Don't make a mistake or I'll punish you!"--say "Shut up and get off my back--I'm in charge now."

10 Do something each day that you really enjoy, and its enjoyment depends only on no one but you. [See below]

#### Our Daily Pleasure

The habit of indulging in pleasures whenever a task is completed or when feeling self-pity can be destructive and debilitating. The way to break it is by scheduling a specific--but limited--time each day for enjoying your favorite pleasures. Here are some stressless suggestions:

Listen to Mozart, Bach and Beethoven  
take a walk in the woods  
give more hugs and kisses  
rent a comedy or musical video  
indulge in star gazing  
play guitar or piano--well or badly  
play chess, checkers, pinochle...  
Establishing Priorities

Are you spending most of your time on the things you consider least important? If so, apply the 80/20 rule: Concentrate energies on the top one or two priorities of importance in your life, leave the 20% of time, resources and effort to the least in importance in your hierarchy of values. [Where does your equanimity and parental effectiveness rank in importance? What is at risk when that is lost or impaired?]

#### Continuing Narrative:

##### Toys and Tools for Real

When the boys were small we did not make such a big deal of Christmas as other families did. The major celebrations took place on their birthdays. To avoid the commercializing holiday-festival-what-am-I-gonna-get craziness, we liked to give a few gifts at Christmastime's Winter Solstice, and Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice, and Fall Equinox. We made up 91-day calendars and had a "Springmas" party, etc., and thus had four "mas-es" a year. We found the mere changing of seasons sufficient reason to marvel and celebrate.

We preferred a few real gifts instead of many fake and frivolous ones. A real Polaroid camera with a supply of film got lots of use. With an inexpensive microscope we found excitement taking turns to examine bread crumbs, sugar grains, various woods, green leaves, topsoil, paper. Lots of art supplies were needed to replenish the ever-depleting stock. Tricycles and toy tractors, a swing set were must items, and later on, bicycles, sports equipment, and walkie-talkies. We never copped out with an "ungift" of socks or underwear, and no gift came burdened with the sneaky "educational" motive behind it.

When they clamored to use my electric typewriter, I said they could have their own. For \$3 we found a used Royal mechanical typewriter, which they promptly dismantled. Their interest was not then in creative writing so much as finding out how the thing worked. They were content with dictating their stories to Daddy while he did the typing.

One of biggest hits was the chess set. We all learned the game together, studying the moves and rules from a book as we went. Henry and Russell are both fine chess players today, though, alas, their father cannot make the same claim.

Perhaps among the most important gifts were real tools. No child wants to live in a fake world, and nothing real could be done with plastic hammers and screwdrivers. As a result, they developed a respect for tools, took good care of them, and borrowed Daddy's tools only after asking permission.

-----

*Parenting Without Punishing*

Chapter 9

---

**Letter to Children and Adolescents of All Nations: You Are No Longer Alone If You Dare To Protest**

From Dr. Alice Miller, psychiatrist, author of *For Your Own Good--Hidden Cruelty in Childrearing and the Roots of Violence*

c/o Suhrkamp Verlag, Lindenstr. 29-35, D--60325 Frankfurt am Main, Switzerland  
November 2000

(paragraph numbers are keyed to Norm Lee's comments below)

Dear Friends,

[1] I want to pass on to you information that some of you might already have but most of you--I guess more than ninety percent--have never been allowed to become familiar with. It is the information that all kinds of corporal punishment (spanking, hitting, beating) of children by their parents and teachers are profoundly immoral and dangerous for their future. They have the right to protest against this humiliation since most governments (except the USA and Senegal) signed the United Nations Convention that obliged them to protect children's rights.

[2] Out of almost two hundred countries that signed this convention, only eleven actually did what they had promised by clearly forbidding by law to beat children (among them Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Holland and Germany).

Even Allowed to Hit Children in Schools

[3] The other countries, however, don't change anything in their old habits. In most of them it is even allowed to hit children in schools, not only in Africa and Asia but also in twenty three states of the USA, among them Texas, where George Bush, the current Presidential candidate for the USA, has been governor for many years.

---

... all kinds of corporal punishment

(spanking, hitting, beating)

of children by their parents and

teachers are profoundly

immoral and dangerous...

--For Your Own Good

---

#### Spanking Teaches Violence

[4] I know that children are dependent on their parents, and will fear even more cruelty if they speak out or try to defend themselves. Not without reasons. However, I want to let you know, all of you, that spanking children is absolutely wrong and that today you are no longer alone if you dare to protest. The opinion that inflicting suffering one who is weaker can be [a good thing] has been passed on for millennia to the succeeding generations. Today, it is already scientifically proven that spanking children teaches them violence and creates fear. It is also severely humiliating. It can't help anybody. Ever.

[5] The only reason why your parents continue to believe in this misleading message and to beat you is the fact that they too were beaten and silenced when they were small children. They learned this wrong lesson very early, and it is difficult for them to get rid of it. They believe that children don't suffer because this was what they were told. Thus their sensibility for the suffering they inflict on you is frozen.

#### Your Protest Can Help Them to Wake Up

[6] Maybe, some of you can find access to their frozen feelings and open their heart because you love your parents and your parents want to love you. As you are better informed than they are your protest can help them to wake up, to melt the ice, to open their eyes and to stop humiliating you. Then, they will appreciate the unique human being you are and learn to respect your body, your feelings, and your need for honest communication. I hope that as soon as you confront them with the information you are getting here, the bewitched castle of their mind will start to crumble, the heritage they received from their parents will no longer resist your knowledge. They will become able to give up the misleading opinions.

---

Children tend to blame themselves

for their parents' cruelty

--For Your Own Good

---

#### Why I Decided to Encourage You

[7] Why did I decide to give you this encouragement? Because I believe in your curiosity and in the power of your awareness. I spent twenty years of my life helping adults to overcome the main consequences of the severe abuse they had endured in their childhood: the denial, the blindness and the tendency to abuse their own children. [8] Then, over the following twenty years, I did research on childhood and I wrote ten books to let people know that children are born

innocent and that they need love, care and protection, but never violence, to become compassionate adults. When children are lacking this, or when they are treated violently instead, they will glorify cruelty and will become cruel to others or to themselves or both. My books reached many readers but these readers still belong to a small minority of people. The majority still urgently needs the information.

---

Scared children learn only to lie and to pretend

--For Your Own Good

---

#### Spanking Prevents Learning

[9] For a long time I was puzzled by the fact that even very intelligent people could say children need to be spanked so that they could better learn at school. I wondered why it was not obvious to them that you can't learn anything of value in a state of fear. Scared children learn only to deal with fear, to lie and to pretend. And above all, they strongly wish revenge. Most of them will take revenge as soon as they get power. Tyrants such as Stalin, Hitler and Mao gave us a lesson about what happens then. They were mercilessly beaten as children, denied their pain and later inflicted their denied suffering and helplessness on entire nations.

#### Earliest, Buried Memories Are Strongest

[10] I eventually came to understand that the memory of the first years of life stored up in the body is stronger than everything we learn later at schools and universities. This memory of the first experiences, although it stays unconscious, can drive parents crazy and let them believe that they act in the interest of their child. Thanks to the new research on the child's brain, we can realize that the brain of a parent who was beaten as a child is already programmed to believe in the effectiveness of punishment and spanking.

#### The Poison in the Pedagogy

[11] Today, many best-selling books about childrearing pretend to be updated and to have integrated the new psychological knowledge, but usually they look to provide parents with the same means they themselves were brought up. They give advice on how to control, reign, manipulate and humiliate children in the most effective and undetectable way. Unfortunately the readers often overlook the poison in this pedagogy, because as children they were never allowed to see and to name it.

---

For some years now there has been proof that the devastating effects of [corporal punishment] take their toll on society--a fact that we are still forbidden to recognize

--For Your Own Good

---



[12] If we [parents] are not looking for power, our children [will] want to cooperate with us. They are interested in cooperation as a way of communication. But for doing that, they need to trust us. We are by no means trustworthy if we try to govern them just to escape our helplessness.

[13] Today, it is no longer allowable to beat one's wife, to have slaves, or to beat criminals in jail. The only thing still allowed is to beat a helpless child, even a baby, and to call it discipline. It is time to stop this practice, to reject this cruel, immoral, dangerous and absurd tradition, and to inform children as widely as possible about their rights. [Your] power lies precisely in this information. It is up to this generation to replace the tradition without knowledge--by the knowledge without tradition.

Alice Miller

Zurich, Switzerland

My best regards and thanks for your newsletters. They are really absolutely free of poisonous pedagogy and my friends and I appreciate them very much. --Alice Miller, Zurich, Switzerland

Commentary by Norm Lee

Dr. Alice Miller, for twenty years, provided psychoanalytic therapy for adult patients before deciding that it would be better to work at preventing the awful damage done to people in their childhood, and so reduce the sum total of human pain and suffering.

So she closed her office practice and devoted the succeeding twenty years to writing more than ten books. Probably the best known and most influential of these (translated into several languages from the original German) is For Your Own Good--Hidden Cruelty in Childrearing and the Roots of Violence.

The subtitle is significant, for it shows that most of the harm done to children is not obvious, but continues unseen or ignored by us all. And that it is on precisely this "dirty little secret" that light must shine, for it is this hidden cruelty that is at the bottom of almost all the violence, crime, and suffering that we see every day--in our own lives and in society.

[The numbers in brackets refer to Dr. Miller's paragraphs above.] [1] Scientists have shown, in research over the past 50 years, that physical punishment is without question a root cause of children growing up with violent tendencies, with significantly more mental illness, more likelihood of committing serious crimes against people and property, and with more chance of failing in marriage and employment.

For all the talk about "learning right from wrong" that we hear from the "strict discipline" and "tough love" crowd, the spanking, slapping and shaking of children is clearly a moral wrong, as well as an offense against society. Any and all physical attack on a child is abuse, plain and simple, the abundance of euphemisms notwithstanding. To our shame, our United States government refused to sign the UN resolution to protect children from assault. It is clear that we have much work to do.

[2] At this writing the list of countries in Europe alone that ban all corporal punishment of children--even by parents in their homes--include: Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Norway, Italy, Cyprus, Croatia, and Latvia. In addition, dozens of countries around the world, including Thailand, U.K., Kenya, Japan, Israel, India, Belgium, Australia, and many others, have passed laws against corporal punishment in schools.

[3] In Texas schools, 81,373 children were beaten with paddles during the 1997-98 school year. That is an average of 814 children every month, tortured, some very seriously injured, and all traumatized. These figures, from The Office for Civil Rights, were given voluntarily by school officials. Says PTAVE (Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education), "The schools of Texas are untouchable behind their bulwark of skillful obfuscation, habitual buck passing, silence, and denial."

[4] To recognize physical punishment as a moral wrong, one needs only to read the words of Jesus of Nazareth. I knew that to be so very early in my life, even as I was beaten without provocation. I also became aware of the rage within me at having been so hideously treated. Then for fifty years I looked for sufficient scientific proof of what I already knew to be true: That the violence I saw on the street was a direct result of the violent treatment of children. Now a quarter century of research has at last documented and proven the extent of the appalling harm done to children when they are assaulted. It is now beyond question, beyond a matter of opinion or theory. There can no longer be excuse or defense. There is no place for spankers, paddlers, and child-bashers to hide. Better that their demands for a change of behavior be made on themselves.

-----  
Child abuse is still sanctioned-- indeed, held in high regard--

in our society

as long as it is defined

as child-rearing.

--For Your Own Good  
-----

[5] The fact that parents, themselves, were victims of violence is no justification for passing it on to the next generation. Help is in the form of therapy and parenting classes is readily available free in every community in America, and on Internet. No child need ever be struck again.

[6] Readers can gain much self-insight by reading Dr. Miller's discussion, in *For Your Own Good*, of our hideous history of violent childrearing (now called "traditional"), and how we can overcome this "poisonous pedagogy." For the price of soup and a sandwich you can benefit from the wisdom of Dr. Miller's half-century of experience in psychiatry.

[7] I agree that the time has come to speak directly to the young victims of violence, those spanked and slapped and paddled by parents, "care-givers" and schoolmasters. No one, especially a child, should accept the opinion that they deserve to suffer. We can begin with the same words that the feminists uttered so effectively years ago:

No One Deserves To Be Hit.

No One.

[8] In *In Thou Shalt Not Be Aware, Society's Betrayal of the Child*, Dr Miller explains how this Eleventh Commandment, is obeyed by the mistreated child--"all of us"--because of our belief during childhood that we were to blame for our suffering.

*The Drama Of The Gifted Child--The Search for the True Self* is a best-selling book about which the New York Times said, "Rare and compelling in its compassion and its unassuming eloquence... her examples are so vivid and so ordinary that they touch the hurt child in us all."

[9] "Fear is the enemy of learning," said John Holt, author of *How Children Learn*, *Teach Your Own*, and *Instead of Education*. I worked with him for several years (before his death from cancer) in showing parents how to remove their children from abusive and incompetent schools, and teach them at home.

You will find a most enlightening essay on Hitler's childhood in *For Your Own Good*; how the brutal treatment by his father was translated into the murder of millions of European citizens and children.

[10] People often try to minimize their attacks on children, saying "a little spank once in a while doesn't hurt them," when it is obvious that corporal punishment is their sole understanding of "discipline." One mother, after vehemently denying that spanking was harmful, flatly lied to me, claiming she used only "a slight pat," and she lightly patted my arm.

The local superintendent of schools, when I questioned him about his practice of paddling "misbehaving" children, became violent, leaped from his chair with a yell in red-faced rage, in defense of his school district's policy of battering children with those wooden weapons. The paddles were "not used often," was his claim, which told me that this churchman knew it was wrong. But as a politician, he also knew he had the backing of the board of education, the public, and his church.

-----

The only thing still allowed  
is to beat a helpless child...  
and call it "discipline."  
--For Your Own Good

-----

[11] Publishers know that anyone who offers a solution to "discipline," especially if tied to fundamental religious biases, will sell. If I may be permitted to express an opinion: Combine the primitive child-rearing doctrine of James Dobson with the "compassionate" fascism of Texas Gov. Bush, plus the dark-ages mindset of Jerry Falwell and Bob Jones, and you have a recipe for destroying the coming generation of children--and our society with it.

[12] If we have betrayed the natural trust of a child, the remedy cannot wait for a later time: begin work on the road back to building trust again, starting with being honest and trustful, as well as trustworthy.

[13] Extremism in parenting--the "hit 'em and neglect 'em" approach so widely practiced--is, I think, as much due to ignorance as it is to buried aggression. I, myself, after having been beaten routinely and frequently for five of my childhood years, read and researched enough to understand the innocent and loving nature of children, and the damage that any sort of punishment could inflict on a vulnerable and trusting being.

The result was that my two children, while (unwittingly) teaching me about themselves and children in general, also taught me some surprising things about myself. They tapped into my gentle true nature, and showed me, to my astonishment and joy, that my lack of patience was no obstacle to non-punitive parenting. When understanding is there, punishment is anachronistic, if not downright atavistic.

Continuing Narrative:

It's Not Work If You Enjoy It

The summer their mother had a lengthy stay in the hospital, the two boys--then ages 7 1/2 and 6--increased their already brisk pace toward self-reliant living. Together we planted seed flats, and later set the seedlings out in the newly dug garden. At harvest time we canned green beans, sweet corn, and tomatoes.

We created shopping lists, and trips to the market became adventures in frugal food shopping. That led to sharing meal preparation. Eggs were Henry's first enthusiasm, and he served up deviled eggs with pride. Russell sole dish, canned spaghetti, was inflicted on us repeatedly until his clientele banged cups in protest.

The menus we made--real works of art--grew larger as new dishes were created. I donned bow tie and cummerbund one day, placed a tea towel over my arm and, playing the haughty but excruciatingly polite waiter, presented the menus with my nose in the air. Then the boys had to do it, too, of course, and kitchen "work" became one of the happiest times of the day. P.S. Their first paying jobs were as cooks. And before going to college Henry became a respected cook in the finest restaurant in town.

---

## **TRADITIONAL CHILDREARING**

### **The History of Parenting Practices: A Brief Summary\***

Reading even a short survey of the ghastly treatment of children in times past can be disturbing. Therefore for this chapter, this is an Advisory Warning to minors, the unstable, and those individuals with weak stomachs: The horrors that follow are ugly and unsettling.

Yet these patterns of childhood treatment are the very basis of our "traditional" methods of childrearing. It was, as now, thought to be "discipline," and responsible "preparation for life." Unless the child was murdered, abandoned, or rented out.

All practices shown here have been documented in all areas of the world and in all periods of human history, including our own. In Arizona today there are parents who kill their babies at birth as they did (and do) in primate and pre-literate cultures; they rape and sodomize them as did the Greeks and Romans; they give them away, beat them and abandon them as in early Christian times; they use them for perverse and sexual gratification as was commonly acceptable in the Middle Ages. And as the influence of the church spread, the children were targeted with the projected guilt of God-fearing parents. Evidence of this "traditional" childrearing we see in our newspapers and TV every day.

As a human race, we have much work to do in becoming human, in making ourselves worthy of the love, admiration and affection every child naturally bestows.

#### **I. Killing and Raping Stage**

**The Hunter-Gatherer Tradition** Archeological evidence indicates that in the earliest cultures children's skulls were cracked open for access to the brains--to dine on raw or toasted over a fire. In the Pleistocene diggings it is clear that more girl babies than boys were killed and consumed; four times more boy skeletons can be found. Scientists estimate that as many as half of all babies were killed in those times, a traditional practice that was to be passed on for at least 400 generations. The tradition of incest harks back to the primates as well. Jane

Goodall's work with apes teaches us that it is normal for the mothers of baboons and chimpanzees to derive sexual pleasure from their babies. As for humans, even today the men in some New Guinea tribes gang rape young girls, and use boys up to teen age for anal intercourse. In some tribes adult men take school-age boys as concubines for daily and forcible fellatio.

It is not only the men who are culpable. Their mothers, too, readily and commonly prey upon their own children for sexual satisfaction, having begun with orgasmic pleasure experienced while breastfeeding. (So much for the mythical "incest taboo.")

## **II. Sodomizing Children for Fun & Profit**

**The "Noble" Greeks and Romans** The fact that the raping of children was traditional in Greek and Roman times is a matter of historical record. The sexual victimization of young girls was commonly accepted as perfectly normal. Bisexuality was not unusual. The condemnation of Socrates for "corrupting the young" was not for his enjoyment of boys' bodies but for his persistent questioning in search of wisdom--behavior always found threatening by the politically powerful in any age.

-----  
Tiberius "taught children of the most tender years, whom he called his little fishes, to play between his legs while he was in his bath... Those which had not yet been weaned, but were strong and hearty, he set at fellatio..."  
-----

Pre-pubescent girls were given to older men as brides, and fathers customarily gave away their seven-year-old sons to men friends to be used as boy-brides. An essay by Plutarch, (d. 120 A.D.) read widely without objection, gave instruction on how one should best choose the friend to sodomize their son or daughter.

In comedies at the time, little girls were raped on stage as audiences roared with laughter. Contemporary physicians commented on the rarity of finding a girl at puberty who still retained her hymen.

Sex-slavery was rampant in every populated area. Houses of prostitution featured young children at premium prices; rent-a-boy and rent-a-girl businesses flourished. The wealthy found it necessary to buy pedagogues--slaves assigned to protect boys from sexual attack on the street. It is a matter of record that laws were passed requiring schools to close before dark, lest the teachers rape their pupils.

Petronius, at once Nero's "Judge of Taste" and popular satirist, thrilled audiences with his "Satyricon," an obscene romance, and repeatedly touted the joys of playing with a young boy's "immature little tool." (He eventually committed suicide, though not from guilt.)

Tiberius, a Roman general and later, emperor, was reported to have "taught children of the most tender years, whom he called his little fishes, to play between his legs while he was in his bath."

As though not enough, he also gratified himself with suckling babies: "Those which had not yet been weaned, but were strong and hearty, he set at fellatio..."

-----  
Laws were passed requiring that schools close before dark, lest the teachers rape their pupils  
-----

### **III. The Child Throw-Away, Give-Away Tradition**

**[Dark ages 300-800, & Middle 500-1500]** The introduction and spread of Christianity was generally a weak deterrent to the practice of infanticide, and its teachings did little to dissuade parents from abandoning their children. The tradition of drowning or strangling the crippled and physically unsound babies continued as the family planning method of choice, and healthy but unwanted female babies were still left by the roadside or trash heaps much as living babies in plastic bags are tossed into dumpsters today.

-----  
Reports of the time show that even infants and toddlers were commonly whipped and bludgeoned, in vivid descriptions of beatings resulting in bloody and bruised genital areas.  
-----

The parents, Christian and unbelievers alike, simply didn't want to raise their own children. The custom of leaving "foundlings" on the doorsteps of churches arose, since they could be taken in to make Christians of the infant and toddler surplus, the cast-offs, the seconds, and the annoying. (To be either colic or disobedient was often fatal.) Few were turned away; according to historical accounts, children also served to gratify the sex-deprived monks. Thus child abandonment became institutionalized as orphanages sprang up and the Christian population grew.

### **Children As Personal Property**

Because children were traditionally considered their personal property, as they are today, the "owners" felt they could do with impunity whatever they pleased with them. Some children were sold outright, while others were sent into servitude to earn their keep until old enough to work for their family.

As the influence of Christianity spread, so did the practice of corporal punishment for erotic pleasure. Children were, as they are today, the objects of their caretakers' evil projections. Believed to be the hosts of demons, (as evidenced by their "bad" behavior,) the children had to have "the devil beaten out of them."



It was the opinion of St. Augustine [c.400 A.D.] that children who cry too often "suffer from a demon," thus providing powerful church authority to justify sadistic beatings. Reports of the time say that even infants and toddlers were commonly whipped and bludgeoned, shown in vivid descriptions of beatings resulting in bloody and bruised genital areas.

Brutality was considered a normal and expected part of a child's life. Virtually all children suffered these "lessons," countless dying agonizing deaths as a result of unchallenged traditions of child treatment. There was always a surplus of babies, and the prevailing view was, "There are always more where they came from." So the suffering of children (and their mothers) was not recognized as problematic. Those who survived childhood rationalized that it did them good, and, to demonstrate that conviction, brutalized their own children.

-----  
It was the opinion of St. Augustine [c.400 A.D.] that children who cry too often "suffer from a demon," thus providing further church authority for sadistic beatings.  
-----

A variety of tools were employed in "disciplining" children, including canes, rods, sticks, whips, and even shovels. A special instrument, "the discipline," made of small chains bound at the handle end, was used for special infractions of rules. The torture tool designed for use in schools was known as "the flapper," a paddle with round holes meant to raise blisters. A rule of thumb for beatings became traditional, and continues to this day, preserved in a 13th century law: "If one beats a child until it bleeds, then it will remember, but if one beats it to death, the law applies." Yet there are few records of prosecutions. Public support for such "discipline" was based on the near-unanimous opinion: It was for the children's own good. People defended, as they do today, the application of "the rod" to teach right thinking and strict obedience. "It did me good, and it will do my children good." Thus brutalization and the suffering were passed on from generation to generation.

-----  
A special instrument, "the discipline," made of small chains bound at the handle end, was used for special infractions of rules.  
-----

Rarely did a reformer raise a protest, but when one did it was typically with this advice: Parents and teachers should not "strike and buffet them about the face and head, and to lace upon them like malt sacks with cudgels, staves, fork or fire shovel," lest they die from the "discipline." Instead, "Hit him upon the sides ... with the rod, [so] he shall not die thereof." *Sacrifice of Children in the New World*

Mention must be made here of the Aztec practice of sacrificing children as well as war prisoners in the belief it would please the gods. The selecting of young virgin girls (a high honor) to be killed on the sacrificial alters continued through the 15th and 16th centuries, until Cortez destroyed the Aztec Empire in 1521. During that time period, thousands of children were placed naked on a stone slab, their throats slashed open by a priest, their hearts ripped from their breasts and held, dripping, to the sky, for the approval of the gods Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl.

#### **IV. Love Them, Hate Them Stage [Renaissance 1350--1650]**

In Europe, the practice of swaddling (binding children to keep them immobile) during their first year gradually gave way to "only" a few months. But then parents felt obliged to enforce controls to suppress the "exuberance" that swaddling had made impossible. Punishment was the principal (or sole) teaching method employed to enforce conformity to behavioral standards. "Bending as the twig; shaping as the clay" was the predominant thinking, with the Bible--that is, tradition--the authority on pediatrics. While the "beat them into shape" pedagogical method continued (as it does today), there arose in the 13th century isolated signs of objection to the use of children as slaves and for the satisfaction of sexual appetites. Not surprisingly, such radical thinking was vigorously resisted.

Still, "gentlemen" were seen on the street flanked by the mistress on one side, and boy kept for sodomy purposes on the other. Martin Luther, among millions of others, was no lover of children. He complained, "[What is] more obnoxious than ten children with their crapping, eating, and screaming?"

The period of change we now know as the Renaissance that brought new ways and ideas to the arts and sciences also brought about changes (though very slowly) in raising children. New thinking held, for example, that it might be better for mothers to nurse their own infants rather than employ "wet nurses," as was then customary.

During the years between Chaucer and Shakespeare--roughly between 1400 and 1600 A.D., a change took place in the psyches of the general populace. Wrote Dr. deMause, "[This] much-improved child-rearing allowed the schizoid and borderline personalities of antiquity and medieval times--who regularly heard voices and hallucinated visions--to move on to the more integrated, less splitting modern neurotic personality more familiar to recent times."

**V. Fear, Force, & Punishment Stage [1600--1850]** During the time Shakespeare's work was being published and performed, (late 1500s) children were still beaten, but not as routinely on a daily basis. Nor were infants so often swaddled and given daily enemas to remove "badness." Sexual exploitation, however, continued to be commonly practiced. It was around 1540 when Queen

Elizabeth, as a young child, was being sexually abused. Historians tell us that in 1603, the entire court of baby Louis XIII kissed his penis and breasts. His parents routinely included him in their bedtime sexual pleasures, in the 17th century version of the family bed. Mme. du Barry (1760) kept busy procuring small girls for King Louis XV to rape.

Yet in the 18th century serious efforts began in reforming the widespread and common practice of sexual abuse. While formerly adults masturbated children and licked their bodies, the sin was now projected to the child, who was then punished accordingly. For touching their own genitals, children were terrorized with threats of circumcision, castration, clitoridectomy, and such mutilations. The corrective remedy for masturbation, child experts of the time recommended denying food to the child for an assigned number of days, or imprisoning in a dark closet. On visiting a typical home, a con-temporary eye-witness described it as: "... a sort of little Bastille, in every closet of which was to be found a culprit-- some were sobbing and repeating verbs..."

Gradually the practice of exploiting the child for sexual gratification was replaced by brutalizing for "touching themselves." And as late as the 1930s, the tiny hands of the Dionne quintuplets, on orders of their pediatrician, were tied to their cribs to prevent "disgusting" self-exploration.

### **What 1750 Was Like for a Child**

Psychological terror gradually took the place of the physical brutality. Children were taken to view decaying corpses and preached moral lessons the while. Highly moral parents had them watch public executions, and then beat them, the better to impress on the memory. An entire class of school children would be marched, as on a field trip, to watch criminals being hanged, for the opportunity to teach a lesson on the virtue of obedience was not to be missed. It cannot be doubted that the trauma disturbed them all their lives.

Indeed, there were widespread reports of nightmares, phobias, hallucinations, and psychosis. The child's world was one of terrifying ghosts, bogeymen, ghouls, ogres, witches, goblins, and demons. "Caregivers" dressed themselves in frightful costumes and sprang on the children in their beds, to impress on them some moral admonition. Teaching by terror became the enlightened, humane way of preparing children for life.

### **Child Psychology Begins**

The emergence of childhood psychology theorists in 18th century, Middle Europe spawned manuals on child care and taught methods, almost all of which focused on suppressing children's natural exuberance and forcing submission to authority. Beginning around 1750 certain German writers in the fledgling science of psychology urged the absolute necessity of exacting strict obedience. Dr. Alice Miller, in her *For Their Own Good*, quotes one such "authority," J. Sulzer, who

wrote in 1748: "If willfulness and wickedness are not driven out, it is impossible to give a child a good education."

It is necessary, he went on, "to drive out willfulness from the very beginning by means of scolding and the rod..." It must begin "in the child's first year."

The influence of these early theorists on our practices today cannot be overestimated. These are precisely the "discipline" methods that Attorney General Janet Reno urged on parents in a 1989 TV interview, 141 years later. "Begin in the crib!" she admonished. "Teach them right from wrong from the very beginning!" Sulzer's education philosophy was similar. He wrote, "Obedience is so important that all education is actually nothing other than learning how to obey."

(Need we note that the second generation brought up heeding this expert's counsel brought on World War One; the third generation gave us World War Two, which killed over fifty million people?)

A manner of "non-violent parenting" very gradually came to be accepted, where alternatives to beating and torturing were used as cures for the child's "sins": Psychological punishment was considered the "humane" way to reform erring children. But change was exceedingly slow. Even during the 1800s in Florence, Italy, more than half of all newborns were abandoned on the street or put into homes for foundlings. There they stayed for their first five ("annoying") years. Then, when obedience trained, they would be returned to live with their parents. And even as late as 1900, in Paris, over 90% of the newborn babies were taken to farmers' wives to be wet-nursed.

Thus history shows that the much-revered "mother love" is a myth, not at all instinctual. The championing of "family values" among Christians is hardly a sentiment founded on tradition. They simply refused to care for their children, and there was no commandment admonishing, "Honor thy sons and daughters." It would have sounded as absurd to them as advising "love thy burro." Says Dr. deMause, "... by the nineteenth century parents would less often commit incest themselves, but still sent their children to schools where they were erotically whipped on the bare buttocks ..."

To paraphrase Bertrand Russell, here is our one-sentence History of Childrearing: Adults have never refrained from inflicting on children any cruelty of which they were capable.

The End.

### **Continuing Narrative:**

**Life At Pooh Corner** Bedtime stories included Winnie the Pooh, with the ridiculous adventures of that silly bear, and Kanga, Roo, Eeyore and the rest,

stories so exquisitely absurd that Russell and Henry laughed until they had to be carried from the room and up to bed. In the summertime we'd trudge down the hill through the pasture to our "Pooh Corner," a just-right place with a waterfall. Here it was that we made up our own stories of squirrels, deer, mice, and rabbits, all of whom talked, and some of whom lived in underground burrows with castles filled with buckets of chocolate.

Nearby a small grove of trees became the camping spot where we pitched a tent and stayed overnight in blissful adventure. There were nights that friends were invited to camp with us, to double the pleasure.

Where the stream fed into a meandering brook, the spring rains had scooped out a swimming hole. Here the boys taught themselves to swim, simply by doing it.

Thus the failure to find an apartment in town, as it turned out, provided experiences for us to treasure all our lives. What could be more idyllic for small boys than tramping through a cow pasture with dog and Daddy to explore a small stream with a waterfall, make up fantasies about talking animals, tent-camp under the stars and trees, and skinny dip in the brook?

---

**OUR HERITAGE OF CHILD REPRESSION**  
**Seeds of Today's Punishment Tradition Were Sown in 1800s**

"The history of childhood has been a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken," said Dr. Lloyd deMause in his introduction to *The History of Child Abuse*.

"The further back in history one goes, the more massive the cruelty and neglect one finds, and the more likely children are to have been killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized and sexually abused by their care-takers." Having devoted his life to a psychohistorical study of the treatment of children from antiquity to today, he comes to this shocking conclusion: "the history of humanity is founded upon the abuse of children..."

"Most historical families once practiced infanticide, erotic beating and incest. Most states sacrificed and mutilated their children to relieve the guilt of adults ... it has been the cause of war and social violence... [T]he eradication of child abuse and neglect is the most important social task we face today."

Dr. deMause, Dr. Alice Miller, and others have sought to understand why, though children are by nature "more gentle, more joyous, more trustful, more curious, more courageous and more innovative than adults," grownups have always regarded children as beasts and monsters, possessed by devils, basically sinful, and generally enemies to be kept weak and dominated.

"...Parents until relatively recently have been so frightened of and have so hated their newborn infants that they have killed them by the billions, routinely sent them out to extremely neglectful wet-nurses, tied them up tightly in swaddling bandages lest they be overpowered by them, starved, mutilated, raped, neglected and beat them..." writes Dr. deMause.

"I have searched so hard during the past three decades for any exceptions to this extremely abusive pattern that I have offered a prize to anyone who could find even one 'good mother' prior to the 18th century, the definition being one who would not today be incarcerated for child abuse or neglect. No one so far has claimed the prize."

---

[T]he eradication of child abuse and neglect is the most important social task we face today.

-----

### I. Roots of Parenting in 19th Century Brutality

What we consider "our" opinions of how children should be brought up are likely not our own invention. Our views concerning childrearing in the Western world today are heavily influenced by the practices in middle and northern Europe during the 18th century.

About the time Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, et al., were giving birth to our nation and Napoleon was trashing Europe, a number of German-speaking writers during the reign of Frederick William III, (king of Prussia, 1797-1840) began publishing instructions on parenting. In their writings, these founding fathers of psychology, education, and pediatrics reflected the values of the Prussian militarists: strict discipline, Spartan endurance of pain and discomfort without complaint, self-denial if not sacrifice, and above all, unquestioning obedience to all authority.

In her landmark book, *For Your Own Good*, Dr. Alice Miller quotes some of their instructions to parents: "They see something they want but cannot have; they become angry, cry, and flail about ... These are dangerous faults that hinder their entire education and encourage undesirable qualities in children," wrote J. Sulzer in 1748. [Emphasis added.]

"The moment these flaws appear in a child," he cautioned, "it is high time to resist this evil so that ... the children do not become thoroughly depraved..." as if they are enemies to be feared and subdued. "Once children have learned that anger and tears will win them their own way, they will not fail to use the same methods again. They will finally become the masters of their parents ... But if parents are fortunate enough to drive out willfulness from the very beginning by means of scolding and the rod, they will have obedient, docile, and good children..."

Sulzer then stressed, "To make children into righteous, virtuous persons" this is among the "most important matters one must attend to in the child's first year."

The second year, he admonished, must be devoted to regimentation: "Everything must follow the rules of orderliness"--food, drink, clothing, sleep--"so that the child may learn in earliest childhood to submit strictly to the rules of orderliness." This training is combined with "strict obedience to parents and superiors and a trusting acceptance of all they do."

Of utmost importance to Sulzer was that children be trained to:

"1. willingly do as they are told,

"2. willingly refrain from doing what is forbidden, and  
"3. accept the rules made for their sake."

[J. Sulzer: Versuch von der Erziehung und Unterweisung der Kinder --An Essay on the Education and Instruction of Children.]

-----  
"...whip him well till he cries so: 'Oh no, Papa, oh no!'  
... this will rob him of his courage to rebel anew"  
-----

In 1752, child authority J. G. Kruger explained the rationale for beating children: "The only vice deserving of blows is obstinacy. It is therefore wrong to strike children at their lessons, ... to strike them for falling down, ... to strike them for wreaking harm unwittingly. ... to strike them for crying; but it is right and proper to strike them for all of these transgressions and for even more trivial ones if they have committed them out of wickedness. If your son ... cries with the intent to defying you ... if he insists on having his own way, then whip him well till he cries so: 'Oh no, Papa, oh no!' ... this will rob him of his courage to rebel anew."

Certainly a true statement. Such punishment, perhaps all punishment, robs children of confidence and courage, as well as their self-respect. Thus the sons of macho men are made cowardly, the objects of their father's--and their own--contempt.

By 1800, as the carnage and battering continued, there were stirrings of a new way of thinking about children. Rousseau's Emile had appeared in 1762 and was being widely read in educated circles. Rousseau argued for viewing children as natural beings, and therefore good by nature, not evil. Their natural tendencies should be trusted, not treated as evil objects of suspicion. A revolutionary idea, to be sure, heatedly protested even today. Scientists, in efforts to understand adult behavior, increasingly examined the influence of childhood experiences. In time, children came to be seen as raw material to be fashioned into acceptable and productive societal members. (Dr. deMause and others contend that socialization remains today the basic method of child education and treatment.)

Other institutional forces had a vested interest in how "the twig is bent." Governments, through compulsory schooling, wanted children indoctrinated to defend their respective nations, and be ready to die for them; industry wanted consumers oriented to support business; religious institutions insisted that children grow up faithfully supporting the church--and to multiply, thus increasing their numbers and coffers.

Above all among the forces working to slow the progress of the reformers were the parents, who harbored unconscious hates, resentments, ambitions and fears to unwittingly work out on those most avail-able and vulnerable--the children. Each generation consisted only of the survivors of victimization--before they



themselves became the victimizers. The few reformers who objected to the brutality were often themselves brutalized for their trouble.

## II. Early Reform Attempts in 1800s

Early movements for the humane treatment of children took the form of legislation against the beating and raping that was common and usually unchallenged. "But those who tried to oppose bugging and beating boys in schools were opposed by parents who said 'It didn't hurt me.' "

Progress was therefore very slow, and reformers were seen as troublemakers, subversives, or worse. They were resisting the powerful momentum of traditional thinking. Established experts on childhood were of little help. As late as 1858, author D. G. M. Schreber advised that if your child persists in screaming or crying, the correct response is to persistently punish it until it stops. "This procedure will be necessary only once or at most twice, and then you will be master of the child forever. From now on, a glance, a word, a single threatening gesture will be sufficient to control the child."

-----  
"But those who tried to oppose bugging and beating boys in schools were opposed by parents who said 'It didn't hurt me.'  
-----

There was, of course, heavy dependence on the Bible for its ancient advice in treating children, principally Solomon's dictum to not "spare the rod". The historical fact that Solomon kept dozens of concubines and did his own share of child abusing seems not to have affected his standing as child-raising expert.

## III. Grandparents of Hitler's Generation

In examining the childrearing beliefs and practices of the generations preceding Hitler's Third Reich, Dr. Miller summarized the lessons we inherited from the German pediatricians of last century. The traditional treatment passed down from our great-great grandparents to our great-grand-parents to our grandparents to our parents were, in short, an insidious collection of cruel myths, a list of beliefs that are all lies. Yet they are accepted as guides by the great majority of parents in the United States today:

1. A feeling of duty produces love.
2. Hatred can be done away with by forbidding it.
3. Parents deserve respect simply because they are parents.
4. Children are undeserving of respect simply because they are children.
5. Obedience makes a child strong.
6. A high degree of self-esteem is harmful.
7. A low degree of self-esteem makes a person altruistic.
8. Tenderness (doting) is harmful.
9. Responding to a child's needs is wrong.

10. Severity and coldness are a good preparation for life.
11. A pretense of gratitude is better than honest ingratitude.
12. The way you behave is more important than the way you really are.
13. Neither parents nor God would survive being offended.
14. The body is something dirty and disgusting.
15. Strong feelings are harmful.
16. Parents are creatures free of drives and guilt.
17. Parents are always right.

#### IV. How Were the Generations Raised that Supported the Hitler Regime?

In her account of the childhood experiences of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, Alice Miller asked, "What made respected members of society suddenly act like monsters? How could a former teacher like Klaus Barbie, described by their daughters as kind, caring fathers, have innocent people tortured or indeed do the torturing themselves?" Blaming it on "anti-Semitism" does not explain it, she insists. It was due to the "destructive child-rearing style practiced widely on infants around the turn of the century in Germany ... a universal abuse of infants."

In the two generations before Hitler was elevated power, the suppression of infants reached its highest intensity. Without this population of survivors of mistreatment, wrote Dr. Miller, Hitler could never have embarked on the systematic killing of an entire race of people.

-----  
 "... a generation of young people will grow to strike fear into the heart of the world. Violent, masterful, unafraid, cruel youth is what I want..." --A. Hitler  
 -----

Over 820,000 children born between the years, roughly, 1878 and 1912 joined the Nazi Party, raising its membership to nearly a million by 1933. These were Hitler's card-carrying, fanatically loyal supporters, who listened without objection to their Fuhrer's words concerning childrearing: "Whatever is weak must be hammered away. In the fortresses of my militant order a generation of young people will grow to strike fear into the heart of the world. Violent, masterful, unafraid, cruel youth is what I want... They must withstand pain. There must be nothing weak or tender about them." What made it possible for the German people to champion a leader with such pedagogy?

Dr. Miller answers: "The children systematically subjected to obedience drill around the turn of the century were not only exposed to corporal 'correction' but also to severe emotional deprivation. The upbringing manuals of the day described physical demonstrations of affection ... as indications of a doting, mollycoddling attitude. Parents were warned of the disastrous effects of spoiling their children, a form of indulgence entirely incompatible with the prevalent ideal of rigor and severity."

An example is this excerpt from *Wie erziehen wir unseren Sohn Benjamin? How Shall We Rear our Son Benjamin?*, a 1902 manual by A. Mathias, quoted in *For Your Own Good*: "Is it not doting when the baby is coddled and pampered in every way from infancy? Instead of accustoming the baby from the very first day of his life on earth to discipline and regularity in his intake of nourishment ... doting lets itself be guided by the infant's crying ... Doting ... allows itself to be dominated by a blind desire to be kind, as if this were a natural instinct; it permits when it should forbid, is lenient when it should punish...."

"It is the opposite of true love, which does not shrink from punishment. The Bible says, 'he who loves his son chastises him often with the rod, that he may be his joy when he grows up' ...and 'Pamper your child and he will be a terror, indulge him and he will bring you grief '" Thus we have found the roots of "tough love," an extreme attempt to control and suppress.

In her discussion of the Nazis Dr. Miller says, "The rigorous obedience training [of Eichmann, Himmler, Hoess, etc.] in earliest infancy stunted the development of such human capacities as compassion and pity for the sufferings of others. They were incapable of emotion in the face of misfortune... Their total emotional atrophy enabled the perpetrators of the most heinous crimes imaginable to function 'normally'...."

"Dr. Mengele could perform the most cruel experiments on Jewish children in Auschwitz and then live for 30 years like a 'normal,' well-adjusted man... only men and women who had experienced mental and physical cruelty in the first weeks and months of life ... could possibly have let themselves be made into Hitler's willing executioners ... no amount of indoctrination alone, at school or wherever, will unleash hatred in a person who has no preconditions in that direction."

#### V. Abusive Treatment Continued in the 1900s.

It is not to be supposed that the severe treatment of children characteristic under the Nazis was markedly less so elsewhere. The public school philosophy and system was largely developed from German models, the Prussian discipline, Teutonic precision, and authoritarian ethic was much admired by the many millions of European immigrants during the 19th century. An estimated one million-plus German-speaking immigrants arrived during the decade of 1840-1850 alone. The German gymnasium, with its military-oriented, strict, and systematic suppression of school children suited a nation's school system whose task it was to mold and coerce its second-generation immigrant pupils into one, loyal, obedient citizenry.

Reform of hideous child labor practices was vigorously and violently opposed by businesses large and small. Not least among the opposition were parents who depended on their children's income to supply food for the table. In 1914-15, Professor of Economics Dr. Scott Nearing in University of Pennsylvania spoke

out publicly against children as young as age six being forced to work 10 or 12 hours a day. Pressure on university officials from factory owners forced his dismissal. His publishers stripped his widely used economics textbooks from the shelves, and he was blacklisted from the teaching profession.

Dr. deMause reports: "Those who tried to pass child labor legislation to reduce horrendous working conditions and hours were labeled Communists. And those who thought one could bring up children kindly were considered impractical visionaries."

Like everything else, the thinking and treatment concerning the upbringing of children is an evolutionary process. While those most informed and most compassionate urge revolutionary changes (before our culture is destroyed), even a brief historical survey tells us that we can expect more--and perhaps faster--progress in the coming years.

A view of the past 20 or 30 centuries shows that progress toward humane treatment, though agonizingly slow, is inexorable, and at a staggering cost in children's suffering. While we may congratulate ourselves for not being as bad as our ancestors, this is not an occasion to rejoice. Today, in this Arizona valley where I live, which includes a small city, schoolmasters with impunity beat small children with wooden weapons (paddles), secure in the support of school boards and most parents.

"Clearly, different groups have moved different distances up the ladder of psychological evolution," wrote Dr. deMause, "since some contemporary groups still practice brain-eating as our Paleolithic ancestors did, and different subgroups of our more advanced nations still terrorize and abuse their children in ways identical to those that were commonplace centuries ago, producing the 'historical fossils' we now call borderline personalities and other severe character disorders."

Even in this new millennium, anyone nery or foolhardy enough to suggest the abolishment of corporal punishment of children is likely to be met with hostility, and perhaps violence. But when awareness of the harm done to children reaches critical mass, the good changes will occur. We cannot make changes in the past. We cannot even make changes in the future. We can only make changes today.

Alice Miller wrote, "Our parents and grandparents are not to blame for having passed on to us misleading messages because, at that time, they had no better information at their disposal. But we do have them today. We can't claim innocence when the next generation blames us for having rejected information that was available to us and was easy to understand." CONTINUING

NARRATIVE:

Mr. Mazarak and His Orchestra

After listening, in Daddy's lap, to the concertos, sonatas, and symphonies of Mozart and Beethoven, Henry and Russell were eager to attend the Sunday afternoon concerts at the college. We sat front row center, the five- and four-year-olds looking up at Mr. Mazarak, the conductor, with worshipful admiration. Here was a musician, a professional, doing what they had been doing at play: waving a stick in time with the music. And there was the music being produced from the violins, trumpets, cellos, French horns, and tympanis they had heard on the stereo, by musicians who could, and did, perform that magic.

When they learned of the Wednesday evening rehearsals, they clamored to attend those, too. They were immensely impressed with the persistent hard work the conductor and musicians strove to create the precise tone and volume and timbre and tempo required. Not once over the many months of concert and rehearsal attendance did either of the boys squirm or become impatient or bored.

We taped each performance, and then played the tapes at home, pretending they were conducting, like their hero. And when their mother returned home after an extended stay in the hospital, they played it for her, becoming each time more familiar with the music. Thus did Mr. Mazarak take his place among their boyhood models, alongside Roger Staubach, Wilt the Stilt, Bob Dylan, and Pete Seeger.

-----

**JANET RENO and ELLEN KEY:  
Two Views of the Nature of Children**

[This chapter on the then-new US Attorney General was first printed eight years ago in the Phoenix, AZ, paper, *The Current*. Reno confirmed and encouraged millions of child bashers with her archaic poisonous advice, undoing much of the patient and painstaking efforts of parenting educators like Briggs, Gordon, Brazelton, Miller, and even Hillary Clinton, the last to whom I telegraphed a fiery protest against AG Reno's views--and the new AG's view promises to be even more child-repressive--are representative of the majority of the US public, recent studies show. By contrast, Ellen Key, writing nearly a century ago, pleaded for enlightened, evolved, humane treatment of children, a still, small voice largely ignored. Must human evolution be so slow? --NL]

Reno's War Against Children In October, 1993, Attorney General Janet Reno, in PBS's hour-long Bill Moyers interview, explained her methods of dealing with violent criminals: the "carrot and stick" approach. Punish violent criminals, put them in jail. Fine. Then she advocated similar reward and punishment methods for controlling children as well, treatment unfit for training circus animals.

Like most behaviorists, she would have parents control children by conditioning, as in Pavlov's salivating dogs. But children are not dogs, and if they are treated as Reno suggests, we will raise yet another generation of alienated, conflict-ridden, violence-prone kids. The attorney general's thinking is a high-profile example of the kind of child-rearing approach endemic in America: hitting children to "make them behave." We are all shocked by stories of child abuse, but it often seems that most parents agree with Fred Clark's grim view in Auntie Mame: "I'm going to turn this kid into a decent, God-fearing Christian if I have to break every bone in his body!"

**Just Normal, Everyday Abuse**

Here we're not talking about the extreme, headline-making, life-threatening abuse. This is about the everyday, casual violence that the vast majority of otherwise decent parents consider proper "discipline" of the spank on the bottom, the slap across the face, the box on the ears, the grab-and-shake, ear-twisting, hair-pulling physical assaults that are routinely used in millions of US. homes to keep misbehaving children "in line." Parents, as a general rule, raise children as they themselves were raised. Victims of violence perpetuate it by inflicting violence on their children, who, in turn, punish their children. Thus the seeds of violence are planted in each succeeding generation.

This traditional domestic abuse is perhaps the principal cause of the widespread violence we see today. Yet great conferences and "summit" meetings are held during which civic leaders scratch their heads and puzzle over the cause of it. Anyone suggesting the elimination of the violence euphemistically called "discipline" is ignored or shouted down. We sow the seeds of the violence we reap. Big surprise.

-----  
"Spanked the daylights out of us!"  
-----

In Moyer's interview, Reno reveals the reason she is so vehemently in favor of punitive methods. "[My mother] used to spank the daylights out of us!" she blurted with obvious pride. Later on, when Moyers postulated the hypothetical instance of her mother being victimized by violent criminals, Reno's instant reaction was rage: "I would tear them limb from limb!" This, in the midst of her sermon against violence.

In a recent article she told how her mother would never allow her children to watch television. If Reno's violent proclivities did not come from watching TV, or rap music, or E-porn, what is its cause? Could it be the pain, both physical and emotional, that was inflicted upon her by a domineering mother who smacked her kids around? The dramatization of violence on TV cannot compare to the traumatic impact on children of being brutalized by those they love and depend upon for comfort and security. We look for causes of violence elsewhere, but as Pogo wisely pointed out, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." Punishing Infants in Their Cribs

On the MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour Reno explained how her carrot-and-stick method should be applied to criminals. Then again she segued into childrearing methods: "Begin with the zero-to-three-year olds! Set limits, and when they go over the line, punish them!" Infants. Her caveat to tell them, after the spanking, that they are "loved" serves to legitimize hitting and humiliating kids, while allaying the conscience of the perpetrator. As for the child, he or she can be driven further into confusion and alienation--not to mention perversity. (This is made clear in Alice Miller's For Your Own Good).

Then Reno made a chilling proposal: "We [the federal government] want to be a partner with you parents"--in enforcing on children her Draconian carrot-and-stick method. That is, the very practices known to undermine self-esteem and inevitably end in exponential increases in crime, mental illness, dysfunctional families, and street violence.

#### Defining Limits For Parents

The attorney general and others with her punitive mentality are fond of speaking of defining limits for children. Limits? The first limits need to be applied to the

adults whose responsibility it is to protect and nurture children: parents, teachers, babysitters, and child care professionals.

#### Limit #1: Never Hit a Child of Any Age

Only a bullying coward would strike a child. Adults can defend themselves with fists and laws; their emotional growth isn't dependent on protection and approval as a child's is. Let the attorney general get laws passed protecting children from the violence committed by parents and teachers. Use of a paddle or other weapon should be made a felony; use of the open hand should be a misdemeanor. In Sweden [and a dozen other countries] it is a federal offense to spank a child, and has been for a quarter century.

#### Limit #2: Never Use Reward-and-Punishment Methods

What may be appropriate for rats in a psych lab is dehumanizing to children. That is why the approach Reno was selling to American parents was actually causing the violence she so stridently preached against. It robs children of their self-respect. When that goes, so goes respect for authority, respect for the law and respect for human life.

The reward-and-punishment method of dealing with kids never works. This kind of treatment, borrowed uncritically from German "experts" more than a century ago, is the chief cause of the violence we see today. The "stick" approach makes the child either dangerously withdrawn (and apt to explode later) or openly rebellious.

-----  
Punishment simply does not work--it fails to produce the desired results  
-----

In either case, it influences him or her to seek security in totalitarian figures who promise approval, status, and identity.

The opposite all-carrot method (over-permissiveness), is, in reality, neglect--another form of abuse. Here, parents cop out on their responsibilities by abandoning the child emotionally, leaving him/her to choose surly rebellion as the only perceived way to gain recognition, if not approval. It's called "spoiled" by judges, and angry demands for "strict, rod-swinging, wood-shed discipline" follow.

#### A Better Way of Parenting

Fortunately there is a third approach: democratic discipline. Only by sharing the decision-making, rule-making power in the family can the child maintain his or her self respect and learn self-discipline. Nearly all American homes function in the autocratic style, where the parent has sole and unlimited power. This is where the harm is done. "Benevolent" dictatorships are still totalitarian. When the home is democratically run, where individual rights are respected and defended, where the child's viewpoint has real weight in the rule-making process, that child



is more likely to obey the rules and to develop a sense of personal responsibility. The processes of democratic discipline are not difficult to learn. First-hand experience has shown that this way of viewing and treating children is infinitely easier and happier for both parents and children, far more effective than the authoritarian, abuse-prone carrot-and-stick approach. It can transform squabbling, whining, disobedient children into happy, confident, self-respecting (and therefore respectful) family members. Punishment of children undermines self-esteem. The harmful effects of punitive methods have been known for more than a quarter century, with the publication of Dorothy Corkille Briggs' *Your Child's Self-Esteem: Step-by-Step Guidelines for Raising Responsible Productive Children* (Doubleday), and a decade before that with A.S. Neil's landmark book, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Childrearing* (Simon & Schuster). Even preceding that, in 1957, Sears, Maccoby, and Levin, in *Patterns of Child Rearing* (Harper & Row), showed that punishment methods simply do not work in producing the desired behavior. Punishment = Negative Results

Since "punishment never works" is the overwhelming lesson to be learned from bringing up children, it is a curious fact that few parents ever learn it. Over 200 years ago pioneer criminologist Cesare Beccaria observed, "The fault no child ever loses is the one he was most punished for." Perhaps our society has progressed too far down the road to madness to make its way back. One of the measures of insanity is persistence in a course of action that consistently fails to yield positive results.

The Education of the Child (Excerpts) By Ellen Key

Published 1909 by G.P. Putnam's Sons [More Ellen Key at [www.nospank.net](http://www.nospank.net)]

The art of natural education consists in ignoring the faults of children nine times out of ten, in avoiding immediate interference, which is usually a mistake, and devoting one's whole vigilance to the control of the environment in which the child is growing up, to watching the education which is allowed to go on by itself. But educators who... are consciously transforming... themselves are still a rare product. Most people's... education... has deprived them of the desire for educating themselves.

Only by keeping oneself in constant process of growth, under the constant influence of the best things in one's own age, does one become a companion halfway good enough for one's children...

To bring up a child means carrying one's soul in one's hand, setting one's feet on a narrow path, it means never placing ourselves in danger of meeting the cold look on the part of the child that tells us without words that he finds us insufficient and unreliable. It means the humble realization of the truth that the ways of injuring the child are infinite, while the ways of being useful to him are few.

How seldom does the educator remember that the child, even at four or five years of age, is making experiments with adults, seeing through them, with

marvelous shrewdness making his own valuations and reacting sensitively to each impression. The slightest mistrust, the smallest unkindness, the least act of injustice or contemptuous ridicule, leave wounds that last for life in the finely strung soul of the child. While on the other side unexpected friendliness, kind advances, just indignation, make quite as deep an impression on those senses which people term as soft as wax but treat as if they were made of cowhide... Why does everything remain essentially the same from generation to generation? Why do highly civilized Christian people continue to plunder one another and call it exchange, to murder one another en masse and call it nationalism, to oppress one another and call it statesmanship?

Because in every new generation the impulses supposed to have been rooted out by discipline in the child, break forth again, when the struggle for existence--of the individual in society... begins. These passions are not transformed by the prevalent education of the day, but only repressed...

-----  
"The slightest mistrust, the smallest unkindness, the least act of injustice or contemptuous ridicule, leaves wounds that last for life"  
-----

Thoughtful people... talk a good deal about [individuality]. But they are... filled with doubts when their children are not just like all other children; when they cannot show in their offspring all the ready-made virtues required by society. And so they drill their children, repressing in childhood the natural instincts which will have freedom when they are grown.

People hardly realize how new human beings are formed; therefore the old types constantly repeat themselves in the same circle--the fine young men, the sweet girls, the respectable officials, and so on. And new types with higher ideals--travelers on unknown paths, thinkers of yet unthought thoughts, people capable of the crime of inaugurating new ways--such types rarely come into existence among those who are well brought up....

It is original natures, particularly talented beings, who are badly treated at home and in school ... Mothers and teachers show in this their pitiable incapacity for the most elementary part in the art of education, that is, to be able to see with their own eyes, not with pedagogical doctrines in their head...

I naturally expect in the supporters of society, with their conventional morality, no appreciation of the significance of the child's putting into exercise his own powers. Just as little is this to be expected of those Christian believers who think that human nature must be brought to repentance and humility, and that the sinful body, the unclean beast, must be tamed with the rod--a theory which the Bible is brought to support. I am only addressing people who can think new thoughts and consequently should cease using old methods of education...

Those who have [tried and failed] contend that the child must be taught to obey, that truth lies in the old rule, "As the twig is bent the tree is inclined."

Bent is the appropriate word--bent according to the old ideal that extinguishes personality, teaches humility and obedience. But the new ideal is that man, to stand straight and upright, must not be bent at all ... Fathers and mothers must bow their heads in the dust before the exalted nature of the child. Until they see that the word "child" is only another expression for the conception of majesty; until they feel that it is the future which in the form of a child sleeps in their arms, and history which plays at their feet, they will not understand that they have as little power or right to prescribe laws for this new being as they possess the power or might to lay down paths for the stars...

-----  
CONTINUING NARRATIVE:

#### A-Frog-Hunting We Did Go

Certain paragraphs of John Steinbeck's were favorites with Henry and Russell, he provided such vivid images of the creatures of nature. The entire third chapter of *Grapes of Wrath* describes the experience of a land turtle as he crosses a highway. In *The Pearl*, a scorpion hangs poised above Kino's baby son. Kino stalks the beast, and, in wild fury, smashes it to paste in his bare hands. And then, of course, *The Red Pony*.

But most in demand was "The Frog Hunt," from *Cannery Row*. They loved the irresponsible characters, lazy bums utterly devoid of status or respect, but without an ounce of meanness in their hearts. Their hilarious attempts at capturing frogs for Doc's lab sent the boys helplessly sliding to the floor in giggles.

Having won a Honda 90 in a store opening drawing, we delighted in exploring the dirt roads behind the farm. Henry sat in the rear, locking Russell in with his arms, fists grasping my waist. The frog pond we found was no more than a large puddle, but there were frogs--big ones, mired in slime, waiting for us with big eyes. We crept up cautiously, whispering, lest we spook them. Once a large bullfrog just sat there mocking, daring us to try to grab him, then leaped a split second quicker.

We hunters caught no frogs. Ever. But we rode home happily every time, and talked endlessly about our adventures.

-----

**Is the School System Obsolete?  
Wrong Purposes and Philosophy Mean Wrong Functions & Practices**

**Buckminster Fuller Meets the Schooling Mentality**

Early in the 1980s, a year or two before his death, I was talking privately with Buckminster Fuller, the great philosopher, mathematician, inventor, and genius-at-large. After he had lectured in a college in upstate New York, we talked about the gravity of the nuclear arms race. Suddenly he said, "Excuse me, please wait-- I've promised to speak to the school children across the street." He soon returned, red-faced and fuming. "Can you believe this?" he said to me. "They cut me off! Said they had to 'change classes,' so I had to stop my presentation!"

In his mid-eighties, the Genius of the Geodesic Dome had held the school children fascinated by filling the blackboard with the dazzling math formulas he had earlier shown us. He was assuring them that any one of them could do it too, when the school principal appeared, announcing "The show's over--no more time," and ordered the children to go to next "period" class. The bell had rung, the administrator salivated.

An exception? Wrong! The same kind of blind, wooden-headed compulsive system-think I have seen repeated hundreds of times since I taught my first public school classes in the Fifties. [Let me say here that this is not a new interest of mine. I taught Philosophy of Education and Sociology of Education at the State University of New York, explaining to future school people why and how the system works. --NL]

Tragically, there is now an army of former teachers who were once fine, honorable, talented, unselfish and dedicated class-room teachers who were fired for being "too creative," or who resigned in despair, having repeatedly rolled the Sisyphian boulder up the "down" staircases of schooling's intransigent stupidity, only to see it roll down again.

What is needed is a fundamental and massive radical change in philosophy, in underlying premises, values, and approach, not just switching policies, more spending, more programs, "better" methods, and more government control.

But that can never, never happen.

What's Wrong with the School System?

## Wrong Purposes

1600s: Schooling began in America soon after the Pilgrims landed a) so children could read the Bible; b) to provide future professionals with basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. For the preparation of clergy, lawyers, physicians, and political leaders, Harvard was founded in 1636, only 16 years (16 years!) after the landing of the Pilgrims. Such a feat for a colonial culture is still unmatched in all of human history.

1700s: Because he saw that a democratic system required "an informed citizenry," Jefferson surveyed the state of Virginia and designed its school system with an elementary school within walking distance and a secondary school within riding distance from every home. His crowning and proudest achievement was the designing and founding of the University of Virginia, a project which he helped build in his eighties.

1800s: For the developing Industrial Revolution it was thought a good idea for children to get used to following routines and schedules, and obeying the commands of "superiors," a behavior in much demand by the powerful factory owners. Also, the influx of millions of immigrants increased the role of school as "a great melting pot" in indoctrinating "Americanism" into the children fresh off the boats.

By mid-century, a Massachusetts lawyer and politician named Horace Mann had designed a schooling system to function as (in his words) "instruments of the scientific management of a mass population." The plan was borrowed chiefly from the German gymnasium system that organized life and reality into categories: this is history, this is mathematics, this is chemistry.... Not remotely "child centered," it was a scheme made for the convenience of schoolmasters (and factory managers) in scheduling classes and work, evaluating performance, and controlling efficiently the workers.

About 100 years ago school was made compulsory by law, mainly to prevent the children from taking jobs (at low wages) that were needed by the adult workforce. To quiet protesting farmers, provision was made for the farm kids to help with crops, thus the "summer vacation" was invented.

It should be noted that forced schooling was not always accepted without resistance. In Barnstable, Mass., crowds of angry parents with pitchforks marched on town hall to protest compulsory schooling laws, saying they were already teaching their kids to read and write. It got ugly, troops were called in, and the children were marched to the schoolhouse under guard. It was "for their own good," the government officials said.

Thus did political coercion backed by military force act as midwife at the birth of public schooling. The federal government kept out of the fray because it was understood that the Constitution, since it deliberately avoided mention of education, made schooling, if any, the business of the individual states.

Wrong Philosophy [Please forgive oversimplification.]

Schools have muddled through with a philosophical mishmash of Perennialism ("a child is a twig--bend it in the way it should grow"), Essentialism ("knowledge is matter/content, therefore fill the child's head with it"), and Progressivism ("learn by doing; all of life is a learning, socializing process").

The first became obsolete even before the century opened, the second was clearly inadequate by WWII, and John Dewey's Progressivism was only superficially understood, was partially and sporadically attempted, and was never fully practiced. After years of efforts, the Progressivism Association finally abandoned the attempt by declaring victory and disbanding.

A schoolteacher once told me, "Dewey? Progressivism? Oh, that's where a pupil, passing or not, simply progresses from one grade to the next."

Startled, I asked, "Do you know there are school children in Europe who fight over who is the best philosopher, Sartre, Kierkegaard or Nietzsche?"

And she said, "Kirk who?"

With a patchwork philosophy, purposes become blurred. It leaves a political structure that prevents meaningful learning from taking place. Any notion of meeting the children's needs is replaced with the needs of parents, school people, and government being served by the children.

Nothing really educational can take place unless its center and guiding principles are the natural interests and talents of the individual child. A body of knowledge, imposed by adults, requires that the children suppress their natural eagerness to learn by their own direction and pace, that which is of interest to them. Insistence on replacing that natural drive for learning with school curricula and enforced submission to system authority kills the will to learn.

Given unwilling learners, the job of teaching becomes one of "motivating." (Refrain: "These kids just don't want to learn!" As always, the children are blamed; "Something's wrong with the children and it's our job to fix it." (And a determined President says, "No child will be left behind.")

Not all children will swallow the sugar pill or the "motivation" medicine, so compulsory attendance must be enforced by truancy officers. What is ignored is the children's inborn, natural need to learn about the world, and it is as strong as

the need for food. The school works like the landscape foreman who was chopping out a lovely birch tree outside my classroom window. "Why are you destroying that beautiful tree?" I called to him.

"Because we didn't put it there," he said, with finality. He was another Procrustes (see below).

In helping a child develop his/her natural interests and talents, no established curriculum can be imposed. Further, by making school attendance compulsory by law, no curriculum has any chance of being swallowed, much less digested. No learning worthy of the name can take place by force. With mandatory attendance in an authoritarian setting, no matter how benign, there is always the underlying fear of punishment by a teacher in loco parentis.

The Essentialist thinking goes thus: There is a certain "body of knowledge" that must be imparted to each generation, things they must know before they qualify for admission to the adult world as good citizens and self-supporting "contributors to society." As we all know, this does not happen. Schools simply do not produce good citizens and self-reliant individuals. If they become that, they do it on their own, and only if they survive the mind-numbing 14-year initiation. Any serious participation in society is prevented until the much-feared and distrusted childhood years are safely past. Hence, what is left is thinly disguised incarceration--at times benign, often times brutal--that causes systematic destruction of self-esteem, self-respect, and the creative spirit.

In summary, without the firm guidance of a child-centered educational philosophy and serious commitment to it, the function, the practices, and the methods are decided by whoever has the most political influence. Given the indoctrination and values of the state-paid employees who run it, the touted noble aims of academic learning and sane socialization are but a vain and illusion-ridden hope. Until the education mega-business places the meeting of the child's needs--physical, mental, emotional--first and paramount, only indoctrination can take place. No amount of "motivation" or "innovative methods" will help so long as the child is denied the right to direct his or her own learning.

We need a whole 'nother paradigm.

Wrong Functions and Wrong Practices

The Myth of Procrustes:

In the ancient city of Attica lived the legendary Procrustes, a huge mythological ogre who stationed himself beside his hut by a well-traveled road. Here he invited in passersby for direction, instruction, and improvement "for their own good." Procrustes had preconceived ideas on how everyone should "measure up," how they must "fit in," and woe be to anyone who failed to conform. In his zeal to

change everyone to fit his "ideal," he measured them on his iron bed; if they were too short, he attached chains and stretched them to fit. If they were too long for his bed, he simply chopped off the excess with his axe. Procrustes valued uniformity, conformity, and submission to authority, regardless of the cost in pain to his captives.

Because he was uncompromising (he was a "hard grader" with "high standards," they said), parents brought their children to him in droves. "He's no permissive liberal Spock-minded wimp," they said. "He's a disciplinarian, and his discipline works. My kids will never be the same." Which, of course, was very true.

He was admired for his "tough love" and professional dedication to the good of society. The fact that many children were crippled with separated vertebrae, or had to crawl about on stubs, was dismissed--even by the victims themselves--as the necessary price for "fitting in" the scheme of things. Children were brought to admire the deformed but "successful leaders," who lived in grand homes among the "best people." Indeed, status was symbolized by the severity of one's deformities.

Some few of the youth were smart enough and quick enough to skip out and save themselves. But they were frowned upon as "losers," and Procrustes spoke of this "small percentage" with a shrug. "You can't win 'em all," he said. "The quitters slip through the cracks." They would "come to no good," he warned, and will become burdens to the tax-paying "normal products" who survived his forming--and deforming.

The function of schooling is threefold:

To police, to baby-sit, and to break spirit. It does these so successfully that no reform is ever seriously attempted. -- Erik Erikson, psychiatrist, author of *Identity Crisis*

**1.** The school system functions as an arm of the government, a fact that is obvious in its thinly-disguised efforts to bend children to meet the needs and demands of the established political institutions--local, state and federal.

**A.** In recent history the big power grab came following Sputnik in 1957 ("The Russians made us do it.") The government spokesman and designated reformer was a full-blown (but rather tiny) admiral of the U.S. Navy, Hyman Rickover. Freedom and "permissive progressivism" was thrown out the window, to be replaced by iron, grim "discipline" and "back-to-basics" curricula. "The Russians are ahead of us!" was the cry, "and the blame is on the schools for not producing scientists." In a "crisis," there is no place for pampering, liberal-minded, child-centered schools. Progressivism and freedom doesn't work, so throw it out and imitate the enemy.



We hear the same refrain from Washington now, in spring 2001. As I write this, another power grab, one even more insidious, is being launched by the Bush II administration "for our own good."

**B.** Teachers and administrators are employees of the government, and as such are agents of the State. For all the pretenses of professionalism, tenure protection and "academic freedom," school people must conform to state thinking patterns and watch what they say, or they will soon find themselves bagging groceries at Safeway. It's a political position, as surely as was Harry Truman's under Boss Pendergast. Academic freedom is a myth, tenure notwithstanding, as many thousands of ex-teachers can attest.

**C.** School is a child-finishing factory: the building is called a "plant," the materials are "processed," the graduates are "products" bearing diplomas that are "marketable." They could as well be furniture, except that these "products" are also enthusiastic consumers and reproduce themselves. While many very human and conscientious teachers struggle valiantly for the children, they work in an inhuman system that is soul-destroying for both teachers and pupils.

**D.** The school is a quasi-military institution. Dr. B. Schling, psychiatrist, describes it as "a psychopathic institution"--that is, having no conscience, no ethics remotely human (witness the widespread practice of corporal punishment), which serves not the best interests of the child, or the parents, or society.

Note that the high school "product" requires only eight weeks of boot camp to make an infantry soldier of him or her. The schools are monolithic models of authoritarianism, increasingly requiring school uniforms. At this writing, the First Lady is recruiting military retirees for service as schoolteachers and administrators.

**E.** As an authoritarian political/quasi-military system, it's in the business of suppression. There is only one curriculum: Obedience. It is enforced by a hundred means, including shame, ridicule, isolation, and expulsion. When those fail to produce conformity and subservience, 23 states beat the children with wooden paddles.

In America's War Against Children during the past 20 years, the "losers" have shot back on the beaches of 27 schools. Yet no one has any idea what causes youthful violence. From media, political leaders and pulpits, after every school shooting in the past two decades, has come the question: "Why? Why?" No one has the faintest clue.

**2.** As the biggest business in corporate America: schooling is a super-corporation that involves one-fourth of the nation. It controls the day-to-day lives of millions with school bus schedules, homework (for parents too), vacation time, school supplies, buying and enforcing dress codes, including school uniforms. Schooling

supports in excess of one-fourth of the national economy with its army of children, a massive chunk of the GNP indeed.

Schools provide millions of jobs from building contractors to custodians, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers. Teachers, administrators and nurses, are expensive, as are textbooks, sports equipment and buses. The list is without end. A recent addition: armed police guards to shoot down the revenge-seeking "rejects."

There is so much consumptive commercialism that even small children are obliged to lug huge backpacks to carry the stuff: the school supply bill is staggering, and "back-to-school" shopping for clothes and supplies rivals the Christmas mania.

The Children's Army travels on Daddy's wallet. Mommy goes to work to help pay for it, hugely increasing tax revenues, and the Child Care Industry is born.

**3.** The function of the school system is, in its role as babysitter to the nation, to keep youth occupied and under the control and supervision of government employees. Where there is no "lesson" to be learned, there is busywork, seatwork, workbook work, and stare-at-the-wall detention. As obedience schools they function similar to the kennel clubs: Follow all commands promptly and without complaint, for your masters know best. "Come. Sit. Beg. Fetch. Speak. Roll over. Stay. And be quiet... No." The incivility, humiliation, and general punitive methods inherent in the school system, the endless punishments result in life-long emotional scars. But above all is the terrible price paid in corporal punishment, the spankings and beatings by paddling that 23 states grimly persist in, in the delusion that it is "discipline." According to EPOCH-USA (End Physical Punishment of Children), in the 1997-98 school year, over 365,000 U.S. children were physically assaulted by school personnel, some armed with wooden paddles or other instruments.

**4.** Triage: a primary function of schools. This sorts children into three categories or status roles: Leaders, Followers, and Losers. The message to the child is clear: "Make a contribution to society (on our terms)," or get tossed on the human trash heap. This ugliness is at work in the schoolyard as well as the classroom in the form of bullying, ostracizing, and in the cliques and sub-groups of popular students, jocks, geeks, dorks, and outcasts. These are the social dynamics that pushed Keybold and Harris and others to the edge, resulting in the killings at Columbine and elsewhere.

Continuing Narrative: The Hammerharp Variations

Because we enjoyed music so much, I was looking for a way to provide Henry and Russell opportunities to create their own. And truth to tell, I missed my years-

long interest and enjoyment of playing jazz piano. At a local auction I bid \$5 on an old upright piano and got it.

The instrument hadn't been touched in years, and was clearly a victim of neglect, having been left by an open window exposed to the vicissitudes of weathering. With neighbor help we got the heavy thing into the farmhouse and into a dining room corner. The boys could hardly be more excited.

Nothing worked. The ivory fell off the keys and to the floor. No matter--the key mechanism was frozen in anyway. We had a "musical instrument" that made not a sound. So we began dismantling--always the boys' default approach when something didn't work. To our joy, beneath that shabby exterior laid a beautiful and magnificent work of art: the strings and soundboard, with its colorful felt pads and fascinating key mechanism.

After removing the hammers we began striking the strings manually. This led to experimenting with a variety of soft and hard objects that produced different sound qualities, and soon we were plucking the strings harp-like as well. We were back to zither, harp, and harpsichord-like sounds, and there seemed to be endless variations.

Within a few days the boys began staging "concerts" for the family. Kitchen chairs were arranged facing what they now dubbed the "hammerharp." Performances by these pre-school boys were awesome. Even today a tape recording of a spontaneous Russell concert sounds to me as exquisitely conceived and performed as one by the modern composer, Karel Husa.

-----

## **CAN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM BE REFORMED?**

"School Is A Place Where Children Learn To Be Stupid" - John Holt

### **I. HOW HAVE SCHOOLS FAILED?**

Compulsory schooling's reason for existence is to induct children by force of law into an authoritarian, repressive system to serve the purposes of local, state, and federal governments. The ostensible justification is found in high-flown rhetoric: "For their own good", "We are serving future generations", and now, "No child shall be left behind", as if a wonderful vehicle is being provided that will deliver children into Successland and happiness. But more and more it becomes clear that the school system does not - it cannot - meet the needs of the children. Because it serves, instead, political and economic ends - for which the children serve as the means.

The education bill recently passed by the U.S. Congress - the most flagrant power grab of the nation's school system in its history - leaves no more doubt. It passed overwhelming-ly, amid resounding applause from both liberals and conservatives. No congressperson seems to recognize the inevitable consequences.

When the veils of illusion are dropped, compulsory schooling can be seen for what it is: large-scale incarceration of 64 million school children for the crime of being children. It is the cynical exploitation of that vast population who are denied the rights and means to defend themselves. We must ask: How can we pretend this is a free society? How can children grow up understanding what freedom means?

### **What Does The System Aim To Do?**

While the children are compelled into service by the government, the teachers are selected for their loyalty to it. Since their jobs depend on subservience to authority, and their teaching the most common values of the community, little creativity or originality can survive the screening. As a general rule, any enlightened thinking, even intelligent thinking, provokes fear and hostility among parents and the general citizenry, and creativity at any meaningful level is suspect if not taboo. The academic freedom that once affording protection is now a myth, the mere mention of which provokes cynical laughter in faculty rooms of

public schools and teachers' colleges. Employees of the State must conform to the dictates of the State and its description of reality; tenure protects no one.

It is not a comforting thought that the children of the U. S. are incarcerated in a quasi-suppressive system to be indoctrination in values decided upon and enforced by under-educated school boards, inadequately-educated teachers, and ignorant, anti-freedom administrators. It takes much research and investigation to understand this. Those who doubt are invited to visit a teachers' college on the day Masters' Comprehensive Examinations are being given. They will find the hall full of physical education majors and football coaches making their second and third attempts at a passing grade. They aspire to secure positions as "tough" school principals. These corporal punishment-prone "disciplinarians" will be appointed as "bosses" over professional teachers and bullies over children. Cowardly school boards will hire them by the thousands. That is only one reason why the public school functions, in many respects, as a fear-ridden prison system for America's children. Although they broke no law, they must do their time.

### **What Are The Methods Used?**

What means are employed to bend children to the service of government? Seduction, deception, and brute force. That is to say, whatever it takes. The bottom line - for teachers as well as pupils - is to follow instructions as orders, do not do what is forbidden, and do not question authority. The pretense is that teaching is a profession, but the reality is that respect for teachers as professionals is nearly non-existent.

While the rhetoric and pretense is reading, math and science, the fundamental curriculum is obedience to authority. In suburban schools the sham (and shame) is easier to maintain, but in inner city schools attempts to disguise the imprisonment have long been abandoned. Except for a few brave souls in highly-publicized attempts at civilizing native children, long before the days of "Blackboard Jungle" the inner city schools have been a prison system against which children waged war. It had its beginnings well before World War II.

All this has, of course, its historic roots. The U. S. largely adapted its school system from the model of the German gymnasium, and based on the writings of the early German psychologists of the 19th C. In his "Essay on the Education and Instruction of Children, (1848), J. Sulzer, who had enormous influence in shaping U. S. schools, wrote, "Obedience is so important that all education is actually nothing other than learning how to obey." (Begin, he wrote, in the second and third year of age the "strict obedience to parents and superiors, and a trusting acceptance of all they do.")

More recently, novelist Kurt Vonnegut told of his meeting with Heinrich Bolle, the German author who won the 1972 Nobel Prize for Literature, and whose writings

explored the causes and consequences of Nazism. "What," Vonnegut asked him, "is the most damning and damaging feature of the German character?"

Bolle thought for a moment and answered in one word: "Obedience." That dedication, that reverence for authority, formed the essential ingredient that made possible World War II, the Holocaust, and the killing of over 50 million men, women and children.

So the most important lessons to be learned in schools are (1) do as you're told; (2) pretend that you know; (3) conceal your ignorance and weaknesses; (4) become as invisible as possible to keep from getting hurt. For most, this means faking your way, not asking questions the teacher cannot answer, telling authorities what they want to hear, and deceiving and conniving to avoid failure and punishment. For the more physical and mentally active, (the undefeated), it means fighting boredom by creating a career in rebellion, mayhem, violence and chaos until the 13-year sentence is completed. That is, skills useful for survival in the street.

Obedience is enforced by a range of penalties limited only by the authorities' imagination, including detention, humiliation before peers, expulsion, and physical assault. In 23 states, disobedience is punishable by physical attack, including battering with wooden paddles and other weapons. During school year '97-'98: there occurred in U. S. public schools more than 400,000 paddle-batterings of children. (EPOCH-USA)

And then there is the widespread and rapidly-growing use of the drug method of control. U. S. children now consume 90% of the world's supply of Ritalin. In most schools the main function of the school nurse is the daily dispensing of drugs to keep children from rising up in rightful protest against what is being done to them: bodily beatings, mind-rape, and robbing of their birth-right to think with a free mind.

### **What Does It Do To The Children?**

1. Denies their basic rights, their freedom; rendering them powerless, impotent
2. Undermines self-esteem by constant correction and punishment; bullies, demeans, and humiliates.
3. Damages self-worth with competition (few winners, many losers)
4. Stunts socialization by limiting association with other ages; social deprivation by limiting to age group, achievement and intelligence level, and other segregation
5. Penalizes individuality by enforcing conformity

6. Suppresses creative expression, critical thinking
- 7 Destroys, systematically, the spirit, spontaneity, and joy that is natural to every child
8. Discourages self-reliance by requiring dependence on authority and peers
9. Retards maturation, responsibility
10. Prevents most contact with the real world by providing only fake, contrived experiences, manufactured and pre-digested. Life is lived in 45-minute "periods"; reality is divided into "subjects"
11. Induces drugged, zombie-like distance from authentic being and genuine relationships; makes for intellectual stupor, TV commercial-length attention span.
- 12 Penalizes authenticity of being; fosters self-alienation, a profound loneliness, a constant feeling of isolation, hence, non-commitment to human standard of values, empathy, genuine human feelings
13. Undermines character development: models dishonesty and deceit, lying, cheating, while hypocritically punishing the same
14. Stupifies by using carrot/stick conditioning that destroys the mind, instead of developing thinking ability
15. Limits growth by controls, including intimidation, bullying, ridicule, ostracism, expulsion, beatings, drugs (Ritalin, uppers, downers), peer pressure and parent pressure.

## **II. THE REAL FUNCTION OF SCHOOLS IS TO PREVENT MEANINGFUL LEARNING**

In practice, the school system actually prevents learning from taking place.

Significant worthwhile learning cannot happen in a climate of coercion and fear, and where subject matter and learning pace are determined in the state capitol. Schools simply do not function to help children follow their natural interests and inclinations, and whatever little is learned there is soon forgotten That schools are the foremost impediments to genuine learning is a fact that more than a million parents have discovered, and have removed their children from school to provide instruction at home.

Schools, run as they are by authoritarian methods, cannot prepare the young for participation in a democratic society. Being denied decision-making power, they

are deprived of experience in handling meaningful responsibility. Socialization is stunted through age grouping, limiting association to those peers whose birthdays are within six months of their own. Self-esteem is systematically damaged with the reward-and-punishment treatment inflicted at all ages and levels, resulting in the self-alienation that is the sickness of the modern age.

Because learning cannot take place when under threat of punishment, testing, peer and teacher ridicule, and failure, school becomes essentially a place where children are kept in custody while they "do their time." But it is even worse than that. Profound boredom and appalling incivility benumbs the mind of the child and dulls sensitivity and all that makes him or her human. What's left is frustration, anxiety, self-loathing, depression, and rage.

John Holt, author of *How Children Learn*, described it this way: "School is a place where children learn to be stupid."

### **III. CAN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM BE REFORMED?**

1. President Bush's education reform plan calls for tripling spending on education in the coming five years. But the federal government provides only 6 percent of the education funds accessible to local school districts, to be spent "as they see fit".

He giveth, yet he taketh away. The price to local districts for that miniscule, inadequate "gift" is no less than their decision-making power. In a word, Freedom. The new Bush plan specifies that the schools must administer tests "on a regular basis" to measure "how individual students are performing". This information on the children will be gathered and tabulated "to rate school and district performance". The Bush government does the rating, of course. Any schools showing generally low scores (deemed "deficient") would be threatened with the loss of their federal funds. Copious "guidelines" on what "corrections" schools must make to meet Washington's requirements are sure to come.

"Faith-based" intrusions, (in violation of the constitutional separation of church and state,) are in. But vouchers, a chief argument during campaign promises to "overhaul the education system" - are out. They presumably could have been used for attendance in private schools, or even for home schooling.

Far too much has been demanded of the school system, so much that management problems dwarf even the social service system. Schools serve as transmitters of middle class values such as consumerism, status seeking, competition, violence, and exclusivity. There is the myth of official certification to have faith in despite contrary evidence, as well as the politics of authoritarianism, and the "discipline" of militarism. In short, schools teach an extremely narrow and shallow orientation in how society works, while perpetuating its shortcomings: class hatred, racial prejudice, hypocrisy, lying, cheating, bullying the weakest,



shameless greed, and many forms of violence. No way is GW's reform going to change that, even with the help of Congress and his bully pulpit.

The competitive mindset and rat race lifestyle is hardly avoidable in a setting that encourages aggression, where courses are required, where attendance is mandatory, and testing in step-by-step grade levels is never-ending. Above all, schools are so fashioned as to not disturb the most conservative, the most fear-filled and the most under-educated elements of society. It is not surprising that those are the very qualities that characterize many school boards and school personnel.

2. Whenever the authorities feel the kids are enjoying too much freedom, there is another call for "BACK TO BASICS!".- and another school reform campaign is launched. Again the headlines read, "The schools are failing! Back to the basics! The kids can't read, can't write! Reform the schools!" Freedom didn't work, so "out with Progressivism, out with the frills, in with the discipline!" There have been dozens of such reforms in my memory, nearly identical in rhetoric, since the 1940s: More reading, writing, arithmetic! More testing! Fail the kids! Make them work! Make them repeat (the teaching that didn't take the first year)!

1947 - Max Rafferty's book, "Suffer Little Children", called for "back-to-basics reforms" in the right-wing style and tone of communist-hunter Senator Joe McCarthy. The Pasadena, CA school system fired its famous school superintendent for his progressive programs.

1954 - The ultra-conservative Council For Basic Education supported the election of school boards and throwing out progressive school superintendents, and publicized its demands for harsher "discipline", and heavy infliction of the 3 R's.

1957 - The Soviet Union put Sputnik into orbit, so the schools were blamed for "losing the race" against communism. The nation awoke to learn that schools were on the front line in the Cold War. An admiral named Rickover, small of stature but big of mouth, recommended to Congress a national testing program in "the basics", and a general regimentation of schools.

1958 - National Emergency Defense Education Act made it clear that the schools were to serve the national defense "in this time of crisis".

1963 - School Mathematics Study Group

1964 - Elementary Science Study ...

1965 - Title One for disadvantaged ...

1968 to present: Repeated spasms of school reforms occurring every few years, ever more shrill in the demand for "basics", ever more expensive for the

taxpayers who remain furious because the children can't read, can't add a row of figures, and never heard of Inchon, much less the Marshall Plan. They know they're being cheated but still believe schools can work, given enough money and "discipline".

But where are the great results of those 54 years of school reforms, the billions of dollars spent to improve reading, writing, arithmetic, social studies, and science? Watch Jay Leno's "Jay-walking" features on the Tonight Show, and see high school graduates' attempts to place WWII in the correct decade, or guess the name of Abe Lincoln's assassin.

This "school reform" of President Bush's is supposed to resolve a "crisis" that has lasted over five decades. Regardless of his repeated denial about "not running the schools from Washington", this most flagrant power grab in public school history threatens the most serious blow ever to the children and to generations to come. There is no possibility of the harm ever being undone.

#### **IV WHY IS SCHOOL REFORM NOT POSSIBLE?**

First: Helpful educational changes cannot take place from the top down. In Arizona, as in other states, statewide standardized testing was adopted as the "answer" to improving schools. Problem: the test-givers could not pass their own test. The politicians who voted for it couldn't pass it. The general public, including parents - couldn't pass it. That fact was promptly made a non-problem by simply brushing it aside and denying it.

They forced the impossible tests on the kids anyway. Presently the pass-scores are being lowered, and testing schedules extended year after year. Now President Bush wants similar tests administered on a nationally scale. Only brain-deadening control - certainly not education - can result by political decree. Learning, as distinguished from indoctrination, must begin - and be controlled by - the learner him/herself.

Second: It is the Law of Bureaucracy that the only way to change a bureaucracy is to replace it with a bigger bureaucracy. And that is precisely what is happening with Pres. Bush's education plan. It is a Machiavellian attempt to gain and keep control of the minds of U.S. children, and by extension the population.

Third: He must compete with the counter-culture with its drugs, the youth culture with its rock and folk music, the right wing militia with its cold, dead soul, and wacko religious movements with their manic-depressive trance theology. All of the above have made, in the past 50 years, inroads into every level of the education system from day care to graduate schools, from custodians to college presidents. No reform from Washington can change the system to meet the educational needs of children. Such change can only make the school

experience more oppressive, more exploitive, more Kafkaesque, and more destructive of children's minds, emotions, and spirit.

Fourth: Schools are already successful in their fundamental purposes, so no one wants real change. The children are supervised all day while the parents work and earn more money. The economy thrives from the production, the government revels in the excess in taxes, the children become consumer-oriented in recreational shopping, having been dulled to ignore how their minds were being raped.

Some professional educators have long ago placed their hopes in the school system's very inefficiency. The greatest harm may be averted, they believe, so long as the schools fall short of their real purposes. Teachers by the tens of thousands are home schooling. To these people, the prospect of the Bush Plan is most alarming.

## **V. TEN REASONS TO ELIMINATE THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

1. Little is taught; much less is learned; what is learned is not retained; what little is retained must be unlearned before any meaningful education can take place. School PREVENTS authentic learning experiences from happening.
2. Children are bored, insulted, humiliated, bullied, beaten, drugged and brainwashed. Nearly 400,000 children were beaten with paddles in 1997-98 school year, 81,373 of them beaten in Texas schools alone, far exceeding any other state - (from Office for Civil Rights).
3. School is a place where "socialization" often means developing survival skills to escape violent victimization. Survey: 56% of kids feel unsafe in school; 57% feel adults don't do enough to prevent violence. (NBC News). In the past 20 years, 59 children and teachers have been killed in schools, 124 wounded by gunshot. Most of the shooters were victims of teasing, isolation, punishment, low self-esteem; none felt they had access to an understanding adult they could talk to. All of the shootings were, therefore, preventable.
4. Schools serve the purposes, not of the 64 million children in U.S. schools, but of government agencies, military "requirements", global corporations, and endless institutions whose existence depends on exploiting the young.
5. Already a prison with armed guards policing the halls, schools can soon be expected to assign the guards to enforcing "discipline" to "free the teachers to teach".
6. Bored by mind-numbing routine regimentation and spirit-killing "lessons", those who protest the ignominy by acting out their frustration are labeled "victims" of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These presently number 20% of

school kids. The number taking Ritalin (to make them more "easily controllable") is "alarmingly high".

7. Learning cannot take place where fear and threats are pervasive: fear of ridicule, attacks on esteem, demeaning treatment, the constant fear of failure in a dozen varieties, and violence from paddlings by administrators to beatings by schoolyard bullies. For millions of children, school is a dreaded and dreadful place, a daily nightmare. Worse, they must pretend that school is "okay", otherwise parents, friends and teachers may think they are "abnormal" - the worst fear of all, since it would invite harassment, bullying, ostracism as a "weirdo", and the lowest-rank in the pecking order.

8. Anyone who is educated has had to go through an unlearning process, a de-programming, to free themselves from school-imposed mind-warp. But built into the programming is the belief that the indoctrination itself is the education process.

9. Individual identity is undermined. School uniforms are required to gain greater control. Its purpose is to have the pupil identify him or herself as a unit in a training organization, not as an individual. The question all children ask, Who am I? is then answered, "A unit in an organization, with no identity other than a piece of the System, a machine component.

10. Bush's "education overhaul" scheme - by tripling spending on schooling in next 5 years - is a flagrant take-over of the U.S. school system by the federal government. He says, "I believe in local control of schools. We should not and we will not run public schools from Washington, D. C." But it is a lie. He's doing exactly that with his education reform.

"I see public schools as burning buildings - and I'll try to save every child I can." - John Holt

### **Continuing Narrative: Growing Garden**

We found a discarded rain gutter and filled it with topsoil, and on our sunny enclosed south porch in early spring we began with planting many kinds of seeds. We wanted to discover which ones we could later transplant: tomatoes, carrots, onions, cabbage, summer squash, sweet corn, beets, lettuce, radishes, peas, bush beans. That was the first year. We found that root crops did not transplant well, but had better results with lettuce, tomatoes, bush beans, peas, cabbage, and squash. The others we seeded directly into the ground.

We made a commitment to the organic method from the outset. No chemical "farming" for us. Instead we collected "cow patties" from the pasture and planted them first. The question was raised: How long could we extend the harvest seasons for each vegetable? Experiments with timed plantings taught us that

plants had minds and agendas all their own. Alternating row plantings of peas and beans, lettuce and radishes, carrots and beets, were moderately successful. But in the end each variety matured generally according to its season, regardless of its planting time.

The weeds and the bugs presented interesting challenges, but we persisted in eschewing chemical fertilizers and pesticides and picked slugs and cabbage worms by hand. At harvest time, preserving extra produce opened up a whole new adventure for us. Into the scalded Mason jars went string beans, sweet corn, bush beans, and, of course, tomatoes. It was a proud moment when we lined up the colorful quart jars on the cellar shelves. It was with even more pleasure that we opened, in mid-winter, a jar of garden vegetables that we, together, had raised, then preserved, ourselves.

---

"A most fundamental human right is the right to decide for ourselves what we will explore in the world around us, think about our own and other persons' experiences, and find and make the meaning of our own lives." - John Holt [Norm worked as friend and colleague with pioneer home schooling advocate John Holt in the years before his death by cancer in 1985.]

### **THE POWER OF FASCINATION**

When Joseph Campbell was nine years old, he accompanied his father to the Museum of Natural History in N. Y. City. Being shown there at the time were many carvings, drawings, totem poles, and masks of the North American Indians. The boy, mesmerized as he was by the wondrous display, began at once to explore the libraries to read all he could find on the meanings of those articles, and of the rituals, beliefs and lives of the people who created them.

That was in 1913. For the following 74 years - until his death - Campbell searched and researched, read, traveled the world, wrote, published, lectured, and taught about what he learned about myths and the influence they had on those who fashioned their lives by them. He became the most famous world authority on the subject, and his PBS videos are shown worldwide. (THE POWER OF MYTH.) Few have had such a fascinating, satisfying, happy life as Joseph Campbell, with the absorbing interest that began with that visit to the Museum of Natural History.

I do not have the facts about Campbell's upbringing, but it is a sure bet that he was not forced to go to the museum "for his own good". Or told to "look and learn", or admonished to "appreciate the beauty", or otherwise obliged him to make his father feel he was "getting his money's worth". Any of that could have killed his interest at once, because in being "shaped", the quest would have been robbed from him.

That's what parents and teachers do, they strip from the children the natural drive to find out about the world. The child becomes a repository of the stuff told to him, not a free agent on an adventurous search for that which can have meaning to them. That is the tragedy of schooling.

**WHY WE LEARN** We all learn things so we can derive more pleasure from living and to avoid pain and suffering. It is a quest for happiness. That is the purpose of learning. Not to serve some master.

Anyone who cares about children, and who has taken the trouble to examine the nature and purpose of public schools, cannot avoid feeling outrage. Anyone who loves liberty and human dignity, and sees thru the propaganda and myths and lies that support this abusive system, want it dismantled and demolished at once.

What abuses? Compelling attendance; deciding what must be learned and when and how much; forced examinations, then grading performance and measuring against others who are to be viewed as competitors; labeling winners and losers in sorting out who will prosper in life, and who will not.... The list of violations of human spirit and self esteem is nearly endless. Have we mentioned the variety of punishments? Have we cited the 23 U.S. states in which children are whacked with paddles - ostensibly for purposes of "behavior modification"?

By implication, compulsory schooling says to the child:

a. We represent society, and as such hold you in distrust and contempt. We believe that if we did not force you to come here and submit to our "discipline" and learn what we've decided to tell you, you would never learn anything. You would never acquire discipline or decide to do anything worthwhile, and probably never hold a decent job and raise a family. You would be a bum, and perhaps a criminal. '

b. If you actually do want to learn what you need to get along in the world, you are too dumb and irresponsible to take charge of your education. Only through us expert educators can you learn about living effectively in this world, because you are helpless to do it for yourself.

c. You have to learn from us teachers about life BEFORE you begin living it. And you cannot learn it unless it is taught to you. First, the schooling, then the living. Life begins after graduation.

### **MOST LEARNING TAKES PLACE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL**

All but a tiny percentage of what adults know was learned outside of classrooms. Indeed, any educated person remembers that they had first to UNlearn what they had been taught in public or private school before they could effectively learn in depth about the world. Most of what they had been taught was inaccurate, a great deal was nonsense and some were flat lies on the order of babies delivered by storks. The idiocy and fairy tales that are taught about American history is a clear example of this. Past events are distorted or created from whole cloth to suit current political purposes, or to exploit the gullibility of the children, or to mask the teacher's ignorance or fear.

The myth has grown that if something important is to be learned, one must go to a school to learn it. It is believed that they will find there an "expert" who has mastered the subject and, because he/she is duly "certified", knows how to

convey that learning,. Upon finishing the program, it is believed that they "have" it. Their certificate "proves" that they "have" it, their having acquired it from someone who "had it" and gave it to them. Life decisions are based on that fantasy. Unless the reader has just fallen off a turnip truck, he recognizes that as total and dangerous crap.

## **LIST THE THINGS YOU CAN DO**

Here's an exercise that will illustrate the point. On a sheet of paper list the things you know how to do. Begin with talk, walk, run, skip rope, sing ... Leave it handy to add to for a day or two. It will never be complete, since you learn new things all the time. But after a time, check off the ones that you did NOT learn in school.

Among the hundreds of things I have learned to do passably well without having been taught them in schools are:

talking, walking, running, rope skipping;  
reading, singing in harmony, whistling,  
roller-skating, bicycle riding,  
waiting on table, building with stone,  
motorcycle riding, auto and truck driving,  
heavy equipment operating, acting,  
playing jazz piano, playing chess,  
playing ping-pong, jitterbugging,  
playing volley ball, making love,  
performing on parallel bars, videography,  
playing bluegrass bass, snow skiing,  
organic food gardening, writing poetry  
swimming, diving, water skiing,  
playing basketball, target shooting,  
speaking Japanese, writing war reports,  
writing Hiragana and Katakana,  
rowing a boat, motor boat operating,  
writing military correspondence,  
speech writing, playwriting,  
public speaking, office management,  
auto maintenance, overnight camping,  
food preparation & cooking, ice skating,  
food preserving, speed-reading,  
book publishing, business administration,  
newspaper & magazine feature writing,  
magazine editing, magazine publishing,  
investing in the stock market, tracking,  
conference organizing, hair cutting,  
seminar conducting, playing pinochle,  
selling goods door to door, reading music,



handwriting analysis, body massage,  
chainsaw sharpening, felling trees,  
working with a horse, winter camping,  
setting gravestones in cemeteries,  
creative writing, book binding,  
public debating, winter food gardening,  
non-punitive child rearing.

No one taught me these things in some school. I simply did them because they were useful and worthwhile things to do, and I simply let my mistakes teach me. Some required more mistakes than others, some less. None killed me, altho my lack of expertise at times brought embarrassing moments. Some skills needed more practice to satisfy my desired level of competence. For a certain few I later sought out a teacher to assist me in advancing to higher levels of competence.

No one "motivated" me in any of these things. I learned them because I liked them, I wanted to do them, and do them well. They were sources of pleasure and satisfaction. Some served me as escapes from boredom; silently reading the music from hymnals, and singing hymns in harmony in church compensated for having to endure sermons about sins I had never dreamed of, and a hell that was too gross and terrifying.

I saw early on that most people didn't do the things they needed or wanted to do because of their fears about failing. So I decided I would try to do anything I wanted to do, and while there are many reasons why I might fail, fear of failure was not going to be one of them.

Hundreds of times I fell flat on my face, often before a crowd of people. That was years before I heard that wonderful quote of Michael Jordan's: "Twenty-six times I was trusted to make the winning basket - and I missed. In my career I failed again and again, and again, and again, and again. And THAT is why I succeed."

You can make your own list of the things you can do that you taught yourself outside of school, and you'll probably be as surprised as I am now as I read my own. (And I keep adding more as I write this. Did I mention typing?)

### **NO LAW: REQUIRES ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL.**

The law requires not that you send your child to school, but that you see that your child learns the three R's. You may be required to fill out a form for the county superintendent of instruction. Perhaps take certain tests, little else about the "basic subjects" like reading, grammar, arithmetic, social studies, and science. The present acceptance of learning at home is due to years of battling on the part of determined parents.

Schooling attendance is believed to be mandatory by law, "compulsory", but the education laws state that a child must be given sufficient instruction to function adequately as a responsible and self-supporting citizen: enough reading skills, arithmetic, and writing to read traffic signs, balance a checkbook, and write a note to mother.

In forty-nine states no special training for a parent is required to teach a child at home. Only Michigan demands that home schooling parents be certified in teaching, and I hear even there it may be revised. It is commonly believed that it is required elsewhere, but that is because school administrators commonly lie to parents. (During a live TV debate I caught in such a lie the administrator of a large school system in Upstate New York. He had told me on the phone the day before that unless I had a degree in teaching, I was legally bound to send them to school.)

The first step in home schooling is to simply stop meeting the school bus. It is legal in every state in the Union. That public schooling is compulsory is Big Lie propaganda spread by the bureaucrats of the monolithic school system, who get their state and federal aid according to head count. Hence, the dreaded truant officers and deceiving the public.

The myth holds that giving instruction is a mysterious and terribly difficult art and science, and only many years of training can qualify one to help a child learn to read, to write, and to do math. We do not need a degreed teacher to explore libraries, museums, encyclopedias, the Internet, the world. When school people tell you that, they are lying to you, as surely as are USDA's "Master Gardeners" when telling you your vegetable garden won't grow successfully without your buying chemical fertilizers and poison sprays. (The liars always have something to sell - or are pimping for Corporate America - ever notice?)

One caveat: One must be eager to learn together with the child, NOT "play teacher".

#### WHERE TO BEGIN SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING:

1. Read John Holt's HOW CHILDREN LEARN, WHAT DO I DO ON MONDAY? and INSTEAD OF EDUCATION
2. Subscribe to HOME EDUCATION MAGAZINE'S ONLINE NEWS, a free monthly newsletter full of the best internet resources, home schooling news, article excerpts: <http://home-ed-magazine.com>.
3. Subscribe to Holt Associate's GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

Growing Without Schooling  
2380 Massachusetts Ave Suite 104

Cambridge, MA 02140-1226

Phone (617) 864-3100

FAX (617) 864-9235

Toll-free order line: 888-925-9298 E-mail: [info@HoltGWS.com](mailto:info@HoltGWS.com)

[Summer '02 NOTE: GWS has ceased publication, but back issues of immense value to homeschoolers are reportedly available. - N]

4. Subscribe to the free national home schoolers newspaper, The Link. E-mail [the.link@verizon.net](mailto:the.link@verizon.net) or call 805/492-1373 Website: [www.homeschoolnewslink.com](http://www.homeschoolnewslink.com)
5. There is a 400-page pb book by Gold & Ziellinski: Homeschool Your Child For Free - "More Than 1,200 Smart, Effective, & Practical Resources for Home Education on the Internet & Beyond". Call 800/632-8676, or see [www.primapublishing.com](http://www.primapublishing.com).
6. Scholastic offers workbooks & readers in basic skills for beginners (to age 7 or so), called "Jump Start". [www.scholastic.com/jumpstart](http://www.scholastic.com/jumpstart)
7. There is help in science, math, phonics & more from Learning Resources: [www.learningresources.com](http://www.learningresources.com), or call 888/342-5381
8. Math Trips you can check out for on-line math: 800/695-9427
9. For a series of lessons on reading & writing, from phonics to journal writing, check out Reading Jane's Way, Inc. E-mail [contactus@readingjanesway.com](mailto:contactus@readingjanesway.com).
10. The World & I offers abundant material in geography, history, anthropology, and related "social studies": call 800/8222-2822; or [www.worldandi.com](http://www.worldandi.com).
11. For high school age: Independence High School, which offers correspondence courses, will issue a Washington State official high school diploma to graduates. See [www.independent-learning.com](http://www.independent-learning.com), or call 800/595-2630.
12. Preparation for the GED test & much more will be found at [www.unschools.com](http://www.unschools.com)
13. Robinson's Self-teaching Curriculum offers "complete 12-year curriculum" on a set of 22 CD-ROMs. Write: Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, 2251 Dick George Road, Cave Junction, OR 97523.
14. For \$17 you can get a newsletter that provides lists of free home schooling materials: 604/876-3377.

## **LEARNING RESOURCES: THE WORLD AS CLASSROOM**

For the home schooler, the immediate community - indeed, the entire world - is a classroom. The things to learn and the number of approaches to learning them are seemingly infinite. The obvious sources of learning, besides libraries, museums, include bookstores, skilled neighbors, civic organizations. Then there are movies, video tapes, audio tapes, TV specials, public radio, and, of course, the incredible Internet, which is like having a library, museum, and massive set of encyclopedias with interactive connections to the world's experts on any subject imaginable, all in your home.

One can take all school course K - 12 on the Internet, and thousands of programs, including many interactive via e-mail. One can take almost all college courses now via Internet, and earn a doctorate with almost no residential time required. All of the above, taken together, renders public schooling obsolete.

### **THINGS TO DO**

These suggestions for activities may provide "learning experiences" - (as if there were experiences one can't learn from):

Talk about the peaks and valleys of life

Do lunch with someone cultured and wise

Listen to the wisdom & tales of the elderly

Play chess or ping-pong

Visit an art gallery

Walk in the park, sketch what you see

Begin a daily journal of thoughts & events

Explore your local library

Find someone you can read a story to

Choose a subject and search the Internet

Volunteer for a community cause

Go on a field trip to manufacturing plant

Go on hike you have planned well

Go camping overnight

Attend a concert or lecture

Design an exercise and nutrition plan

Sign up for or audit a college course

Give a talk before a group

Create a work resume

Search help wanted ads for interesting jobs

Practice interview skills

Begin playing a musical instrument

Sign up for yoga or aerobic exercise

PLAYING TEACHER: As a home schooling parent, it would be folly, even tragic, to "play teacher", that is, to fail to relinquish control of the child's learning quest by deciding what they should study and learn, and when and how they must learn it. Better, a facilitating role, assisting.

"Children do not need to be made to learn about the world, or told how. They want to, and they know how."

Holt felt that it does not matter so much how parents begin home schooling, so long as they begin. It didn't bother him that people, at first, lined up school desks in the basement, and began the day with salute to the flag, singing the National Anthem, and a reading verses from Deuteronomy. Yet most of his writing was aimed at freeing children from the shackles of doctrines and closed-minded authorities whether religious or secular. John knew that there was hope for freedom of thought and inquiry so long as they escaped the conditioning and dehumanizing influences of school systems.

"Children do not need to be made to learn, told what to learn, or shown how. If we give them access to enough of the world, they will see clearly what things are truly important ... and they will make for themselves a better path into that world than we could make for them." - John Holt

CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS: The next most popular mistake is to order books and courses of study and follow them as rigidly as is done in school. It is not easy to rid oneself of the idea of "course content" and "subject matter"

There are dozens of organizations that are eagerly offering to take over the "training" of children's minds - (for a hefty fee), including an endless number of religious organizations who prey on home schoolers as a way to win supporters. Almost all mimic the usual schooling approach that you have already chosen to avoid. Most will - in obvious or sneaky ways - indoctrinate the child in an ideology/value system that closes the mind rather than opens it.

There are none that I am aware of that offer the approach that John Holt (and I) have taught to parents since the Sixties - that learning is about freeing the mind and allowing the natural interests of the child to grow and blossom, and bear fruit in the wonderful adventure of living. That is why John and I urged parents to avoid the people who are in the business of controlling children' minds, and we taught parents in seminars and publications how to be a facilitator as the child pursues his or her own learning. If it is not aimed at freedom, freeing the mind of both the parents and children, they might as well be enrolled in government schools or church schools.

#### **Continuing Narrative: Mack and Linda Rosen**

Birds of many varieties frequented our side yard both summer and winter, so one day the boys and I built a bird feeder. The design included a large rudder to keep the open side away from the wind. It hung, bobbing from a maple branch and well out of reach of cats, outside our East kitchen window. We enjoyed close-up views of visiting Chickadees, Blue Jays, and Cardinals. Henry got a camera for Christmas, so many birds were captured on film.

On our country road, someone dropped off an affectionate, chubby half-grown cat. We named her after Linda Rosen, a fictional junior high girl in Kaufman's "Up the Down Staircase" who was "bursting with hormones." Then Mack showed up, a battle-scarred tomcat whose vocabulary was limited to one word: "mack".

The inevitable happened, and on the top landing of the cellar stairs Henry and Russell watched with fascination as Linda gave birth to a litter of kittens. Mack had made himself scarce, but he showed up later, fresh and happy from a recent fight.

All the kittens had to be named: Blackie, White Jump, and so forth, and we all watched at the window at the feeding birds. To our knowledge neither Mack nor any of the other cats ever caught one.

-----