


Parenting is not for Wimps!



The Millennial Generation, Helicopter Parents, & Teenage Retirement

Brigham Young University-Idaho
Campus Education Week, July 2009

Wimpy Parents

“Wimpy parents are loving, well-intentioned parents who continually struggle to get their children to listen to them. They are dedicated parents and will, in fact, knock themselves out for their children. They expect their children to appreciate their efforts but find that their children give them a hard time: Instead of cooperating, their children confront them with arguments. Instead of respecting a no, their children continue to do what they have been told not to do. Instead of being satisfied and grateful for all the special services and goodies they have received, these children demand more of everything” (Kenneth N. Condrell, *Wimpy Parents* [Warner Books: New York, 1998], 4-5; emphasis added).

Wimpy Parents

“Parents who have fallen into the wimpy parent trap express disbelief and confusion. They never would have dared to treat their own parents the way they are being treated. Many wimpy parents see themselves as much more involved with their children than their parents were with them. It seems only logical that their own children should be falling over themselves to please them instead of being so difficult” (Kenneth N. Condrell, *Wimpy Parents* [Warner Books: New York, 1998], 5; emphasis added).

Are You a Wimpy Parent?

1. Do you have a hard time being the boss? (are you non-convincing to your children?)
2. Do you give in to your children too often? (what if your child doesn't like you?)
3. When it comes to discipline, do you talk too much? (are you trying to be fair and logical?)
4. Are you too patient? (over-patience allows inappropriate behaviors)
5. Are you inconsistent (you nail them for misbehaving one minute, and then later allow the same misbehavior)
6. Do you take too much abuse from your children? (He doesn't really mean it when he calls me that name)
7. Do you save your children from the consequences of their choices?

Are You a Wimpy Parent?


8. Do you feel like your child is running you?
9. Does your child talk back to you?
10. Does your child rarely take “no” for an answer?
11. Does the thought of making your child unhappy cause you to hold back discipline?
12. Do you frequently do your children's homework?
13. Do you have to ask your child 10 times to do something before they get around to it?
14. Are you embarrassed in public by your child's behavior?
15. Do you dread mornings because your child hates to get up?
16. Do you worry that any mistake you make will permanently damage your child?
17. Do you find that no matter how much you do for your child, they still want more?

Incapacitated Adults

Larry Nelson, BYU Professor, recently related that when people discovered that he taught courses in Child Development—years ago, they would ask questions such as “How can we get our 2 year-old to sleep through the night?” Today, the questions are more like, “Tell me what to do with my 20 year-old,’ [and] tell me what to do with my 22 year-old.”

Incapacitated Adults

“Parents don’t know what to do because in generations past, you were done parenting by now. Kids were getting married, moving on. But since they are not, parents are at a loss” (Larry Nelson, as cited by Molly Farmer, *Mormon Times*, October 2008).



BYU Students Bring in the New Year with Root beer. You’ve got to love it!

The Idle Generation

- And withal they learn *to be idle*, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (1 Timothy 5:13).
- Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer (D&C 42:42).
- Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated. (D&C 88:124).
- Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:49).
- Use boldness, but not overbearance; and also see that ye bridle all your passions, that ye may be filled with love; see that ye refrain from idleness (Alma 38:12)

D&C 68:25-31

25 And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.

28 And they shall also teach their children to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

29 And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

30 And the inhabitants of Zion also shall remember their labors, inasmuch as they are appointed to labor, in all faithfulness; for the idler shall be had in remembrance before the Lord.


31 Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness.

Are They Adults?

- Are these 18-25 year olds really adults when.....
- You pay for their car and insurance?
- You pay their cell phone bills?
- You pay their tuition?
- You pay their housing?
- You pay for their food?
- You pay their rent?
- **Newsflash:** They are not adults! Just kids in grown-up bodies!

They Don’t Want to Be Adults!!!

- *USA Today* recently reported that only **16% of mothers and 19% of fathers** say that their children between the ages of 18-25 are adults!
- Their adult children don’t even dispute it! **Only 16% of those between 18-25 consider themselves adults!**
- **46.7 of women and 53.7 of men between 18-24 still live at home!!**




“I had a dreadful childhood. Especially recently.”

The first part of our lives is ruined by our parents and the second half by our children.
--Clarence Darrow

Just 20 Years Ago...

CBS News recently reported, “Twenty years ago, you graduated college and got a place of your own—no matter how small or squalid. For today’s post grad, life is a little cushier. Increasingly, parents are playing a greater financial role to make that transition a little easier. **Half of this years graduates have moved back home and 44 percent of last years graduates are still there, while 34 percent of 18-34 year olds still get cash from mom and dad— an average of \$3,410 a year** (CBS News Report).

The Boomerang Generation



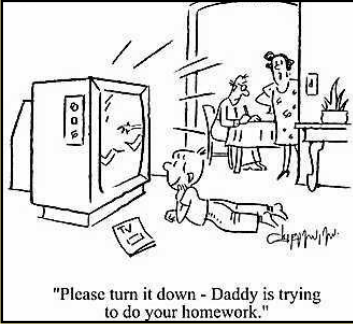
"He takes after his deadbeat dad."

- These kids leave all right, but they always seem to find their way back home. That's why experts have called them the "Boomerang" generation.
- "Many of these college graduates are reluctant to compromise the expensive lifestyle they have become accustomed to. Luxuries like cell phones, iPods, and digital cable have become essential to them, so they go into shock when they enter the workforce and realize how much basics like health insurance and gas cost" (see Scott, Deseret News, 12 May 2008).
- "Those who do too much for their children will soon find they can do nothing with their children. So many children have been so much done for that they are almost done in" (Neal A. Maxwell, *Ensign*, May 1975, 71).

How Did We Get Here?

- How did this begin?
- How did we get from point A to point B?
- Why do we have so many dysfunctional adults in our contemporary society?
- There are probably many answers– but one stands out– parenting!
- Or better yet, the lack of effective parenting!
- In order to better understand the situation, let's see if we can determine what we may have done wrong.

Look Familiar?



"Please turn it down - Daddy is trying to do your homework."

The Pampered Child-Syndrome

"We live in a **child-centered society** where children's wants and demands are increasingly being given priority over marital and family harmony, financial considerations, parental sanity, common courtesy, quiet enjoyment, respect and common sense. With the encouragement of many professionals.... Along with the enthusiastic support of the media, manufactures and marketers, **some children are becoming empowered to the point where parents feel helpless and ineffective.** Many can no longer guarantee their children the basic building blocks of physical and mental health– sleep, nutrition, exercise, fresh air– not because they do not understand their importance, or have the ability to provide for them.

The Pampered Child Syndrome

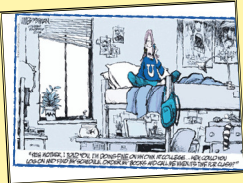
"Rather, they hesitate because the child does not agree, or because they are afraid of **damaging a child's 'self-esteem,'** or because they have been led to believe that **imposing anything on children that children do not want to do or that makes children unhappy or uncomfortable is tantamount to abuse.**



THE PAMPERED CHILD SYNDROME
Revised Edition
How to Recognize It, How to Manage It, and How to Avoid It
A Guide for Parents and Professionals
Maggie Mamen

Pampered Child Syndrome

"These well-intentioned parents are catering to their children's every whim and are actively avoiding, or even resisting, their responsibilities as parents to say 'no,' to set limits, to engender a sense of responsibility, and to teach morals, ethics, values, and the importance of family and community. **Children are not learning active or creative problem-solving strategies, or how to be resilient or responsible, or how to build up a range of internal resources to manage stress, loss, failure, or disappointment.** In a word, they are growing up pampered!" (Excerpt from *The Pampered Child Syndrome: How to Recognize It, How to Manage it, and How to Avoid it*, by Dr. Maggie Mamen).



Raising Pampered Kids

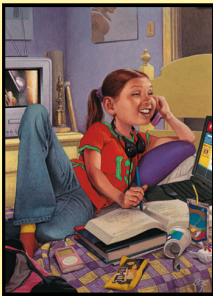
- **The Wall Street Journal** recently estimated that families in the top-third income bracket in the USA will spend from \$800,000 to \$1.6 million to raise a child born in 2005 through age 17 ("The Million Dollar Kid", March 4, 2007). In introducing these projections the **Journal** observed, "With the debate about the country's wealth gap heating up again, pampered kids provide some of the most dramatic examples, from toddlers in \$800 strollers to 10-year-olds with cell phones."
- The **Journal** projections were based upon a survey of parents' spending habits. Among the expenses included in the projections are...
- enrollment in child care and private schools (\$96,000)
- tutoring (\$75,000)
- gas spent transporting children (\$18,394)
- iTunes downloads (\$3,600)
- Baby Gap wardrobe (\$6,205)
- organic groceries for child (\$50,000)
- acne treatment during teen years (\$11,000)
- car as 16th birthday present (\$23,000)
- swimming pool in back yard (\$60,000)
- designer handbags for teenage girls (\$4,000)



Million Dollar Children

- **Evidence:** Flat screen TV's in Children's bedrooms, complete with Nintendo/Play Station
- **Evidence:** \$3,000 dollars worth of baseball equipment parents are expected by purchase for boys between the ages of 10-17 to "Compete"
- **Evidence:** Traveling with "Elite" or "Competitive" Sports Teams averages \$12,500 per year
- 2 out of 3 Teenagers have cell phones
- 1/2 of all American Teenagers have MP3 Players (Average cost of downloaded music per year is \$361).

Million Dollar Children



- **School Principals in wealthy communities say children are in so many classes, they don't know how to work things out on their own.**
- Children also own so much stuff, school "Lost & Found" departments are overflowing.
- Children are not as independent. They don't do chores at home. If you bring a broom over, they just look at you" ("The Million Dollar Kid, Eileen Daspin & Ellen Gamera, *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 3 March 2007).

Enabling Parenting Quiz

1. Do you often rescue your children and bale them out of trouble and responsibility?
2. Do you practically do everything for your children [chores, projects, scouting, young women's] and don't expect anything in return?
3. Do you not expect your children to have chores, work, or be respectful at home?
4. Do you often defend your children, feeling like they can do no wrong?
5. Do you believe that your children's problems are someone else's fault? [teacher, church leader, coach].

Enabling Parenting Quiz

6. Do your children believe they are entitled and have rights?
7. Do your children believe that they are entitled to success without any effort?
8. Are you more concerned with political correctness rather than teaching standards, values, and beliefs?
9. Do you buy your children something every time you walk into a store?

Enabling Parent Quiz

10. Do you carry your children's backpack to school? Make their bed, help get them dressed, etc.? Do they have to wear helmets, arm pads, and knee pads just to go out and play?
 11. Do you let your children come and go as they please, having set no limits or boundaries?
 12. Do you let your children sit inside day after day, watching TV, playing Video games, and complaining that there is "nothing to do."
- If you said yes to more than 5 of these question, run as fast as you can for the border. We will drive you there personally. The inmates are running the prison!

Cardinal Rule in Parenting

"You never do anything for your children that they can do themselves!!!!"



The Self Esteem Bubble

"Kids born in the '70s and '80s are now coming of age. The colorful ribbons and shiny trophies they earned just for participating made them feel special. But now, in college and the workplace, observers are watching them crumble a bit at the first blush of criticism."

"I often get students in graduate school doing doctorates who made straight A's all their lives, and the first time they get tough feedback, the kind you need to develop skills," says Deborah Stipek, dean of education at Stanford University. "I have a box of Kleenex in my office because they haven't dealt with it before."

The Self Esteem Bubble

"So when the criticism flows, some college students are increasingly seeking counseling."

"Sam Goldstein, a neuropsychologist at the University of Utah, likened some students to bubbles — on the surface they seem secure and happy, yet with the least adversity they burst...."

"One of the things the managers talked about is an incredible sense of entitlement for people who don't deserve it," she says. "They'll come in right out of college and don't understand why they're not getting promoted in three months."


Howe blames the attitude on society's high expectations. "We've become a much more child-oriented society around millennials," he says. "Self-esteem for them meant you're the focus of society's attention" (*USA Today*, "Yep, life'll burst that self-esteem bubble," Sharon Jayson, 15 Feb. 2005).

Spoiled Rotten Kids & Helicopter Parents


"Millennials" are Americans born after 1981, the invisible tipping point where it suddenly became *de rigueur* for parents to micromanage our children's lives with flashcards, Baby Einstein videos, play-dates, violin lessons, sports therapists, and tutors for every kind of special need, real or imagined. Now these "kids" have entered the workplace, with interesting results.

- "They grew up with an 'everyone gets a trophy' sense of entitlement," one 57-year-old employer says of his 20-something Millennial employees. **"They are members of a generation that thinks it should get a trophy just for waking up in the morning."**
- Typical problems include arriving to work on time, working towards long-term goals, dressing appropriately (the same employer had to tell a young female employee that his was not an "underwear optional" workplace), and loyalty to employers. It's also apparently hard for employers to keep parents at bay, despite the reality that their children are now adults. **"I had a human resources manager call me about a worker who received her performance review [followed by] her mother calling up to complain that 'she's better than that,'" the employer relayed.**
- "These parents are trying to create a really terrific statue of a child rather than a child," says Levine, author of *Ready or Not, Here Comes Life* (Simon and Schuster, 2005).
- Beverly Low, dean of the first-year class at *Colgate University*, says that **before parents would drop their kids off to college and get out of the way, parents now constantly call her office intervening in a roommate dispute or questioning a professor's grading system.**

How We Created Monsters




- Childhood has become solely fun and pleasure. Most everything in their world seems to revolve around them.
- Many parents are driven by the thinking that their children's lives must be better than was their own. It is natural to want your children to be happy and comfortable. **Feeling guilty at not spending enough time with them has compelled many a father or mother to try to compensate in other ways. Gradually, the focus has changed from parents teaching children to help the family—to pull their weight and do their share—to the opposite. Now, everything is done for them—the world revolves around them. Instead of selfless, outgoing concern, there is a selfish inward attitude.** The purpose and meaning of their life is to party and "have a good time."





*"MEET MY NEW LITTLE BROTHER, THE FUTURE SPOILED LITTLE BRAT!"

The "Me" Generation

- No longer are children obligated to their parents. **Parents are now obligated to their children—obligated to do everything for them and take them where they want to go—baseball games, football, soccer, dance and gymnastic practice. Obligated to clean and pick up after them. Obligated to provide the very latest gadgets, be it a CD or DVD player or the latest cell phone—lest they be unhappy, depressed or bored beyond belief! They must always be plugged in so that they are not left alone with their own thoughts.**
- As if competing in a popularity contest, parents are afraid *not* to cater to their offspring's whims, lest they lose their love. **They will certainly not apply discipline, for fear of terribly destroying their little one's "self-esteem!"** Truly, this scripture has come to pass: "Children are their oppressors...they which lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your [former] paths" (Isaiah 3:12).



Bunch of Little Wimps!

All of this has produced an entire generation of weak, selfish, pampered children. Though they have all they could ask for, the joy and better life that their parents want for them is not there. **Countless millions of young minds, after being diagnosed with every conceivable disorder, are being "medicated" in an attempt to fix depressed, unhappy and unfulfilled lives** (From *The Pampered Generation* by James F. Turk).


Around the Horn

- **Example:** 14 year old boy who told me recently that he doesn't mow his own lawn because he dad doesn't think he can make it nice. Instead, he plays video games all summer and watches the lawn crew outside his window
- **Example:** 21 year old boy who lives in parents home, eats their food, and refuses to go to school, go on a mission, or work. He's got a great life!
- **Example:** Youth who spend their summers attending EFY and other camps, but because of their busy schedule, they don't work
- **Example:** Parents who cover for their children so they don't have to bear the full consequences of their mistakes. Seminary make up work is a classic example.
- **Example:** Girl who repeatedly threw her cell phone on the side walk so her parents would buy her a new one, which they did!
- **Example:** Parents with out of control teenager approached me at my counseling office. After they described to me how rude, rebellious, and lazy their 17 year old son was, I said to them, "It sounds like to me that he needs to be punished." The mother retorted back, "We couldn't do that..... That would just make him mad."

Around the Horn

- Teens who do not work, whatsoever. They do not have chores at home, nor do they work for anyone else.
- Teens who play video games "round the clock."
- Teens who stay up until 2-3 a.m. on cell phones. Are these kids really getting up at 6:00 a.m. the next day and contributing to society in any way? This whole 3:00 a.m. culture is going to be the downfall of this lazy generation
- Teens whose parents let them sleep each day of the summer until noon or 1 because "they are growing."
- Youth who demand their parents "owe" them material possessions, such as Ipods, cell phones, digital cameras, and cars.



The Clincher



- Too many young men in my stake and yours who still have not worked a day of their lives before they enter the mission field. Today, this is now the rule rather than the exception. No wonder mission presidents kneel down in prayer and plead that the Lord will send them a handful of missionaries who know how to work!

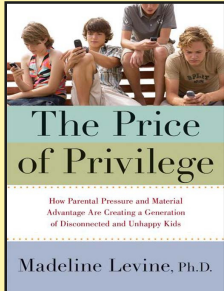
Country Clubs and Cotton Candy

- We cannot raise future parents, leaders, and over-all, just plain good citizens on a steady diet of cotton candy, television, and country club memberships.
- Our youth need to be taught to work, to be responsible, and to be disciplined.





The Price of Privilege

- Too many parents, in an effort to make their children's lives better and happier, have actually made things worse.
- In Madeline Levine's book, *The Price of Privilege*, she wrote: **"While many [teens] may seem passive and disconnected, their parents are typically in a frenzy of worry and over involvement. They tend to shower their children with material goods, hoping to buy compliance** with parents' goals as well as divert attention away from their children's unhappiness" (Levine, *The Price of Privilege*, 6).




The Bushy-Tailed Squirrel



"The people then rushed forward in horror, forcing the dog's mouth open to rescue the squirrel. It was too late. The squirrel was dead. Anyone could have warned the squirrel or held back the dog. But they had been momentarily amused and watched silently while evil slowly crept up on good. When they rushed to the defense, it was too late.

"We see around us daily that which is portrayed in this parable. We sit idly by, watching as an insidious stream of profanity, vulgarity, demeaning behavior; a mocking of righteous ideals and principles invades our homes and lives through most types of media, teaching our children negative values and moral corruption. We then become upset when our children perform differently than we would wish, and social behavior continues to deteriorate" (David B. Haight, *A Light unto the World*, 134).

A Parable to Consider




"As two men walked across an eastern university campus, they were attracted by a crowd of people surrounding a large maple tree. They approached and noticed that the crowd was being amused by the antics of a fox-tailed squirrel circling the tree, climbing it, and running back down again. An Irish setter crouched nearby, intently watching the squirrel. Each time the squirrel ran up the tree out of sight, the dog would slowly creep toward the tree. The squirrel paid little attention as the dog crept closer and closer, patiently biding its time.

"People watching this entertaining drama unfold knew what could happen, but they did nothing until in a flash the dog, catching the squirrel unaware, had it in the grip of his sharp teeth.

You May Reap What You Sow

Doesn't this story reflect the attitude that many parents have today? They think it is *cute* when they dress their little three-year-old daughter in a bikini, or listen to their five-year-old son talk back to them. What appears to be cute and harmless can eventually develop into full-blown rebellion and disobedience.




So What in the Heck Are We Going To Do??

- We've got to take our kids back!
- We need to rise up and be parents!
- We'd better take the bull by the horns!!





Or We're Going to Get it!



Parent's Need Skills

"We live in a remarkably complex world. The tools of the past are no longer adequate for all the tasks of today. The tools my father and grandfather used to turn their North Dakota prairie soil into fertile farmland were adequate for turn-of-the-century farming, but they are antiques today. **And so it is with parenting. In generations past, common sense, common knowledge, conventional wisdom, necessity, and intuition were usually quite adequate for raising a stable family. But not so today. In today's complex world, parents need skills**" (Glenn I. Latham, "As Christ Would Parent," in *Eternal Families*, Eds. Douglas E. Brinley & Daniel K. Judd [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 15).

Key #1: Don't Be Afraid to be Parents



- Too many adults are competing for the "Coolest Parent" award. Many parents have traded their values and beliefs for popularity. But, parenting is not a popularity contest; it is hard work. No one said that parents need to be Ogre's.
- Families can have loads of fun and still have values and beliefs.
- In order to do so, parents have to stand up for their beliefs and convictions, draw a few lines in the sand, and enforce some rules. Parents can't be afraid to be parents.
- So, parents, What do you believe in?
- What are your core parenting values?

Key #2: Tell Your Children "No"



"[Give] your children regular, daily doses of Vitamin N. This vital nutrient consists simply of the most character-building two-letter word in the English language [No]. ... Unfortunately, many, if not most, of today's children suffer from Vitamin N deficiency. They've been overindulged by well-meaning parents who've given them far too much of what they want and far too little of what they truly need" (John K. Rosemond, *John Rosemond's Six-Point Plan for Raising Happy, Healthy Children*, Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews & McMeel, 1989, 114).

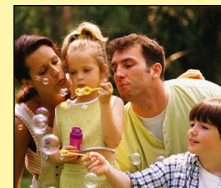
Key #3: Children Need Connection

- Without connection and relationship, you have nothing. There will be no teaching, no influence, and no parenting!
- Remember, Rules without Relationship always equals Rebellion!!!
- Consistent, stable, positive, emotional connections with parents equip children with important social skills and a sense that the world is safe, secure, and predictable. Thus, parents need to spend individual time with their children. It will make a world of difference.

Children Need More Than Love

"Children need more than love.

They need continuing relationships with the people who love them. People use to talk a lot about quality time with their children. But they seemed to mean, 'I'm going to do something very nice and maybe even spend some money on you. But I only have half an hour, so enjoy it!' That is no way to build a relationship.... Relationships include taking time to be with each other. They are also about sensing the other person's unique hopes and wishes....



Got Time?

"Relationships are not built while running a stopwatch. They grow when people take time to be together. But there is more at issue than time. We need to be in tune with the other person's needs, feelings, preferences. Sometimes the opportunity to show our love comes at inopportune times and in unexpected ways....For each person there is a different pattern of hopes, dreams, needs, and preferences" (H. Wallace Goddard, *The Frightful and Joyous Journey of Family Life: Applying Gospel Insights in the Home*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 96-97).



Family Connection


- Sources of connection include giving praise and expressing appreciation.
- "I was always complimented for the good things I had done, and my parents often told me that they were proud of me," one youth stated.
- Another youth described how his parents were supportive of him and attended his school and Church activities: "Even though my dad is a very busy man, he tried hard to attend our activities and always made time for us to do things together as a family."

What Can Parents Do to Foster Family Connectedness?

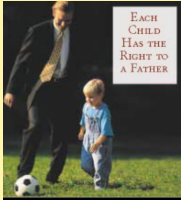
- 1. Spend one-on-one time with children.** A ride in the car, a special meal at a restaurant, or a friendly discussion late at night are good opportunities for parents to strengthen ties with youth.
- 2. Express love often.** Assurances of love and acceptance are crucial for healthy development. A kindly touch, a hug, or a warm smile are easy ways to express love. Many youth in the survey wished their parents would have expressed their love more often.
- 3. Spend time together as a family.** Family dinnertime, family home evening, and family outings develop feelings of connectedness. Don't mistake time in the same room as time together. Also, there cannot be "quality time" without "quantity time."

What Can Parents Do to Foster Family Connectedness?

- 4. Be liberal with praise and generous with forgiveness.** Children thrive on recognition and acceptance, especially from parents. Focus more on your children's strengths than their weaknesses, and remember that everyone makes mistakes. A spirit of love, forgiveness, and acceptance are vital in maintaining connectedness as you help children correct poor choices.
- 5. Develop family traditions.** Family traditions connect people in warm and winning ways. Long after youth grow up and leave home, they will recall with nostalgia family vacations, birthday parties, holiday observances, and other special times (Top & Chadwick, "Helping Teens Stay Strong," *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 27).



Relationship Can Be A Small Investment!




EACH CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO A FATHER

"If the father, tired from work, spends **just ten minutes with the boy, or a half hour, both will fill refueled. If, whether in the boy's infancy or later in life, the father doesn't spend the minimal amount of time with his child, he'll actually end up spending more than that amount of energy dealing with his son's anger, rejection, and abandonment throughout an evening, weekend, or lifetime**" (Michael Gurian, *The Wonder of Boys*, 1996, 116).

Crazy About Our Kids!

"Every child should spend a substantial amount of time with somebody who's crazy about him or her....There has to be at least one person who has an irrational involvement with that child, someone who thinks that kid is more important than other people's kids, someone who's in love with him or her, and whom he or she loves in return....You can't pay a [person] to do what a [parent] will do for free" (Urie Brofenbrenner, "Nobody Home: The Erosion of the American Family," *Psychology Today*, May 1977).



Key #4: Children Need Regulation

Adequate regulation of children, in terms of supervision, monitoring, rule-setting, and other forms of behavioral control are not only necessary; they eventually lead to self-regulation. Children will never be able to regulate themselves if they are not first regulated by their parents! Research indicates that children who do not experience regulation tend to be impulsive, prone to risk-taking, and more susceptible to other influences. Parents, remember that there is nothing wrong with having rules. Children need strong fences and boundaries in place.





Regulation leads to Self-regulation

- Youth who grow up in homes without specific rules or expectations often fail to learn to positively control their own behavior.
- These children tend to act impulsively and are highly susceptible to peer influences, both of which contribute to delinquency.
- It was interesting to note in one study that few youth complained about the strictness of their parents or number of family rules.
- On the contrary, several youth wrote they wished their parents would have been *more* strict and had given them *more* guidance through these difficult years (Top & Chadwick, "Helping Teens Stay Strong," *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 27).



Rules, Anyone?

"One of the best ways to establish preventative teaching as the main form of discipline is to have and use consistently a clear set of family rules.... Rules exist to guide our children's behavior and to make the world more predictable, safe, and comfortable for all of us. Children need rules, even though enforcing them can be unpleasant for the parents and children at times" (C. Richard Chidester, *Eternal Families*, eds. Douglas E. Brinley & Daniel K. Judd [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], 45).



Responsibilities, Anyone?

- Children need to work
- They need to have chores
- They should help around the house
- ***Children will never become responsible adults if they do not learn responsibility in childhood!!!***
- No child should have a cell phone if they are not helping to pay the monthly bill!
- If they drive, they should help pay for gas.



What Can Parents Do to Foster Family Regulation?

- 1. Establish family rules.** Children need the structure provided by family rules. Build family, Church, and school expectations into the rules, and allow youth significant input in the development of them. Rules can be reviewed during family councils and appropriate consequences can be discussed.
- 2. Assign all family members household chores.** This helps children develop a sense of responsibility and helps them see their behavior has consequences for others.
- 3. Monitor behavior.** Talk with your children and ask about what they are doing, where they are going, whom they will be with, and what money they have. If you doubt the answers, check with teachers or parents of friends. Watch for signs of trouble, such as a decline in school performance, complaints from teachers or other authority figures, sudden personality changes, or staying out too late at night.



Fostering Regulation (Cont.)

- 4. Enforce the rules.** This may seem hard since you wish to keep the relationship positive, but it is critical that children learn that their behavior brings consequences. Quietly but firmly discuss any violation of a rule and explain the impact such behavior has on the teen and others. Parents must stand together in enforcement of family rules.
- 5. Show increased love following reprimands.** Children sometimes perceive punishment as rejection, so it is important to express love after an incident (Top & Chadwick, "Helping Teens Stay Strong," *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 27).



Real Discipline!

"I think that most parents of past generations viewed discipline as a form of punishment associated with spanking, grounding, a denial of privileges, or sending some children to their rooms. However, the word *discipline* itself comes from the same root word as *disciple* and is best thought of as being related to teaching. Let's face it--parents are teachers and children are disciples, meaning that they will learn good and bad from us...[D]iscipline should be a positive experience as we teach our children what we would like them to know. It was never intended that discipline would be a punitive exercise involving physical and emotional pain. Discipline should be designed to strengthen relationships between parents and children" (Geri R. Brinley, "The Power of Positive Discipline," in Douglas E. Brinley & Daniel K. Judd, (eds.) *Eternal Families* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996], p. 184).



Key #5: Children Need Autonomy

Parental intrusion into the development of psychological autonomy is a significant risk factor for problem behavior. Children need some independence; they need to have their own opinion's, their own testimony, their own way to do things. To assume that the parental way is the right way; or better yet, the only way, could be damaging to the psyche of a child.

Freedom to Express Their Own Thoughts

- Showing respect for differing opinions and helping youth explore new ideas and their consequences help build a sense of personal worth.
- When parents are not tolerant of views and opinions, youth don't learn to trust their own perceptions or feelings and may look to their peers for a sense of personal worth or withdraw inside themselves and develop emotional problems, such as depression.
- "When I tried to talk to my parents," one young lady reported, "they made me feel like my ideas and desires were stupid." (Top & Chadwick, "Helping Teens Stay Strong," *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 27).

What Can Parents Do to Foster Psychological Autonomy?

1. **Encourage children to share their feelings.** Listen with interest to their opinions, hopes, and desires. Ask them what they think about a specific gospel principle, a family rule, an event that happened at school or in the community, a television program, or the actions of a respected Church leader.
2. **Accept their freedom to express their views even if you disagree with them.** Confidence to express ideas is critical in the development of a competent young adult.
3. **Help youth explore the sources of their attitudes and the consequences of them.** Don't overreact to "off-the-wall" ideas or opinions. Rather, acknowledge the idea as important, then explore the origins of it. Subtle guidance and sharing of your views often help a teen develop attitudes consistent with gospel principles.

Fostering Autonomy (Cont.)

4. **Allow children the opportunity to develop their own avenues of worth.** While participation on a basketball or debate team may have been important to a parent, a teen may not have the same interest or ability.
5. **Don't resort to withdrawal of love as a means of correcting behavior.** Children experiencing this type of control from their parents withdraw themselves and experience a loss of self-worth. Instead of moving toward independence, they often become more dependent on parents or peer groups (Top & Chadwick, "Helping Teens Stay Strong," *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 27).

Key #6: Let Children Fail

"Encourage your kids to try new things, do some hard things at which they are not good, and don't expect them to do everything perfectly..... A child who never experiences failure will view anything less than total success as failure. *A wholly sanitized childhood will only defer failure until later...* As you go through life, you should be sharing your own hard-won coping strategies, not as object lessons you ram down your kid's throats but as


Key #6: Let Children Fail When You Can

useful information tidbits... Don't protect your kids from the consequences of their mistakes. Let them connect cause and effect. Their errors are generally self-motivating if you don't make them feel disapproved or stupid or humiliated... Don't blame the system, the teachers, the test, or the referee when your kids make a mistake or foul out. And don't call the lawyers" (Marano, *A Nation of Wimps*, 262-263).

Having a Bad Day

"Teach our members that if they have a good, miserable day once in a while, or several in a row, to stand steady and face them. Things will straighten out. There is grand purpose in our struggles in life" (Boyd K. Packer, *That All May Be Edified*, 94).





The Time to Change is Today

When our children are born, we have 6,570 days left with them, until they turn 18 and leave home. By the time they turn 8, we have 3,650 days left. By the time they are 12, we only have 2,190 days left with them. By the time they are 16 and ready to drive, we only have 730 days left. It doesn't matter how much money you have, how powerful you are, or who you are related to - there is nothing that you or I can do to get those days back. We must make the best of it - and get off each others case. There is no time to waste.

