

Unsolicited Parenting Advice from a Childless Know-It-All

Let's be honest. No kid wants to be best friends with his or her (or their) parents before the age of 30. And rightly so.

It goes against nature. Moms and dads who resist centuries of basic human behavior to attempt being “besties” with their offspring are ripping the very fabric of society. You should be your kids' boss and benefactor, but *not* their best bud.

This trend has been going on for a few decades now. I can't tell you exactly when parents began going “soft.” But I have a couple of theories as to why.

Here's one: It *is* human nature for parents to want to provide their kids a life “better than we had.” Perhaps these parents, already pampered a bit themselves as kids, feel they must now up the ante and spoil *their* children even more.

Here's another: Maybe it's not really about helping kids avoid the painful moments and difficult lessons that come with growing up. Maybe it's the parents who don't have the fortitude to endure the pain when little Dylan doesn't get a trophy, or when young Sophia loses that spelling bee. Maybe Ma and Pop are sparing their own feelings, avoiding their own discomfort, by ensuring every child gets a trophy, win, lose or draw. If Aiden and Chloe still get prizes for merely showing up, they won't have a meltdown on the way home. Mom and Dad can avoid an uncomfortable car ride. Hell, they can avoid testing their parenting skills altogether.

I don't want to paint a portrait of *my* parents as hard and unfeeling because that definitely was not the case. They were very proud of both of us, they wanted to us succeed, and they hated it when we didn't. But win or lose, my sister Tammy and I

either *won*, or we *lost*. There was little sugar-coating of reality in the Acord household.

That's because Norm and Judy knew that losing once in a while was important and unavoidable. (And that made winning, to us, all that much sweeter.) They knew losses were life lessons. There was no "pep talk" when I failed to get the part in that first school play. I didn't go to them when I was being bullied for being gay. Extravagant birthday parties weren't annual events, but rather, were saved for the "big" birthdays like 10 or 16 – and even then, they weren't all *that* grand. Candles but no pyrotechnics!

And when we screwed up? No pampering then, either.

"You play, you pay," was one of Dad's favorite admonishments.

Believe me, I have my own assortment of hang-ups and neuroses.¹ But thanks to my parents, I take responsibility for my actions. I know how to "take a punch" without always falling to pieces. And when I *do* fall apart, I know it's up to me to pull myself back together again.

Unfortunately, this is not so true for too many of today's young adults.

However it happened, some young Americans are so easily bruised by life's bumpy road, they should be encased in bubble wrap.

Case in point:

My husband recently hired twenty-something "Lisa" at his restaurant. On her third day of work, and without so much as an email or phone call, she strolled in over an hour late without apology.

"Uh, Lisa, you're an hour late. What's up with that?" he calmly asked her when she finally arrived.

¹ After reading this far, you probably don't need to be told.

“Oh!” Lisa appeared absolutely stunned at first, then burst into tears as she stammered, “I assumed your company had a grace period!”

A grace period? Of an hour? For fuck’s sake!

Ironically, while many parents no longer have the resolve to share difficult, painful losses with their children, they have become more emboldened to lash out at anyone who dares to suggest their brats aren’t winners.

For example, high-school sports and little-league baseball teams across America are cancelling games due to umpire and referee shortages.

This is due to increasingly unhinged – and sometimes even violent – outbursts from parents at games. Nobody wants to risk a punch in the face for simply declaring little Jacob or Isabella struck out!

By the way, what a *wonderful* example to provide for our children, as we verbally attack or physically pummel others for simply stating the hard truth!

So, what do we get when younger generations face no consequences, and no discomfort without first receiving a “trigger warning?” When we raise kids to believe what they want is all that really matters? When we give them the message that “getting” something is far more desirable than “working for” something? When they see their parents blaming others for their children’s failures?

You get people like Matt Gaetz, that’s what. Marjorie Taylor Greene. Lauren Boebert. “Pharma bro” Martin Shkreli. Theranos’ Elizabeth Holmes. WeWork’s Adam Newman. And too many online “Karens” to count.

Repugnant, unrepentant, spoiled brats all.

So if you’re a new parent, stop trying to make your children’s lives uninterrupted bliss. For God’s sake, stop trying to be your kid’s friend. They aren’t here for that.

They are here to be embarrassed by you. Occasionally, they're even supposed to hate you. Deal with it. Endure it. And hang out with people your own age!

Besides, your kids already love you, even if they won't admit it. That should be enough for now. There's plenty of time to become BFFs with your offspring after they hit middle-age. Then you can *all* complain about "kids these days!"

And at least, by then, hopefully *they* can afford to pick up the check.

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