

Parenting disagreements destroy families, friendships

A journalist asks, "Why do today's parents seem to be having so many more parenting difficulties than did parents of previous generations?" There is more than one answer to the question; or there is one answer with a number of aspects. One of the primary features of parenting back then — "then" being before the psychological parenting revolution that began in the late 1960s — was cultural consensus. With rare exception, everyone agreed on how children should be raised. The fundamentals included that parents, not children, were the center of attention in a family, they ran the show,

stupid) principle before that was even articulated.

That consensus was shattered by the cacophony of "expert" voices that began arising in the late 1960s. As parent-babble increased, so did parenting disagreement.

Today, parenting differences are one of the leading causes of divorce. Informal polls I've conducted indicate that at least 50 percent of grandparents do not approve (to varying degrees, of course) of how their grandchildren are being raised. The primary complaint I hear from teachers and school administrators is that today's parents are more likely to disagree than agree with at-

school discipline. More than a few parents have told me they don't allow their kids to play at certain other children's homes because of parenting differences.

In short, parenting disagreements fracture marriages, families and friendships. It now appears that parenting should be added to religion and politics as "don't talk about" subjects.

Issues that were nonissues 60 years ago have become major sources of controversy — family sleeping arrangements, discipline (generally), spanking (specifically), diet, education ... everything. And as is the case with American

politics, the parenting middle ground is disappearing as parenting wars become part of the culture war.

Once upon a not-so-long-ago time, there was a village in which adults agreed and supported one another concerning child-rearing matters. Children, therefore, knew what to expect. Today, the village is a cacophonous battleground. Confusion has replaced consensus. The foundations have been destroyed. What was once a fairly straight path from infancy to emancipation has become a long and winding road to who-knows-what or even when.

Psychologists would probably say we need a cultural conversation about how to raise kids. Nah. We have already over-intellectualized a process that is done primarily from the heart, not the head. We definitely do not need more talk, more intellectualizing.

We simply need to get back to square one, which, if that's ever going to happen, will take place one parent at a time. Who wants to go first?

John Rosemond is a family psychologist and the author of several books on rearing children. Write to him at The Leadership Parenting Institute, 1391-A E. Garison Blvd., Gastonia, N.C. 28054; or see his website at

rosemond.com

PARENTING



JOHN ROSEMOND

and children did what they were told simply because they were told. The legitimacy of parent authority was a given; therefore, parents were not required to explain themselves to children. In effect, pre-psychological parenting adhered to the KISS (keep it simple,

Despite the conclusion one might reach after reading the latest issue of any popular parenting magazine, the job of parent is actually quite simple, so simple that I can describe the entire ball of wax in less than 15 column inches.

First, a parent's responsibilities — beyond providing the basic necessities of life — are to provide unconditional love and unequivocal leadership. The "trick," if you will, is to keep those provisions in a state of balance. Too much of either is toxic. Love without an equal measure of authority expresses itself in the

PARENTING



JOHN ROSEMOND

form of numerous enabling behaviors. Likewise, authority without an equal measure of love quickly turns into abuse of one sort or another. Second, there are but six fundamental understandings that a parent needs to convey,

fewest words possible and do not explain why you are giving the instruction. Explanations sound persuasive and provoke resistance.

3. You do what I tell you to do. (Helpful information: Parents who want a child to obey for their own benefit don't get it. Obedience is in the best interest of a child. The research finds what common sense affirms; that is, obedient children are also happy children. You get a child to obey by acting like you know what you are doing.)

4. You do what I tell you to do simply because I tell you to do it. (Helpful information:

If you do not accompany an instruction with an explanation, then your child is forced to ask for one. That gives you the Golden Opportunity to respond with the most powerful four words in a parent's vocabulary: "Because I said so.")

5. At any given time, I do not care what you think of me or any decision I make. (Helpful information: Parenting is not a popularity contest. When you want your child to like you, you end up doing things that negate your ability to provide leadership, which means you end up enabling.)

6. You can always count on me to provide for and protect you under any and all circumstances. (Helpful information: If your child is secure in that understanding, then the world is a safe place and, therefore, eventually becomes the child's "oyster.")

I ask you: Could that be any simpler?

John Rosemond is a family psychologist and the author of several books on rearing children. Write to him at The Leadership Parenting Institute, 1391-A E. Garison Blvd., Gastonia, N.C. 28054; or see his website at

rosemond.com

Key to parenting contained in 6 simple precepts