



Living With Children

By John Rosemond

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A few thoughts over morning coffee...

From the Feedback Department: Certain recent columns of mine have drawn a spike in reader responses, both pro and con. My comments on the fact that young teachers are and have been for quite some time ill-prepared to deal with the realities of classroom discipline prompted a former professor of education to tell me I am “uninformed...disconnected...and laughable.” She went on to say that courses in classroom discipline are part of every education major’s study program, thus missing my point, which is

that the courses in question teach methods that don’t work and won’t work until parents begin once again to support the discipline of their most delicate darlings. Serving as counterpoint, a former teacher wrote to tell me that I was right on and that the column in question identified why she left the teaching profession: to wit, after realizing that in matters of classroom discipline, enabling by parents and administrators trumps all. Not all parents and administrators, mind you, but entirely too many.

From the Rosemond’s Response to Feedback Depart-

ment: It is perhaps time to inform my readers that my primary purpose is not to be “popular” in the sense of being agreed with. Rather, it is to cause people to think critically about what has been called “parenting” for nearly fifty years. Proper child-rearing requires the understanding that one’s primary obligation is NOT to the child, but to neighbor and culture. Specifically, proper child-rearing is an act of love toward one’s neighbor and essential to the ongoing task of strengthening culture. Paradoxically, that “wide-angle” perspective imparts much greater

benefit to a child than does the tunnel-vision inherent to the post-1960s child-centered approach.

From the “How’s This for Pithy?” Department: Past their third birthdays, children do not need a lot of attention; they need their parents to pay lots of attention to one another.

From the “Duh!” Department: Children who seek lots of attention are not getting too little; rather, they are getting far too much.

From the “The Good Old Days Were Truly Good” Department: “I feel your pain” has been a popular saying for some time now. Presumably, the speaker is communicating empathy for someone else’s distress. When, however, someone truly feels someone else’s pain, the two people in question are, by definition, in a co-

dependent relationship, a relationship in which there is no emotional boundary. When that is the case, one person becomes the enabler and the other becomes the enabled. It is a given that the more someone is enabled, the more helpless he will act and the more enabling he will receive.

Over the past two generations, parent-child co-dependency has become, slowly but surely, the norm. It was not the norm in the 1950s (and before), when teaching children to think properly trumped helping them get in touch with and sort out their feelings, talking to them about their feelings, and letting them express their very destructive (to both self and others) feelings freely. This state of parenting affairs was expressed in such say-

ings as “You made this bed, so you and only you are going to lie in it,” “I knew if I gave you enough rope you’d hang yourself,” and “You’re going to stew in your own juices about this.” The parents who employed this sort of parenting language were most definitely NOT in co-dependent relationships with their children. They were highly selective when it came to feeling their children’s pain; therefore, they were able to enforce personal responsibility upon their kids, who did not, consequently, require “safe spaces” and other silly and counterproductive accommodations to get through college without breaking down. Time for another cup of coffee.

Family psychologist John Rosemond: johnrosemond.com, parentguru.com.

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