

SPECIAL EDITION | February 2019

THE EPOCH TIMES *on*

# Parenting

WISE PARENTING  
FOR MODERN TIMES

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## FROM THE EDITOR



Parenting is as important as ever, and perhaps at the same time, more complicated than ever. In a world that lacks a strong moral compass, how can parents bring up children who will grow up to become men and women who value virtue and good character? How can we care for our children's minds, bodies, and spirits, while teaching them to navigate today's society?

The ubiquity of digital technology has only added more complexity to an already fast-paced world, posing many dangers: impaired brain development, poor social skills, bullying, and addiction.

Meanwhile, the infiltration of communist ideologies in government has exerted a large influence on education—leaving less room for parents to assert their own values.

In this special edition, we also explore parenting through a few different lenses and perspectives: a former Navy SEAL father who encourages fathers and men to step out of their comfort



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Parenting will always have its challenges—and rewards

zone and to “lead from the front”; a mother who makes the decision to become a stay-at-home mom to the dismay of her social circle; a single divorced mother who witnesses her own mother make sacrifices to help her and her children; and more.

Clearly, in parenting, no size fits all.

The details and circumstances will vary, but the main responsibility of raising the next generation remains. The ancient Greek historian Xenophon said, “We ought to give good examples

to our children because if they see no uncomeliness, they shall be forced to follow goodness and virtue.”

Perhaps in no other endeavor are the results so long delayed; parents come to see the full-grown fruit of their labors in many years' time. And yet, from nothing else can the rewards be so joyful. We wish you all the best on your parenting journey.

**JASPER FAKKERT**  
Editor-in-Chief

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN BAUMAN

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We endeavor to educate readers about today's most important topics, seeking to broaden and uplift minds. We believe that rational, balanced debate is key

for fostering a healthy democracy and a compassionate society.

As an independent media outlet, we use our freedom to investigate issues overlooked—or avoided—by other media outlets. We seek to highlight solutions and what's good in society rather than what divides us.

We report respectfully, compassionately, and rigorously.

We stand against the destruction wrought by communism, including the harm done to cultures around the world.

We are inspired in this by our own experience. The Epoch Times was founded in 2000 to bring honest and uncensored news to people oppressed by the lies and violence in communist China.

We still believe journalism is a noble vocation, but only when it genuinely seeks to serve its communities and help them to flourish. In all that we do, we will hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity.

This is our promise to you.

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# The Evolving Social Context of Parenting

MARK HENDRICKSON

**P**rocreation has been one of the few constants throughout history. Indeed, it is the sine qua non of human existence—no procreation, no human race.

For centuries, it wasn't unusual for a wife to be pregnant a dozen times or more. It involved little planning, but was more like a biological imperative, impelled by the survival instinct. It was a numbers game: A certain percentage of pregnancies did not culminate in live births, and due to malnutrition, poor sanitation, and the ravages of disease, many children didn't survive until adulthood. The hope was that two or three children would make it to adulthood and be able to care for their parents during their senior years.

Multiple developments in the last few centuries have radically altered the parental calculus. In America, the land of opportunity and individual freedom, economic progress elevated standards of living higher and higher, resulting in declining death rates and increased longevity. Twentieth-century medical advances against disease gave longevity an additional boost, raising life expectancy from the mid-40s in 1900 to the upper-70s by 2000. With higher survival rates, the incentives to have many children were reduced.

The steadily increasing prosperity of the 19th and 20th centuries had a profound impact on family life. As the productivity of parents' labor increased, and incomes rose, children were liberated from the necessity to work. Instead, they could go to school. Economic progress enabled "childhood" to become a period in which children were increasingly exempt from the responsibilities of adulthood. They could be "children" as we think of them

► The rewards of parenthood are considerable and incalculable.





today, not just little people working alongside big people (adults) in the grim struggle for survival. Eventually, the productivity of labor grew to the point where a father could earn enough to become his family's sole breadwinner, enabling the mother to stay home as a full-time mother.

This sociological phenomenon—sometimes called the “Ozzie and Harriet ideal,” after a popular TV show—peaked in the 1950s. While still the basis of our society today, starting in the 1960s, the nuclear family consisting of a working dad, a stay-at-home mom, and kids was buffeted by several major challenges.

In the early 1960s, the birth control pill came on the scene. A wedge was driven between sex and procreation; family ties started to loosen. By the late '60s, the emerging environmentalist movement popularized the notion that a human population explosion, resulting from plummeting death rates and too-high birth rates, would quickly engulf the world in lethal disasters. According to groups like Zero Population Growth (ZPG), human survival depended on us having fewer babies.

In the 1970s, abortion was legalized, making it even easier to separate sex from parenthood and obviously reducing the number of live births. Concurrently, the women's liberation movement was rebelling against the Ozzie and Harriet model, arguing that women should no longer feel obligated to have babies, but instead should pursue whatever vocation they wanted to and not take a back seat to men in the economic life of our society.

(For the record, I am glad that females today feel free to pursue whatever goals they set for themselves. My own daughter, as a matter of fact, is making her way in one of the most male-dominated professions. But please remember, ladies, our society depends on enough of you having enough children to keep us going. That isn't a matter of ideology or personal preference; it is simply a statement of a biological reality: Unless we switch over to having test-tube babies, only women can bear children.)

**The Economic Factor**

Impacted by these developments, the birth rate in the United States fell dramatically throughout the '60s. The decline continued until 1975, when it more or less leveled off for a generation before starting to tail off gradually in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008. The concurrence of a falling birth rate with an economic phenomenon like the Great Recession is no irrelevant coincidence.

Yes, technological change (the pill), legal change (abortion), sociological change (feminist movement), and ideological influence (fears of popula-

**Being a parent isn't going to get any easier in the future.**

**RISE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY**



PUBLIC DOMAIN

◀ While still the basis of our society today, the nuclear family consisting of a working dad, a stay-at-home mom, and kids, starting in the 1960s, was buffeted by several major challenges.

tion explosion) have all contributed to fewer adults choosing to have fewer children, but don't underestimate the economic factor.

I've told my environmentalist friends for decades that capitalism is the cure for overpopulation. The explanation is simple: Capitalism generates prosperity, and very few people who have tasted prosperity will procreate their way out of prosperity. Given the choice between having two children and enjoying an affluent middle-class standard of living, and having six children and struggling to scrape by, rational adults will opt for fewer children. Indeed, this underlying economic reality was already in play before the convulsive changes of the '60s and '70s—remember: Ozzie and Harriet had only two children.

Unfortunately, I believe that America's affluence and resulting desire for material ease has gone too far, with some ominous implications. Americans (like people in other affluent countries around the world) are opting for parenthood less and less. Couples are having children at a rate lower than the “replacement” rate needed to maintain a level population. The danger today is not from a population explosion, but a population implosion.

**The State as Caretaker**

In the modern welfare state, government

retirement and health care programs have replaced children as the primary caretakers of senior citizens. Knowing this, many citizens were “liberated” from the traditional reliance on their children to care for them in their senior years. (The exception is seen among my Amish neighbors, who continue to have more children, on average, than non-Amish Americans, and who still faithfully care for their aged parents instead of depositing them in homes where strangers tend to them.)

The problem is, so many citizens in our country and abroad have counted on the state to be their financial support in their senior years that they did not bother to have and raise enough children to produce enough workers to supply the state with enough revenue to be able to pay for sufficient eldercare when the welfare state Ponzi schemes eventually break down.

Sadly, a “who needs kids?” mentality has taken hold. Many adults refuse to have children because they want to enjoy the good life that modern affluence provides. They don't want what they consider the distraction or expense of raising children to get in the way of their “self-fulfillment.”

In extreme cases, the animus against having children is pathological. About a decade ago, I wrote an article titled





“Sex, Life, and Death” that was prompted by hearing the statistic that the second-most common cause of death among pregnant American women was homicide. It turns out that some men murder their lovers for getting pregnant. Those stunted males so intensely want to avoid being saddled with the responsibility of parenthood that they murder their own children and the women bearing them. In their warped mentality, a woman is a sex toy with no right to get pregnant.

Fortunately for all of us, enough Americans are still opting for parenthood in spite of all the cultural and societal headwinds they face. One formidable challenge American parents face today is from those who should be most supportive of children: their teachers—or more precisely, from certain powerful elements within the public school establishment. Let me hasten to say that there are many wonderful, talented teachers in our schools who are real blessings to the children fortunate enough to be enrolled in their classes. Hats off to all of those good people.

The problem is the progressive ideological mindset that permeates public education. When I went back to college after earning my bachelor’s degree to add a teaching certificate, I can honestly state that I was never taught a single thing that would make me a better teacher.

All I ever got were steady doses of thinly disguised collectivist doctrines about how the purpose of education was to “socialize” kids, to make them malleable, compliant, and willing to accept a place in the social order that supposedly enlightened leaders would plan for society. I know of teachers active in teachers unions who believe fervently that parents should surrender their children to public education starting at two years of age, because the “experts” employed by the state know much more about proper child-rearing than parents themselves do.



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◀ Children laboring at night, in this photo from 1912.

In the modern welfare state, government retirement and health care programs have replaced children as the primary caretakers of senior citizens.

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And then there are the many children in poor neighborhoods, often minorities, who want desperately to escape dysfunctional schools that cripple their intellectual development, but the teachers union and their progressive political allies conspire to deny these children the freedom to attend a better school. That monstrous policy shows that the political establishment doesn’t give a hoot about children, but has become a cynical, oppressive alliance willing to ruin children’s lives for their own self-serving purposes. No wonder so many American parents opt for homeschooling.

One more peek of gloom before I close on an encouraging note: Being a parent in the future isn’t going to get any easier. I am thinking of the potential issues pertaining to genetic engineering. Think of the decisions would-be parents will have to make if the technology of genetic modification gets to the point where humans can customize designer babies. Will couples planning to have children want to equip them with genius IQs? What if you believe that nature shouldn’t be meddled with, but other parents are choosing to use genetic engineering to boost their child’s intelligence (or any other desirable characteristic)? Would you choose to leave your child relatively inferior? And what if the state starts regulating who and how many babies can be genetically enhanced? Then our society would be on the threshold of something akin to Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World” with the state, not parents, making life-altering decisions about their children.

### The Joys of Parenthood

OK, let’s walk back from that peek into potential darkness and close by celebrat-

ing the joy of having children. For those of you reading this who are parents or planning to become parents, God bless you. You are hugely important and much to be respected. You are the ones perpetuating our society and giving us a future, and given some of the challenges swirling around us today, you are to be commended for your courage and strength.

The rewards of parenthood are considerable and incalculable. Think of all you can accomplish as a parent—to give the gifts of life and love and then to be repaid with the priceless reward of a child’s love.

Thank you for all you are doing for society by teaching your children right from wrong. If you are religious, you have the joyous privilege of sharing with your children the good news of a loving God—a just God who will give a full reward for goodness—if not in this world, then in the next. What a sublime accomplishment it is to impart to your children the ability to feel comfortable in their own skin and to gain confidence and a sense of self-worth and security. What a rich reward you will deservedly receive for sharing a love with your children that is so special that, when they grow up, they will want to recreate that love by starting a family of their own.

The bottom line is that parenting—like everything else in this world—is confronted by challenges and pitfalls, but it can bring a joy unmatched by anything else this world has to offer. Again, God bless you parents—and your children.

*Mark Hendrickson is an adjunct professor of economics and sociology at Grove City College. He is the author of several books, including “The Big Picture: The Science, Politics, and Economics of Climate Change.”*



# Should Children Learn Civics and Economics?

CONNOR BOYACK

Imagine being a parent who is unwilling or unable to have the sensitive “birds and bees” conversation with your child—an important topic to be treated in a delicate manner. We as parents want to frame this discussion appropriately and respectfully. Could you imagine abdicating this role and relying on others to fill this void for you?

Before our children are inundated with conflicting values and controversial ideas in their social circles and online, we want to equip them with the right information. It’s a dangerous world, after all.

Now imagine parents being unwilling or unable to talk about civics and economics with their children—probably the majority of us. The world is full of controversial ideologies, dangerous political trends, logical fallacies, and bad economics. For our children’s personal and professional sake, shouldn’t we similarly prepare them for the world’s chaotic bombardment of influences before we leave them to their own devices?

## Schools Are Leaving a Void

It’s natural to assume, as many parents do, that this is what school is for. But are today’s schools adequately introducing these concepts? I submit that they aren’t—and the effects are rather disastrous.

Let me offer an example before I explain. I encountered a video last year featuring brief interviews with high school seniors about a range of basic civic concepts. One would assume that after years of schooling, these students would be at least moderately proficient in basic knowledge like who fought in the Revolutionary War, what the various branches of government are, or what the difference is between socialism and capitalism.

And yet, the answers pointed to a spectacular failure. One after another, these seniors looked dazed and confused, most of them either admitting ignorance or attempting to guess.

## The Tuttle Twins Books

Can’t we do better? Don’t we want better for our children? I certainly do. I recall several years ago wanting to teach my son some basic concepts about the free market and the principles that made America great: property rights, individual liberty,

justice, and more.

I turned to Amazon hoping to find books to help, but came up empty-handed. So I began writing my own—and nine books later, the Tuttle Twins series has sold nearly half a million copies to parents who recognized, like I did, that our children need to be prepared with these ideas, and that schools aren’t doing it for us.

We have to take the matter into our own hands.

Whether you’re worried about the economic and civic literacy of the rising generation or merely your own child’s personal and professional success, the concern is the same: Most curricula and schools have failed to instill these time-tested values into the rising generation. The levels of both discourse and ignorance evident today are exhibit A of our collective failure to ensure our children are equipped with this knowledge.

When I set out to produce the book series—aimed at kids aged 5 to 11—the biggest question on my mind was whether little people could understand big ideas. Could it be that we parents simply don’t talk about these complex ideas merely because we feel they are best left for adults?

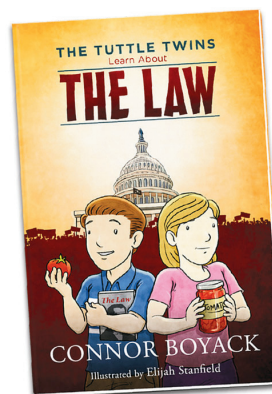
The results have been amazing—thousands of families have sent us messages about how their dinner conversations have become deeper, more meaningful, and relevant to helping their children understand the way the world works.

## Amy’s Story

Let me offer one specific example of many to illustrate what we’ve seen.

Amy has three children, aged 6, 9, and 13. She told me she was frustrated that her kids were bored all the time with what they were learning. They would come home from school, and when asked what they’d learned that day, would respond with “eh, nothing” most of the time. Sounds familiar, right?

Then she began using the Tuttle Twins books along with some of the accompanying activity workbooks. Here’s what she said happened: “It’s almost as if my children’s minds had a spark ignited. We had such interesting conversations after reading together, and I was so amazed seeing my little children understand these big



Connor Boyack is the author of the nine-book “Tuttle Twins” series for children and the president of The Association for Teaching Kids Economics, which helps K–8 students learn the ideas of a free society.

ideas ... things like justice, central planning, entrepreneurship, and more!”

But here’s where things really got interesting: “If I’m being honest, though, I realized when reading through these books that I was learning alongside my children ... and when they would ask me a question, I often didn’t know. ‘Mom, isn’t eminent domain stealing since the government is taking somebody’s property?’ How do you answer that coming from a 9-year-old? It made me realize that I didn’t really understand many of these ideas well, and so we had to learn together.”

And there it is—the real reason I think many of us don’t talk to our children about these complex topics is that we feel we don’t understand them very well. They weren’t taught to us in school. We can’t teach what we don’t know.

## Time to Learn Together

While that can be perceived as a problem, I see it as an opportunity. What better way to gain an understanding of how the world works than to have families explore these topics together, sharing what they’re learning and testing their ideas as they mature and progress.

As the saying goes, those who don’t learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. We parents must ensure that our children learn from the mistakes of the past so as to avoid them, thus setting them up for success in their personal and professional pursuits. We can’t leave that task to others; schools aren’t filling this void.

We also don’t have to wait until our children become adults, nor should we delegate the job to others we don’t know, trust, or agree with. Let’s step up and fulfill our role as the primary educators of our children to ensure that they’re ready for the onslaught of ideas and ideologies to which they will soon be subjected.

▲ The real reason many of us don’t talk to our children about these complex topics is that we feel we don’t understand them very well. They weren’t taught to us in school.



# Raising Deeply Ethical Children

## *The First Seven Years*

JUNE FAKKERT

A

s parents, we love and want to protect our children. We also want them to be happy and successful in their future lives.

To this end, one of most important things we can do is help them develop a deeply ethical core—one grounded in virtues and wisdom.

This is no easy task in today's culture. The world our children face today is tremendously complex and fast-paced, far more so than the world that past generations faced in their early years. The arrival of the internet and social media has changed the fabric of society, and the way that people think, feel, and interact.

Of course, this has brought positive elements, but also many negatives, from social media bullying to an endless amount of distracting, dark, dangerous, and disgusting ideas—just a click away—to tempt immature minds.

In order to meet the challenges of modern life and fulfill our children's potential, they need to be stronger and more discerning than ever: They must be able to resist the temptation to waste hours on Facebook and video games; to understand what is appropriate in a romantic relationship; to be the CEO who refuses to compromise the environment for profit; to let hardship make them stronger; and ultimately be able to value virtues such as compassion and honesty more than personal gain and pleasure.

So how do we raise our children to become such good people?

There are many paths to this, and the answer begins in the heart of every parent: in our care, dedication, and love for our children, and also in our sincere striving to do (and modeling) what is right.

But this isn't to say that just pouring love in is all it takes; children also need boundaries, guidance, and discipline. Every day, we make many small parenting decisions that cumulatively become their experience of childhood.

To make these decisions well-informed, a solid understanding of child development is key. In the book "You Are Your Child's First Teacher," author and early childhood educator Rahima Baldwin Dancy writes that the best informed decisions come from a holistic view of the child.

**The world our children face today is tremendously complex and fast-paced, far more so than the world past generations faced in their early years.**



Every day we make many small parenting decisions that cumulatively become their experience of childhood.

"We need to begin to see the child in a new way, one that takes into account physical, emotional, and mental development, as well as the less tangible spiritual dimensions of the human being. Once we begin to perceive the whole child and how he or she unfolds, then our choices will begin to have coherence," she writes.

### Perception

As a society, we are used to reading books and listening to experts in order to understand our children. This certainly has its place, but taking time to quietly observe them with loving attention is a powerful way to get to know and understand them. It's also especially helpful if you find yourself in a negative pattern of nagging or yelling, or if they are exhibiting untoward behavior.

In the book "Working with Anxious,

Nervous, and Depressed Children," author and therapist Henning Köhler shares his thoughts on how beginning from a spiritual foundation can promote healing.

Based largely on the work of Austrian philosopher and educator Rudolf Steiner (founder of the Waldorf education movement), Köhler's starting point is "reverence for the child" as a spiritual and dignified being in their own right.

Köhler recommends that parents "observe the child keenly and lovingly at least once a day" in order to help form a clear understanding of them.

"One aspect of loving is the ongoing practice of overcoming one's own habitual judgments, desires, expectations, and concepts, pushing them out of the way and giving oneself instead to listening and observing," he writes.

"At moments like these, such a reaction



ANGELO GIAMPICCOLO/SHUTTERSTOCK



as, for example, annoyance that the child walks without lifting his feet properly, is completely out of place. You note instead that is his particular way of walking. When you begin to feel a kind of tenderness, awakening in you for the child's very faults and weaknesses, for all the things that ordinarily lead to strife and anger, you will know that you are on the right path."

### Body

As parents, we pay much attention to our children's bodies—especially when they are young—we touch them often, know every morsel of food they eat, and whether they are eliminating properly.

The way parents care for the body of a young child gives the child his or her first experience of goodness, Köhler writes.

"Rudolf Steiner once described how every child harbors a profound, unconscious conviction at the start of life that the world is moral through and through. It is immensely important whether this 'basic assumption' as he calls it, is (or is not) confirmed in a child's first few months by her bodily sense experience."

Of course, many parents reading this will have children older than a few weeks, and the care you give them and the quality of the things in their environment are important too.

"One of the most important things you can do is pay attention to all that surrounds your child. This includes the food, clothing, images, toys, sunshine, sand, and water. It also includes less tangible 'nourishment,' that comes from our warmth and love and the emotions that surround your child," Dancy writes.

### Mind

If you want to raise an ethical child, it's a good idea to take some time to understand how children's morality and perception of the world develops and how big of an impact that media can have.

There are many theories on moral development, but those developed by Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget are a starting point. Both laid out a framework and timelines of moral reasoning that people pass through sequentially from birth to adulthood.

In both of these developmental theories, there is a change at around age 6 or 7, when children move to a new stage of understanding and perceiving the world.

Before this, they are at a stage of imitation; they don't and can't reason like adults, even though they may be very verbal. They see objects like furniture and toys as being alive.

Another thing to note, although young children can understand silly humor (the sock doesn't belong on your hand), they can't understand sarcasm when they are between 5 and 8 years old.

They also absorb like sponges without discriminating between good and bad.

In the book "Joyful Toddlers and Preschoolers," early childhood educator and author Faith Collins notes a study that unexpectedly found that children shown an educational video on conflict resolution became more aggressive. "The researchers surmised that young children 'learn from each of the behaviors shown,'" she writes.

Research on the effects of movies on children shows they are very affected, more so than adults. The Payne Fund studies, a series of studies by the Motion Picture Research Council, found that children are affected deeply, in part, because "children of all ages tend to accept as true the things that they see in movies," according to a summary by the University of Florida's media lab.

The research also found that children who watched movies "had lower conduct grades, did poorer school work, rated lower in reputation by their teachers, rated lower by their classmates, were less cooperative, were more deceptive, were less skillful in

judging right from wrong, and were slightly less emotionally stable."

Heavy screen time is also literally changing the structure of our children's brains.

judging right from wrong, and were slightly less emotionally stable."

The Payne Fund studies were carried out in the 1920s and 1930s, when movie content was much tamer than today.

Heavy screen time also is literally changing the structure of our children's brains. And even if screen time isn't heavy, children have no way to filter out unsavory images, and what they see, they will imitate and make a part of themselves.

So, to nurture a sound mind, pay attention to what is going into it.

### Spirit

Throughout history, religion provided the moral fabric of society, and spiritual belief was the guiding force behind the actions of innumerable great historical figures, such as George Washington and Harriet Tubman, both of whom were reported to have received spiritual guidance in the form of visions.

To some extent, science also has validated that sincere spiritual practice is beneficial. Studies have shown that it makes people more satisfied, is associated with longer lifespans, and makes people less prone to drug use and depression, and more able to cope with hardship and trauma.

Neuroscience also has shown that prayer and meditation change the brain for the better.

Moreover, Judeo-Christian values are the basis of morality in the Western world, and religious practice probably played a key role in shaping the brain structures we have today—structures we are now changing with screen media.

Put another way, what images do you want to form your child's character? Certainly, your beliefs, values, and corresponding actions will shape those of your young child. And, especially for young children, living examples matter.

"Children's capacity for love is also undermined if we respond to the wondering openness of the good that they bring into life with constant instruction, moral appeals, and pious phrases. These too breed indifference, they are all useless. What does matter is setting an unobtrusive example in our own way of living," Köhler writes.

But when and in what way do you expose them to the rest of the world?

"The best way to prepare your children for the stresses of today's world is not to expose them to problems early in their life, but to provide them with an environment that is warm and nurturing and that shelters them from as many of the problems of the adult world as possible," Dancy writes.

By giving young children love, respect, discipline, good examples, and protection from the adult world, you can set them up with a solid grounding in what is right and good. This, more than any skill, will give them a bright future.



Neuroscience has shown that prayer and meditation change the brain for the better.

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June Fakkert is a full-time mom of two and a health and wellness reporter for *The Epoch Times*.



# Parenting in a Soft Age

JOSHUA CHARLES

**A** confession should come first: I am not a parent. I've mentored many young people, I've observed many families (including my own), and I am very excited about one day becoming a father with hopefully many children—but I am not a parent.

And yet, I have pondered the subject of parenthood for many years.

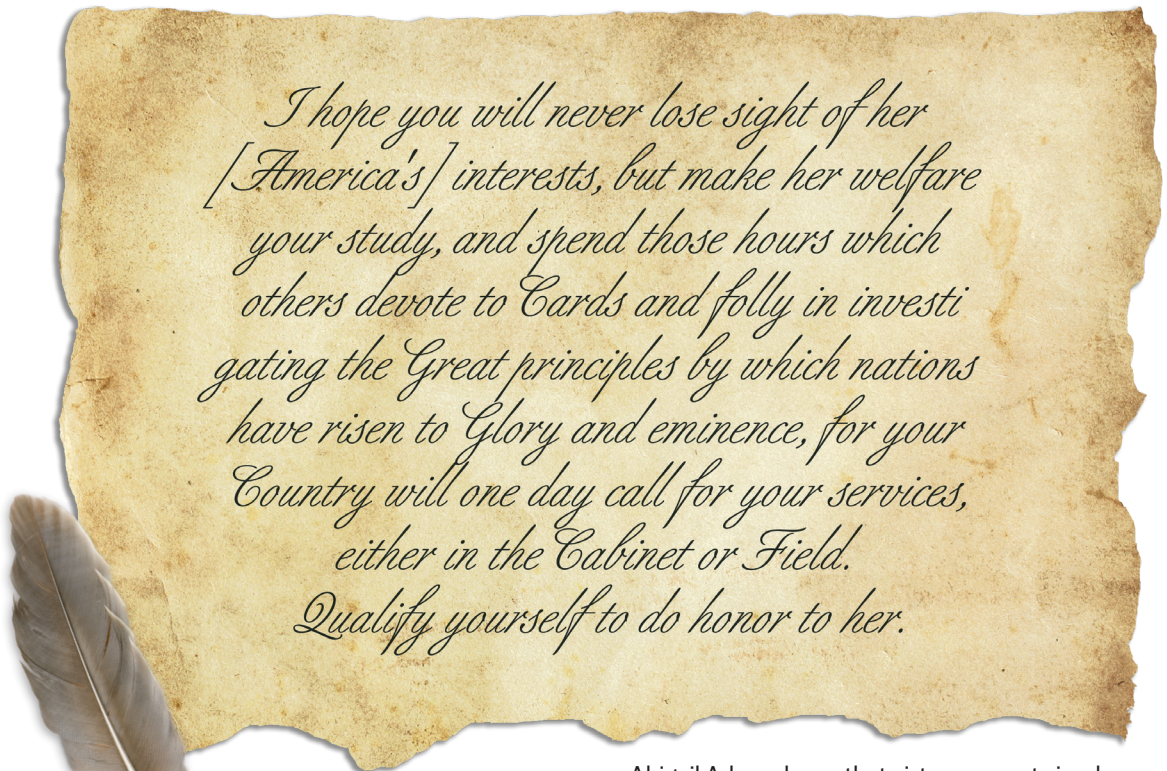
Generally speaking, here is what I have observed: Parenting in our day and age has become less about teaching children virtue, and more about helping them with “career prep.” Parents are more often seen running their kids around to every conceivable activity—sports, dance, chess club, and so on—often in an attempt to augment their resumes in preparation for college, while in the meantime, deeper issues go unaddressed.

What are some of these deeper issues? In my view, one of the great truths the modern world simply doesn't get is that virtue, not satisfaction and emotional happiness, is the foundation of a truly happy life in the long term. This seems to have been ignored by many modern parents, who often seem to care more for the material sustenance of their children than their moral sustenance.

## Reason Versus Passions

Indeed, it was an idea that arose in the 1960s that inhibition itself was a source of human unhappiness—chaining our appetites to archaic morals led to dysfunction and disorder. Naturally, this claim was made primarily in relation to sex. Not going beyond various guardrails was, in fact, the source of our problems, some claimed. It wasn't long before this abhorrence for any form of inhibition on human appetites developed a new vocabulary with words like “repressive” and “oppressive.” Eventually, this abhorrence of moral limitations was reframed in positive terms, and defined itself primarily by one phrase: “self-expression.”

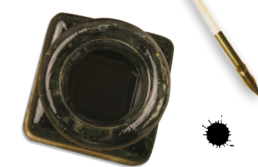
It wasn't long before this idea was applied to parenting, and the idea became to let children determine their own values. The logic of this has flowered into absolute insanity in our own day with gender ideology—adults have become so willing to bow to their children that they even claim that a male child can claim he's a girl, and a girl child can claim she's a boy. To declare otherwise is to “limit” the child—to interfere with their own



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Abigail Adams knew that virtue was not simply a matter of individual profit, but societal profit.

SHUTTERSTOCK (IMAGES); THE EPOCH TIMES (PHOTO ILLUSTRATION)



It is the path of virtue—the path of reason directing the passions—which leads to true and long-term happiness.

goals and dreams.

Of course, left out is the idea that the human person benefits from objective moral goods, and can, in fact, become better and more content (“happy”) by conforming themselves to those goods. Left out entirely is the idea that morality is objective, and thus binding, but that even though “binding,” it nonetheless liberates the human person from the bondage that comes from something much worse: their passions. We are bound to one of two things, our reason or our passions, and reason is the far easier and more ennobling taskmaster.

You find this idea both in the Greek and Roman philosophers, as well as in traditional Catholic and protestant theology (to say nothing of traditional Confucian as well as Jewish sources). Human beings, all recognized, are a mixed bag. They clearly possess reason—the principle of the intellect which directs the will. But they also have passions—desires of the flesh for things like fame, wealth, power, and pleasure. Thus, the great adventure of the human person toward true happiness is the path of virtue: the assertion of the primacy of reason over the passions.

It isn't that our desires for fame, wealth, power, and pleasure—what the Bible calls

“the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” [1 John 2:16]—are bad in and of themselves. Rather, it is that by virtue of being passions, or as the Bible says, lusts, they are necessarily prone to get out of control, and in doing so bring ruin.

Physical pleasure only goes so far to satisfy the human soul—as anyone who has partaken knows. The same with wealth, power, etc. A practical example: most of us partake in a casual wish that we had the money and fame of celebrities. But then we use our reason, and we recognize that celebrities have astoundingly high rates of drug abuse, marital breakdown, and suicide. Does that mean all of them, or that wealth and fame are necessarily bad? No. But it does mean that they are not ends in themselves. None of the passions are.

The virtues, however, are ends in themselves. In traditional Aristotelian terms, virtue was a habitual act that was itself the mean between two extremes. For example, the virtue of courage is the habitual act of courage as opposed to the acts of cowardice (one extreme) or rashness (the other extreme). This virtue is, of itself, worthy of pursuit in a way that the passions are not. Whenever some-





(L-R) Portraits of Abigail Adams by Gilbert Stuart, and John Adams by Mather Brown.

thing that appeals to our passions is pursued as if it was, itself, a worthy goal, it always goes to excess.

Therefore, it is the path of virtue—the path of reason directing and guiding the passions—which leads to true and long-term happiness. Obeying our passions tends to get us in far more trouble.

#### Modern Parenting

I say all of that as a preliminary to this observation: these are not lessons many modern parents teach their children. Any brief look at our society makes this clear. And yet they are liberating lessons. They teach us how to be free of our passions—a lifelong process to be sure, but a liberating one nonetheless. It teaches us to value reason more than our emotions—not because our emotions are bad, but because uninhibited, they rarely lead to individual or societal happiness. Take a look at social

media these days, and you'll see the truth of this observation.

These realities became even more obvious to me when I read the writings of various historical figures who partook of the traditional view (often opposed to those in their own day who took the more modern view of “self-expression”). For the sake of space, I'd like to focus on one particular family: the Adams family. No, not the weird ones on TV who live in a haunted house, but the great early American family who contributed so much to American independence and nationhood. Specifically, I'd like to focus on the mother, Abigail Adams, the wife of the famous Founding Father, John Adams.

#### The ‘Momma’ of the Revolution

John and Abigail were intense parents. They both sacrificed a great deal of their time, money, and on occasion their repu-

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tations, for the cause of American liberty. John was away from his children for long stretches of time as he served in the Continental Congress. He was away from most of his children, and his wife, for years at a time when he was appointed as an American ambassador in Europe.

And yet, both knew that reason required such sacrifice. The passions militated against them—but they were good and right nonetheless.

Abigail is an exemplary model. Much as it pained her to be separated from her husband for such a long period of time, Abigail knew what was at stake, and continued to inculcate those lessons into her son, John Quincy Adams—who, in addition to holding several high offices, would go on to become president of the United States.

For example, writing to John Quincy after he and his father had arrived in France after a long and dangerous journey across





the Atlantic, she wrote:

“I would much rather you should have found your grave in the ocean you have crossed, or that any untimely death should crop you in your infant years than see you an immoral, profligate, or graceless child.”

Virtue mattered to this momma. In the same letter, she said some things that most modern parents would likely balk at:

“Great learning and superior abilities, should you ever possess them, will be of little value and small estimation unless virtue, honor, truth, and integrity are added to them. Adhere to those religious sentiments and principles which were early instilled into your mind, and remember that you are accountable to your Maker for all your words and actions.”

Abigail recognized a reality that many modern parents fail to acknowledge: that absent training, education, and discipline, children really aren’t that great in their moral qualities and accomplishments. It is indeed hard to imagine many parents today daring to question, with respect to such qualities, whether or not their children “[should] ever possess them.” But this was a given for Abigail. Virtue costs, and she never obscured this fact.

In another letter to John Quincy, she writes eloquently on the “due government of the passions” in the pursuit of virtue:

“The due government of the passions has been considered in all ages as a most valuable acquisition. Hence an inspired writer observes, ‘He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taken a city.’ [Proverbs 16:32] This passion, cooperating with power, and unrestrained by reason, has produced the subversion of cities, the desolation of countries, the massacre of nations, and filled the world with injustice and oppression. Behold your own country, your native land, suffering from the effects of lawless power and malignant passions, and learn betimes, from your own observation and experience, to govern and control yourself. Having once obtained this self-government, you will find a foundation laid for happiness to yourself and usefulness to mankind.”

Observe that she does not base what she is saying on some idiosyncratic approach

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Abigail Adams,  
in a letter to her son  
John Quincy Adams



Portrait of John Quincy Adams by John Singleton Copley.



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to parenting, but rather a truth that has been recognized in all ages.

In another letter, Abigail warns her son against the very engine of the passions, and the source of the ruin of so many: self-love.

“Self-love and partiality cast a mist before the eyes, and there is no knowledge so hard to be acquired, nor of more benefit when once thoroughly understood. Ungoverned passions have aptly been compared to the boisterous ocean, which is known to produce the most terrible effects. ‘Passions are the elements of life,’ but elements which are subject to the control of reason. Whoever will candidly examine themselves, will find some degree of passion, peevishness, or obstinacy in their natural tempers. You will seldom find these disagreeable ingredients all united in one; but the uncontrolled indulgence of either is sufficient to render the possessor unhappy in himself, and disagreeable to all who are so unhappy as to be witnesses of it, or suffer from its effects.”

All of this was put in an even larger context by this mother:

“I hope you will never lose sight of her [America’s] interests, but make her welfare your study, and spend those hours which others devote to Cards and folly

in investigating the Great principles by which nations have risen to Glory and eminence, for your Country will one day call for your services, either in the Cabinet or Field. Qualify yourself to do honor to her.”

In other words, Abigail knew that virtue was not simply a matter of individual profit, but societal profit. Her parenting was directed not just toward her child’s “happiness,” but his goodness, for his ultimate happiness depended, as did the happiness of society, on that goodness. She knew that encouraging a child to obey their moment-to-moment passions and emotions was a recipe for imprisoning them to those passions and emotions. To do so would be to enslave, not liberate; to shrink, not expand the soul; to inculcate selfishness, rather than duty, as the prime motivation of life.

I say we bring back the Abigail Adams-style of parenting. After all, she did raise a president.

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# Staying Home Made Me a Better Mom

KIMBERLY YAVORSKI

**W**hen I quit my full-time publishing job to stay home with my children, I was made to feel like a traitor to womankind. My decision was somehow “proof” that women couldn’t be counted on in the business world, at least not when they became moms. I fell into the guilt trap. Though I was not ready to give up the idea that I could “have it all,” I knew I couldn’t have it all at once. Yes, this choice would sideline my career for a time, but I had faith that it wouldn’t end it.

Like my religion and my politics, I often choose not to broadcast my status as a stay-at-home-mom until after people have had time to make up their mind about me. I wait until they have decided whether I am interesting or competent enough to enter their circle. Once they’re hooked and we establish a relationship, being a stay-at-home-mom is seen as just another facet of me, not the thing that defines me.

This strategy came from the reaction of some working parents I met in social situations who, upon learning the truth about me, abruptly walked away or sniffed and looked around, seeking an excuse to escape, deeming me unworthy of intelligent conversation.

Fortunately, things have changed a bit. Today, most people are supportive of this decision.

In fact, a 2014 Pew study found that 60 percent of Americans think it’s a good idea for a parent to stay home to care for children. While the proportion is still small, increasing numbers of parents are making this choice (about 27 percent of moms and about 7 percent dads, with the number among millennial moms being slightly higher). Another sign of changing times: Most of today’s stay-at-home-parents are college educated.

## Considering the Impact on Family

With this kind of societal pressure, why did I stay home? It was right for our family. There were needs that would go unmet had I returned to the workforce. That was not a compromise I was willing to make. This meant we made sacrifices. It meant saying no to my kids. No to the fun summer camps some of their classmates attended; no to fancy vacations; no to some pricey activities they wanted to try. They weren’t deprived, they were



KALI ANTJE/SHUTTERSTOCK

just as busy as other kids, but we set our priorities with the budget in mind.

Vacations often entailed visiting family and friends. We got creative, sometimes staying at campgrounds instead of hotels and often saving money on meals by planning “picnics” after grocery store visits. Like my childhood road trip vacations that often included a cooler with bologna sandwiches and plums picked off the tree in our yard, we focused on activities and time together to make memories. Staying with or near family and friends strengthened relationships and made things more interesting.

While many women take a few years off from the workforce when children are small, most return, either when children enter school or are old enough to be unsupervised for a few hours. Sometimes this is out of necessity; other times it’s a choice. With my children spaced over 10 years, when my youngest entered grade school, my older kids were in middle and high school. I soon realized that I had it backward all those years. Parental guidance is more valuable as they get older, particularly in the middle-school years.

Those in-between years are tricky ones for our children. Bodies change, hormones rage, and cliques form and mutate. It’s difficult to tell from day to day where

you stand. Peers start to have more influence and it’s tough to tell who really has your best interests in mind. There’s the temptation to take risks, to engage in behavior that’s dangerous, and potentially illegal. To be honest, this scared me. I saw some good kids make bad decisions. It was decided. I was staying home.

## Weighing the Pros and Cons

When the end of high-school years were in sight, I again considered full-time employment. Then I realized what would be lost. I had become the family hub. While it sounds self-important, things would change drastically at home without me there. There would be more take-out and instant dinners, more stress (on me and everyone else), less time for fun (weekends would be spent grocery shopping and cleaning), and I would be out of the loop. I would be less aware of everyone’s moods and emotional needs.

Being home, I knew who my kids hung out with. Regularly spending time in their company allowed me to know not just names and faces, but also to know their friends as people. Simply being present and available on a day-to-day basis provided abundant organic opportunities to talk about values—mine, theirs, and society’s—as well as many opportunities to have conversations prompted by the news, an event in school, or a book they were reading. One of the greatest compliments I’ve received was being invited into my teen’s circle.

I don’t believe that I would have been a better role model to my children had I gone back to work. In fact, the opposite: I would be less of a mom and wife, perhaps even a less interesting person. Being home while my children were growing up made me more aware, more flexible, more observant. Reading to and with them, as well as chaperoning and participating in activities with them, broadened my interests and sent the message that I cared about what they thought and did.

It’s the norm today to have multiple careers. For a season, being a stay-at-home-mom was my chosen one. No matter when it occurs, changing careers is hard, but the demands of motherhood have shown me that I am capable of much more than I ever imagined, as well as given me the desire and drive to persevere. My kids have seen me struggle and sometimes doubt myself. I didn’t lose my career to motherhood, it was simply a career change. One I will never regret.

**Parental guidance is more valuable as they get older, particularly in the middle-school years.**

*Kimberly Yavorski writes about life, especially parenting, education, social issues, travel, and the outdoors. She is always searching for things to learn and new places to explore. Links to her writing and blogs can be found at [KimberlyYavorski.com](http://KimberlyYavorski.com)*

**60%**

**OF AMERICANS**

think it's a good idea for a parent to stay home to care for children.



# DIGITAL DEVICES

AND THE

# DEVELOPING CHILD

SHOULD YOU GO SCREEN-FREE?

CATHERINE YANG

Emerging research shows screen usage actually impedes the development of basic abilities like building vocabulary.

**E**ight-year-old Sam had always enjoyed learning, but in less than a year, his math and reading scores dropped. He was constantly being disruptive in classes, and he started dreading going to school. His teacher and school psychologist said he had ADHD, and the next step was medication.

Instead, his mother decided to dial back on the amount of screen time the family was getting. Within two months, he was turning in assignments, getting glowing reports from teachers about his attitude change, and his math and reading scores were climbing.

Sam is one of more than 500 children interviewed by psychiatrist Victoria Dunckley in a comprehensive study on the impact of electronic screen time on the developing brains of children and teenagers.

Going screen-free is not a new idea. Many screen-free campaigns began in the early 1990s, targeting reduced television time. But these movements hadn't gained much traction until recent years, because

our lives have never before been so consumed by the proliferation of screens. We are now seeing side effects that are unique to the new technologies that we have such easy access to, and they're not all trivial.

#### **Why Is Too Much Screen Time a Problem?**

Even before delving into an argument about content—whether kids are looking at something good or bad—the behavioral habit of looking at screens for extended hours bears examining.

In the short term, we see changes in mood, behavior, and cognition. In the long term, it affects the child's potential, Dunckley says. It affects how far children go in school, in relationships, and in their careers—in short, it could affect their quality of life in a dramatic way.

#### **Impeding Growth**

Pediatrician Dimitri Christakis, whose research has been influential in the field, puts it this way: "If we change the

IF YOU WANT TO LIMIT SCREEN TIME FOR YOUR CHILDREN, IT WILL BE MUCH HARDER IF THEY SEE YOU, TOO, ARE ADDICTED TO YOUR PHONE.

beginning of the story, we change the whole story."

An infant's brain triples in size by the age of 2. We are born with a lifetime's supply of neurons, and the connections made between those cells are largely made in our first three years. Then, from ages 3 to 15, the mind is doing away with unused pathways and fine-tuning itself.

The point is, Christakis says, early experiences matter.

There is no research to back up any benefit from having any screen time for children up to 2 or 3 years of age, and emerging research shows this screen usage actually impedes the development of basic abilities like building vocabulary, learning to sense people's attitudes and communication, and concentration or focus. This is because instead of strengthening these connections in the brain, the connections are either not being built, or being purged due to lack of use. Some parents even see these skills regress in young children who start getting too much screen time.



MPH PHOTOS/SHUTTERSTOCK



### Shrinking Brains

Picking up the habit of constantly checking a smartphone, watching hours of content on a tablet or television, or playing digital games creates new behavioral patterns as well. They become biologically compelled habits: The earlier you build these habits, the harder it is to stop. The brain comes to need it.

One of the biggest and most evident reasons is because the touchscreen device is an instant-gratification machine. You train the brain to expect immediate effects and constant stimulus. The brain responds with dopamine, which the body experiences as pleasure, and on the more severe end, the effect is addiction.

“On the scale between candy and crack cocaine, it’s closer to crack cocaine,” Chris Anderson, a former editor at Wired and the founder of GeekDad.com, told The New York Times. “This is going straight to the pleasure centers of the developing brain.”

One study of addicted teens’ brains discovered an imbalance of neurotransmitters. Most notably, they had too much of a neurotransmitter that slows down brain signals, resulting in effects such as drowsiness and anxiety, leading to larger symptoms like depression and other mental health issues.

Another study found shrinkage in the frontal lobe, which is basically the decision center of the brain in charge of planning, prioritizing, organizing, and impulse control. The insula, which affects our ability to develop empathy for others and integrate physical cues with emotions, is also damaged.

### Emotional Disadvantage

Catherine Steiner-Adair interviewed over 1,000 kids from age 4 to 18 about technology and their relationships for her book “The Big Disconnect” and found that parents aren’t teaching children to deal with

frustration and boredom. By distracting them with screens, the children never truly learn how to recognize or work through their real feelings.

“If you wanted to create an environment to churn out really angry people, we’ve done it,” Janis Whitlock, a Cornell University researcher, told TIME Magazine in 2016. “They’re in a cauldron of stimulus they can’t get away from.”

Around the same time smartphones became ubiquitous, 2011-2012, mental health issues skyrocketed, and in-person interactions plummeted in teens. Many prominent researchers say this is not just a coincidence, and generational researcher Jean Twenge outlines the phenomenon in her book on “iGen.”

“Just as playing the piano takes practice, so do social skills. iGen-ers are not practicing their in-person social skills as much as other generations did, so when it comes time for the ‘recital’ of their social skills, they are more likely to make mistakes onstage when it matters: in college interviews, when making friends in high school, and when competing for a job,” Twenge wrote.

### The Diagnosis

The symptoms—trouble sleeping, becoming short-tempered and acting out, inability to regulate mood, and what seems like procrastination or the inability to complete what used to be simple tasks—often lead to misdiagnoses.

Some parents see a drop in cognition in their very young children and fear it is a learning disability. Older children who start showing emotional issues are often diagnosed with ADHD, or bipolar disorder, or something else. But psychiatrists call this “electronic screen syndrome.”

Dunckley, who has done extensive research on the matter, says what we end up seeing is a dysregulated brain: The child

◀ By distracting them with screens, children never truly learn how to recognize or work through their real feelings.

## ONE STUDY OF ADDICTED TEENS’ BRAINS DISCOVERED AN IMBALANCE OF NEURO-TRANSMITTERS.

SOURCE: PRESS.RSNA.ORG, NOV. 30, 2017

# 46%

### OF AMERICANS

▶ say they could not live without their smartphones.

SOURCE: PEW RESEARCH CENTER AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL SURVEY, OCT. 3-27, 2014

can’t regulate mood, can’t tolerate stress, and isn’t getting quality sleep.

Experts also point out there is a misconception that this is caused by too much passive screen time, as many educational games and apps are marketed as “interactive.” Parents, therefore, tend to limit passive but not interactive tech use. But Dunckley says interactive screen time is, in fact, more addictive than passive screen time, and is equally likely to cause problems.

### What Can Parents Do?

First, parents should limit their own screen time.

Early childhood educator Erika Christakis writes that though parents today have more time for their children than ever, they are also more distracted than ever.

No one expects parents to be constantly engaged, but Christakis says “chronic distraction is another story.” The adult not only misses emotional cues, but also misreads them. They’re quicker to anger, perhaps assuming a child is trying to be manipulative when they’re asking for attention.

There are more immediately measurable effects: One study found that as cell service arrived and smartphone adoption rose area by area, so did children’s injuries. Other studies found that language learning—a key indicator of child development—is also affected by how distracted or engaged a parent is. One experiment found that the mere presence of a smartphone in the room with a mother and child affected how many new words the toddler learned.

“We seem to have stumbled into the worst model of parenting imaginable—always present physically, thereby blocking children’s autonomy, yet only fitfully present emotionally,” Christakis said.

Children also mimic adults’ behaviors. If you want to limit screen time for your children, it will be much harder if they see you, too, are addicted to your phone.

### Tips for Limiting Screen Use

Program directors at various screen-free initiatives have found that this works best when the family is all in. Whether you want to cut back on the number of hours spent with screens, or go a weekend, or a week, without these devices, the key to success is clearly communicating with and including the entire household.

The first step should be to assess your goals, and then create a plan that makes sense for your household.

Some parents prefer to gradually reduce screen time in the house. Others find it actually easier to go cold turkey with no screen time at all. What works for one family might not work for another: Some who have tried it find turning off the TV at mealtimes essential; another mom who tried a screen-free week reported





that while she succeeded in encouraging family members to engage in other great activities, having the TV on at dinner actually encouraged her children to linger and chat, telling her about their day, rather than being a distraction to the family.

**BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT USE.** Older children might need to use a computer for homework, or the family might want to watch a movie together, or look up a tutorial to use for an activity.

Once you think about it this way, you might be surprised to realize how much of screen time is used to curb boredom—and boredom can really be quite healthy.

**REARRANGING ROOMS.** Many family rooms are set up so that the television is the focal point. If these are the rooms the children spend most of their time in, it helps to organize so that the focal point is perhaps a table they can use for activities.

Having to replace the TV as a babysitter is a big worry for parents deciding to limit screen time, but childcare experts say that isn't the point. Children don't need to be constantly entertained, and you may just have to embrace a bit of messiness as you let them play independently. Endless variety in toys isn't necessary either. Parents will find that even with few or simple toys, the creativity and imagination of a child more than make up the difference.

**SET CLEAR LIMITS.** Parents shouldn't expect children to hold up to new screen usage restrictions on their own. In addition to clearly communicating when screen time is permitted, and for how long, some parents find it useful to designate certain rooms as screen-free.

**SCREEN-FREE MORNINGS.** The first waking hours can set the tone for the rest of the day. For younger children especially, starting the day with some tablet or TV time could undo the good of all of the other screen-free initiatives you might have around the house and throughout the day.

#### Tips for Going Screen Free

Some families find it easiest to go screen-free completely, because if you get 20 minutes, it's hard to put the phone or tablet down for the rest of the day. Some opt for a weekend, or one full week, and then pull back from regular screen use afterward.

**PLAN AND COMMUNICATE.** If you choose to do a screen-free week, involve the whole family, and announce it in advance. Explain why you're doing it, and what you hope to achieve.

There are some cases where going completely screen-free for an extended time will be the most beneficial.

Dunckley has written a book about a four-week "reset" program intended

## HOW MUCH SCREEN TIME ARE CHILDREN GETTING?

90  
MINUTES

29% of babies under 1 watch 90 minutes of video

2  
HOURS

64% of children ages 1 to 2 watch at least 2 hours of video

4  
HOURS

Various studies put the average daily screen time for children ages 2 to 5 at 2.2 hours to 4.6 hours

7  
HOURS

Children ages 8 to 18 consume an average of 7 hours and 11 minutes of screen media daily

SOURCE: CAMPAIGN FOR A COMMERCIAL-FREE CHILDHOOD



FIZKES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Children also mimic adults' behaviors. If you want to limit screen time for your children, it will be much harder if they see you, too, are addicted to your phone.

to help children who suffer from electronic screen syndrome. It takes four weeks, because it gives time for the brain to get deep rest and rejuvenate, and for parents, teachers, and doctors to clarify diagnoses.

The reset includes one week of planning. There are usually problem areas such as aggression, anxiety, not being able to stay on task, underachievement at school, social problems like poor sportsmanship, and then physical issues like headaches, tired eyes, and insomnia. Parents should identify and track problem areas, and inform other adults in the child's life as well.

Also plan fun activities, because the reset isn't meant to be a punishment. Dunckley suggests planning both family group activities and one-on-one activities, because children thrive on parents' undivided attention, and bonding helps keep the child grounded, calming the nervous system.

**REMOVE DEVICES.** Dunckley recommends taking all devices to work and stashing them in a drawer. It isn't enough to just move the devices out of sight—if there is a hidden phone or game, and kids find it, they will try to sneak screen time.

"Don't feel guilty that you're not allowing the child a chance to be 'responsible,'" Dunckley writes.

"Remember that a child's frontal lobe is not fully developed and thus even a trustworthy child who promises not to play anymore (and really, really, really means it) can't be expected to check urges or control impulses when temptations arise," Dunckley wrote.

**ACKNOWLEDGE FRUSTRATION.** The parent should expect pushback. Younger children may cry, and older children will argue and even make threats. Sometimes, they may seem okay with the idea at first

but panic a little later.

"Remember, from their perspective, something significant and substantial is being taken from their lives, and children have no idea how they'll fill the void, so it's appropriate to comfort them around this," Dunckley writes.

They will also ask why, and she says just tell the truth: It's an experiment.

The first week may be difficult, but as their brains receive the rest they desperately need, the appropriate amount of energy, blood flow, and nutrients start to return to the brain's frontal lobe and balance out biological systems. And as the benefits kick in, it generally becomes easier, and even harmonious.

#### What Benefits Should You Expect?

A break from digital devices should see children return to more imaginative play as their creative energy returns.

In children of all ages, there should be improved mood, and less extreme or less frequent meltdowns. A mother of a 2- and 4-year-old said when she first took away the family room television, her sons would fight all the time, as if they didn't know how to play with each other. But after a few days, they were getting along and able to play together.

On a biological level, the brain is relieved from the constant stimulus that puts it in fight-or-flight mode, and as a result is freed up to expend energy on other things, like learning new concepts and processing emotions.

Parents want the best for their children, and a few small changes early in their lives can have lifelong impacts. If going screen-free sounds intimidating, who knows, perhaps you may benefit from taking a step back as well.

Catherine Yang is an arts and culture reporter for *The Epoch Times*.



# For the Love of Grandma

DEEPGREEN/  
SHUTTERSTOCK

SHANNON SHELTON MILLER

**I**t was one of those mornings: My eldest wouldn't get dressed for school, and I had to plead with my toddler to eat something, anything, on his breakfast plate.

Most weekday mornings feel like controlled chaos as I attempt to get myself to the office and my two boys off to kindergarten and preschool. The frustration rises as I watch the clock ticking and notice that my 6-year-old is still in his pajamas.

Then an angel steps in. She speaks a few soft words to Blake, and he puts his shirt over his head. Said angel floats to Kyle, performs the same magic, and he lifts the spoon to his mouth.

"How do you do that so easily?" I asked.

"I'm just Grandma," my mother said. No further explanation necessary.

When I commiserate with my friends about life in the parenting trenches, we marvel at our parents' ability to calm our children, kiss those boo-boos with an extra dose of affection, and gain the undying admiration and fealty of a demographic not exactly known for its acquiescence. Our children love us, but they adore Grandma, Grandpa, Pappy, Nana, Meemaw, and Abuela.

Countless academic studies, newspaper articles, and memoirs alike confirm our children's seal of approval about their grandparents. They share doses of wisdom and knowledge gleaned from decades of life experience, offer gentle discipline and correction when needed, and provide an additional helping hand to their adult children navigating the ups and downs of parenthood.

An oft-cited University of Oxford study goes further, noting that children who had a high level of interaction with their grandparents displayed fewer emotional and behavioral issues.

Fortunate are the children with loving grandparents in their lives. For those of us in the West, their presence can be a luxury, as grandparents don't always fit into our nuclear family ideal. Career and educational opportunities can push adult children far from their families and cities of origin, and sometimes, grandparents take a less involved role by their own

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**'How do you do that so easily?' I asked.**

**'I'm just Grandma,' my mother said.**

volition or their children's choice.

When I married and moved to another state with my then-husband for his job, I envisioned our parents visiting every few months and staying for a week or two to interact with the grandchildren before returning to their calmer lives as empty nesters. My husband and I would then have our home back and our lives would continue as normal.

I thought that's what we'd all want to maintain a sense of space and separate lives. That's not how it turned out.

After my father died in 2015, my mother began to visit more often. Blake, then 3, noticed her absence when she left. If more than a month passed between her visits, he started asking for her. Each phone call ended with him questioning when she'd be coming back.

They easily picked up from the last visit when she returned, with Blake chattering about dinosaurs and robots and asking for hugs and kisses at night. My mother, a retired teacher and principal, affirmed his every word. During school breaks, she reached into her deep educator bag of tricks and held school, reinforcing his preschool lessons on letters, numbers, shapes, colors, and art. He never complained about going to "Grandma School."

Two years later, my fragile nuclear family bubble popped. My husband and I started the divorce process, and I prepared myself for a future as a single mother of two. A different side of my mother emerged, as she strengthened her efforts to ensure that my children and I would survive the fracturing of our family.

Here was a woman who had never driven more than 45 minutes on the highway for the entirety of my childhood and was now traveling three to four hours on the interstate every two weeks to see her grandchildren. At 73, she transformed into a long-haul driver. Once here, she got to work picking up children from school, preparing dinners, and getting them to bed on nights I worked late.

"I had a choice," she told me. "I could stay scared to drive, remain at home, and miss out on a relationship with my

grandchildren. I decided I was going to be there for them."

I regret the fact that it took divorce to help me appreciate the benefits of an extended family structure that many families around the world accept as the norm. I used to envision my mother finding a nice condo nearby so she could "have her space" and still visit her grandchildren at will, but maybe it's better for all of us to put that space in our home, even if I do remarry.

I'm not saying this approach is best for all families, but for mine, it just might be.

As I watch my mother in action, I imagine that the grandparent stage is akin to driving in cruise control. Grandparents have raised their own children and no longer worry about the minutiae of infancy and childhood. They can simply enjoy the process, love their grandchildren to bits, and adore them despite their terrible twos and threenager years, knowing this too shall pass. They still feel a deep sense of responsibility about their role in their grandchildren's development, but the innate calm they demonstrate while grandparenting is reflective of experience and knowing that the kids are going to be alright.

Although there's little debate about the positive influence of involved grandparents on their grandchildren's lives, I wonder what grandparents get in return. I often worry that I'm asking too much of my mother and imagine she'd rather be relaxing on a tropical beach enjoying her well-deserved, munchkin-free retirement.

Then she calls me after going home for a week. She asks how the boys are doing, telling me she misses them terribly and that a week is too long to be away.

I tell her that they ask about her, too. They walk to the guest bedroom looking for her when they wake up in the morning or sit by the window watching for her car.

"I told them you'll be back soon," I assure her. "But we're all doing fine."

As appealing as that tropical vacation might sound, her answer tells me that the grandchildren aren't the only one receiving a benefit from their relationship.

"I'll be there this weekend," she says.

Shannon Shelton Miller lives in Dayton, Ohio, and is the mother of two boys ages 3 and 6. She writes about education and parenting, among other topics, and has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Huffington Post*. Follow her on Twitter @ShannonSMWrites.



# WHAT TODAY'S FATHERS ARE MISSING

## ACCORDING TO A FORMER SEAL

ERIC DAVIS

**BANG.**

This was the third shot my sniper student had missed. One more missed shot and he was done. Failed out of sniper school and sent back to his SEAL platoon.

I noticed that his body position was slightly off despite my earlier coaching to correct it. The final round cracked off, nothing else was heard—no sound of lead impacting steel at a distance and no “HIT” uttered by the spotter; nothing but the sound of what was now a former sniper student’s head landing on the shooting mat below him.

“Man, I think there’s something wrong with my gun,” he said as he lifted his head back up.

“Here, let me see,” I said as I grabbed his gun and settled into a shooting position next to him.

Bang. Tink.

Bang. Tink.

I used his gun to hit the targets, no problem.

“Body position, dude.” I stood back up.

“I told you that yesterday.”

“You gotta be kidding me,” he exhaled

**LIVING MEANS GOING AFTER SOMETHING THAT BRINGS US OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONE.**

as he stood up, frustrated in anger and ready to fight.

It’s not a stretch to see how this wannabe sniper is much like many of the wannabe men out there. His failure didn’t occur when his bullet whizzed past the target, but months before, when he allowed the subtleties of the desired skill to become his blind spots.

Without awareness, his failure quickly turned into frustration. And without understanding, his frustration converted into anger, as he realized that what was supposed to work, the obvious and simple approach to things, no longer could.

Our fathers before us lived in a much less dynamic and competitive time than we do. In today’s world, using the simplistic and common sense strategies that were handed down to us is like trying to bring a sword and shield to the modern battlefield. It just isn’t going to work anymore.

Today we’re watching persistent failure cause an epidemic of frustration and anger in an entire generation of men. They’re becoming fearful and starting to play “I think there’s something wrong with my gun” on repeat in their heads, when in reality, there is nothing wrong with them. They’ve just yet to become aware of all of the new and persistent subtleties of manhood in today’s world.

We’re just like the sniper that allowed his blind spots to cause him to miss his target. Reflecting as a parent, I can see the same happening to fathers nowadays.

Here are some of the most impactful blind spots that I’ve been watching take men out, and lessons you can take from it:

### 1. Lead From the Front

“I’m just going to put my head down and sacrifice everything to make money for my family” is the anthem of today’s man. He forfeited both the game of life as well as his ability to move or inspire his son.

Too many guys are miserable nowadays. They’ve slid into the rabbit hole and now actually believe their job is to

sacrifice rather than live. Their health, fun, friends, fitness, and more have been burned at the altar in the name of their children. They tell themselves that sacrifice is a noble pursuit when, in reality, they are no longer living, or never have lived, a life worth following.

As a teenager, all I ever wanted to be was a SEAL. By the time I got to BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL), I was a young parent with two children. While in training, I allowed someone to convince me that being a father was merely about providing money for my family and being home every day. Doped up with an antiquated notion of fatherhood and a dash of guilt, I woke up the next day and quit SEAL training.

A year later, I found myself working in insurance and transitioning from one agency to another. I, too, was now living a life focused on sacrifice, rather than intention.

In pursuit of my new definition of success, I landed myself in a place called Foster City, a very unique place that also happens to be my hometown. It sits on the shores of the San Francisco Bay and is filled with lagoons and marked by street signs that attest to its nautical nature.

Walking in one of the parks where I grew up playing, I caught the scent of the salt air blowing off the bay. In a flash, I was reminded of SEAL training. A thought entered my head that would alter my trajectory and redefine who I would become and what I would do for the rest of my life.

“Man, one of the first things I’m showing my children how to do is to give up on their dreams”. Right then, I determined that was an unacceptable example, so I re-joined the Navy, reapplied for SEAL training, graduated, and served as a Navy SEAL for 10 years.

Since then, it’s been my mission to break the dangerous notion that fatherhood is about running yourself into the ground to provide for your family. Does your family need money? Yes, they do, but that’s just half of the job. They also need us to get out in front and figure

THE U.S. ARMY/CC BY 2.0



Men are not meant to reside in comfort. We’re built to accomplish big missions, go on quests, maintain the hunt, and be in a constant state of challenge.





out how to live a good life in this new dynamic and competitive world so that we can show them how to do the same.

Men are turning out frustrated, angry, and confused because they're suffering and don't know how to stop it. They need leaders to redefine manhood and show them how to get it all done. They need their fathers to lead from the front.

## 2. The Only Easy Day Was Yesterday

"The only easy day was yesterday" is a famous and timeless saying that guides a SEAL through his day. It reminds a SEAL that you must earn your trident every day and never rest on your past accomplishments—to wake up every day and do it all again. It's a calling to always choose challenge over comfort. It's how a man lives when he takes seriously his role in the life of others.

For whatever reason, I've found that the mission of most men is comfort. They do what they do not to impact the world, but to accomplish the weakest mission possible, called "retirement." The purpose of their work is to not have to work. I mean, really think about that. Your son is watching you work for the sole purpose of not working anymore;

we wonder why we have an entire generation of boys getting lost.

Guess what happens when I take men out of their comfort zone, having them lock arms with one another, march into the ocean, and lie down in the cold water until they enter a collective state of uncontrollable shivering? They come alive.

Men are not meant to reside in comfort. We're built to accomplish big missions, go on quests, maintain the hunt, and be in a constant state of challenge. Challenge is both the purpose and source of life. Without it, we rot. Living means going after something that brings us out of our comfort zone.

## 3. Adventure

Perhaps one of the most important and most commonly sacrificed things in a man's life is fun and adventure. "Play" is a critical component to performance, and it's the blind spot that's thwarting the intentions of the hard-working man.

Fun and adventure have a very pragmatic purpose. They allow you to access a state of "flow." You know, that thing you used to regularly dip into as a child. The feeling of complete immersion in something, where you lose time and

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don't care about eating or even sleeping. It not only allows our brains to reset, but it puts us in a state of creativity that allows us to better formulate the thinking, strategies, and tactics that we need to design and execute to complete our missions. Without it, we fail to compete, and if we fail to compete, we lose.

It's extremely counterintuitive, but to go forward faster requires us to regularly slow down. It's kind of like if you were on a very long hike with a large pack on your back—you'd have to stop more frequently and take better care of yourself than if you were on a short hike without any weight. So, if you have a lot of responsibilities (weight) in life and are after something big (climbing a tall mountain), you'd better be stopping and resetting more often. If you don't, you're simply never going to get anything big accomplished.

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Fun and adventure have a very pragmatic purpose. They allow you to access a state of "flow."



# Taking the Hits 7 Ways to Raise Tough Kids

JEFF MINICK

“**T**he world ain’t all sunshine and rainbows. It’s a very mean and nasty place and I don’t care how tough you are, it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life. But it ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. How much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how winning is done!”—Rocky Balboa

Most of us are familiar with the term “helicopter parents,” those mothers or fathers who hover over their children, obsessing about their welfare, taking an immoderate interest in their decisions, and fretting over even minor tribulations.

Enter now the “lawnmower parent.”

These anxious guardians take helicopter parenting a step farther by trying to anticipate their children’s difficulties, clearing the path for them and seeking to remove obstacles or unpleasantness before they occur.

They handpick their children’s playmates. They refuse kids access to a playground they deem the least bit dangerous. They go overboard in assisting with homework assignments. On the first day of soccer practice, they consult with the coach to ensure that Tim or Sally will be given plenty of playing time. They help their high school seniors compose the required personal essays for college admission and call various people requesting letters of recommendation to bolster that application. Some of these parents even accompany their 18-year-olds to college registration.

All too often, such coddling produces young adults who have trouble making decisions, who back away from challenges, and who feel lost without the guiding hand that steered them through their pre-adult lives.

Most parents understand the instinct behind this phenomenon. We want to protect and help our children. But most of us also want our kids to become grownups, capable, as Rocky says, of taking the hits and moving forward. We want them to be able to make decisions and stand up for themselves. We want daughters and sons tough enough to endure the storms

**FREDERICK DOUGLASS ONCE REMARKED, ‘IT IS EASIER TO BUILD STRONG CHILDREN THAN TO REPAIR BROKEN MEN.’**

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faced by every human being.

Here are seven ways to toughen up your kids and point them toward adulthood.

1. When they are adolescents, give your children unsupervised time every day, preferably outside. Such free play allows them to explore everything from the backyard to their imaginations. If you’re hauling your 10-year-old daughter to five and six organized after-school activities a week—dance, soccer, play practice—think about cutting back. Ask yourself: Would you like a schedule where every hour is this regimented?

2. From their early years, acquaint your children with heroes from literature, biography, and history. You can use books, like the Childhood of Famous American series or “The Lord of the Rings,” movies like “Star Wars” or some of the Disney films, or television shows like “The Waltons” or “Little House on the Prairie.” Discuss these films and books with your children. Show them how others have faced challenges and fearful odds, and won out in the end.

3. Assign daily chores. The humblest apartment and the most magnificent mansion demand upkeep. Turn some of that work over to the kids: folding laundry, washing dishes, sweeping floors, mowing lawns. Such duties not only enhance the appearance of a home, but also tell the children that they are part of a family unit, with responsibilities as well as privileges. It also teaches the concept of TANSTAAFL. (See Robert Heinlein’s “There ain’t no such thing as a free lunch” in “The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress.”)

4. Demand that your children exercise.

Many American youngsters are overweight and out of shape. Diet will cure the first, exercise the second. Have them join sports teams. If they have no interest in organized sports, then have them run, swim, ride bikes, or hike.

5. From late elementary school through high school, have your children communicate with others. If in seventh grade your daughter has scheduling problems with her soccer practice that week, have her—not you—call the coach. If she goes with you to a restaurant, have her order her meal herself. If she is in high school and has performed poorly on a test, have her approach the teacher and ask for help. Such efforts encourage maturity.

6. High school students should work summer jobs. Whether in a fast-food restaurant or as a counselor at a camp, the summer job teaches young people the importance of money and the responsibility that comes with any paid task. In addition, they meet other young people from different backgrounds and with different values and aspirations.

7. Teach life skills to your children. Have them open and keep a bank account. Teach them how to do the laundry, change a tire on a car, cook meals, fix the smoke alarm, and the dozens of other tasks any adult should master. By learning such things, children gain confidence and independence.

Frederick Douglass once remarked, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Make your children strong. Give them the ability to face and conquer challenges.

▲  
Assign daily chores. The humblest apartment and the most magnificent mansion demand upkeep.



# LETTER TO MY DAUGHTER

BARBARA DANZA

**T**o My Precious Daughter,  
My beautiful girl, who brightens our every day, who giggles at all the joys of life, whose inherent nature is so caring and creative—I wish for you a fulfilled and meaningful life. To that end, there are some things I think you should know.

Before the world imprints upon your spirit too many misguided notions and ideas, there are seven lessons I hope you carry with you always.

## Understand What True Beauty Is

You are beautiful. Indeed, you've been blessed with outer beauty, the kind which may bring you praise all your life. Take it lightly.

True beauty comes from within.

Inner beauty is a product of good character, reflecting the qualities of kindness, generosity, a caring and nurturing spirit, gentleness, forbearance, loyalty, and peace. These are naturally inherent in you already. Cherish them.

In fact, in ancient times, the Chinese character for beauty, *měi* (美), meant “peaceful and auspicious.” What's more, the Chinese character for compassion, *shàn* (善) is very similar to that of beauty, reminding us of how the outer form is related to the inner meaning.

Inner beauty is what truly matters. (That we even need to call it “inner” beauty and not simply beauty is rather telling.)

The world may try to convince you otherwise. From the marketing campaigns of the fashion and cosmetics industries to so much of today's popular entertainment, superficial appearances are given disproportionate attention, while the importance of character is relegated to the margins.

Look at the fairy tales we love to read and even the Disney movies we enjoy so much. Outer beauty is used as a metaphor for inner beauty in so many classic tales.

Snow White, for example, was the “fairest in the land,” a reflection of her inner beauty. In her book “Saving Cinderella, What Feminists Get Wrong About Disney Princesses and How to Set it Right,” author Faith Moore points out: “It's the Queen that's obsessed with Snow White's physical beauty. The Queen. The bad guy. Snow White has absolutely no interest in her physical self.”



KAYLEE EDEN/UNSPLASH

“Ground yourself in gratitude and with a strong spiritual foundation that you maintain throughout your life.”

The Queen's superficiality and, of course, her jealousy, are what makes her evil.

Moore also points to the scene where the Prince professes his love for Snow White: “He loves her even in her ragged clothing, proving that he's not concerned with her physical appearance or her status, only what's in her heart.”

So, what I'm saying is, believe in fairy tales and know that beauty is an inside job.

One of the loveliest pieces of “beauty advice” was written by author Sam Levenson:

“For attractive lips, speak words of kindness. For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people. For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry. For beautiful hair, let a child run his fingers through it once a day. For poise, walk with the knowledge you'll never walk alone.

“The beauty of a woman is not in the clothes she wears, the figure that she carries, or the way she combs her hair. The beauty of a woman must be seen from in her eyes, because that is the doorway to her heart, the place where love resides.

“The beauty of a woman is not in a facial mole, but true beauty in a woman is reflected in her soul. It is the caring that she lovingly gives, the passion that she shows, and the beauty of a woman with passing years only grows.”

Inner beauty  
is what truly  
matters.

Barbara Danza is a full-time mom of two and a family and education reporter for *The Epoch Times*.

## Find Beauty

As you go through your life, look for the beauty in everything. Develop an understanding of and appreciation for true beauty.

Learn about the very best of the arts. Visit the finest museums. Read the greatest literature. Listen to beautiful music.

Practice any artistic pursuit you are drawn to. Learn to play an instrument or two. Engage in practical creative skills. Make your home beautiful, too.

Look for the beauty in any situation and in others. You will surely find it.

## You Are Blessed

Do you know what the odds are of your being born at this time in human history and under the fortunate circumstances we live in? You have been blessed to be born in this age, into a free society, into a family that that loves you unconditionally. The possibilities and opportunities for you to build a life that is meaningful and fulfilling are truly boundless.

Ground yourself in gratitude and with a strong spiritual foundation that you maintain throughout your life.

## Nurture Your Talents

One of the most miraculous characteristics of humanity is the extent to which everyone is different. You have been endowed with your own unique strengths and talents. They are yours for a reason. Nurture them, allow them to grow, and put them to the best use possible. You may find that doing so brings you some of your life's greatest joys.

## You Can Overcome Anything

Of course, even with blessings so abundant, life will be full of ups and downs. It can be tempting in times of suffering, perhaps, to pin the blame on external sources. Don't believe yourself to be a victim.

You have the freedom and opportunity to pursue any path you wish. Your success will depend upon whether or not you have the natural talent required, whether you're willing to work hard, and whether circumstances will be favorable to your aims.

Think like a victor. A victim mentality gives away your agency, shirks responsibility, and discourages your belief in yourself. A victor, on the other hand, will turn anything into a triumph. When life gets you down, look inside yourself, find the lesson, and then pick yourself right back up.

Life will be full of temptations. You may find yourself wanting to please others and make people like you. Don't look outward for validation.

Moral fortitude is worth developing. Hold onto your strong moral values and, as Shakespeare put it, “to thine own self be true.”

Like true beauty, true strength is found within.



RANDY FATH/UNSPLASH



A quiet, rural scene.

# Little Hands

CARDINALE MONTANO

The wind this morning is a force to be reckoned with, wildly tossing a mix of freezing rain and snow in all directions. I hear it, pelting at the windows, and whipping over the roof. The regional weather forecast in the Farmer's Almanac for this week states: "flurries, very cold." Straightforward, and to the point.

I imagine this is helpful to the farmer, as he pulls on boots at 4 a.m., and heads to the barn to do his chores in the dark.

I make my way downstairs. Not quite as early, but it is still dark outside. Winter-dark. I put the kettle on. While it comes to a boil, I open the damper to the woodstove and the bed of coals left over from the night glow suddenly a brighter orange at the fresh infusion of air. I throw on a log or two, and while a cup of tea is brewing, flames begin to lick up their sides. The heat of the fire will soon warm the room. I light a candle, find a corner on the couch, and wrap my hands around the steaming cup. An hour carved out, and time to think about the day ahead.

## Morning Hours

I've woken early as long as I can remember. I savor that gentle, quiet hour. When my sons were little, that time was essential to providing a calm foundation for the day.

You realize its value when, for instance, you come in to the kitchen from doing

laundry, to find them carefully extracting melted crayons deep from within the bowels of the toaster. And you are able, from that tranquil place to notice through the growing cloud of smoke, that, one, they have put on their aprons (because, of course, they are cooking), and, two, they have practiced proper toaster-safety and are using wooden tongs, as taught, not metal cutlery, or fingers. Which are now coated in the same multi-colored mass that they, with smiling faces, are presenting to you proudly, on a plate.

You will then find that you are able (in this order), to inhale, sit down, exhale, and thank them kindly for the lovely breakfast, which they made you with their busy little hands and gave you, from the depths of their wide-open hearts. Those little hands will, over time, grow larger. Today will turn out to be the best day to teach them how to make a soup. They will stand on stools to reach the counter and learn to use a knife. Somewhere between the chopping of carrots and celery, you can talk to them about the toaster and what happens when wax gets too hot.

## Rhythms of Childhood

Preparing meals, daily chores, waking and bedtime routines. Mending what was torn, planting seeds in the garden. Building forts in the woods. These were the rhythms of



Children live by the rhythms of the smaller universe of the home.

HRECHENIUK OLEKSII  
/SHUTTERSTOCK

Cardinale Montano is a freelance writer living in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts. She shares her creativity with good friends, family, and eager learners, and celebrates daily the blessings of nature in the beautiful Berkshires. She is the founder and designer at [LineflaxAndRoving.com](http://LineflaxAndRoving.com)

the smaller universe of home. In their seemingly insignificant routine, they work in synchronicity with the rhythm of the natural world, with one another, and within themselves.

"Give a man a fish and you have fed him once. Teach him how to fish and you have fed him for a lifetime."

Today, an endless supply of "fish" is available to us any time we want. Not just one. But a whole, enormous kettle of endless variety. With just one click of a finger on the appropriate search engine, these will be conveniently dropped at your doorstep several days later, neatly boxed and tightly sealed. Foreign processing facilities will wipe out any less-appealing remnant of a story that begins perhaps, somewhere on a dock. When a pair of cold, weather-beaten hands adeptly loosen rope from a cleat to set a barnacle-encrusted trawler out to sea. Or in a sun-beaten cotton field overseas, where hands both large and small, fill oversized sacks with pure white fluff that end up as a t-shirt, further down the line. Pretty handy, pardon the pun. And yet, not.

With one click of a button, we have in some part severed our connection to the process of creating what we need to live—that human to human interface, carried out by our hands. I want to think that somewhere in this world of technological convenience, the software of the heart will have a conversation with the head. And working together again, they will engage our hands to mend the break. One carrot, one stitch, one seed at a time.

The pot on the stove is full, and the soup has simmered its flavors together throughout the afternoon. The table is set, and we will sit down together and ladle it into bowls. We will have our bread untoasted, but that's OK. A simple grace, "The Harvest" by Alice Corbin Henderson, shared before the meal, puts all into perspective:

The silver rain, the shining sun  
The fields where scarlet poppies run  
And all the ripples of the wheat  
Are in the bread that we now eat.  
And when we sit at every meal  
And say our grace we always feel  
That we are eating rain and sun  
And fields where scarlet poppies run.

On a farm somewhere, the farmer has finished his morning chores. He comes in, pulls his boots off and hangs his coat at the door. He is happy to be in his warm house again. His coffee is ready, and maybe he has a wife, who will pour it into a mug and put it into his cold hands. Over breakfast, he will take an hour to plan the day, according to the weather.

It's 7 a.m. I blow out the candle and switch on the light.





# Recommended Reading

Tales that teach kids to love goodness

JOSHUA PHILIPP

History has left us with a wealth of stories that are valuable and entertaining to kids and adults alike. In the past, people looked to folk tales, fairy tales, and myths for guidance when facing trials and moral choices. Today, these stories can still help to guide children, who aspire to emulate the goodness found in the heroes and heroines in the tales they hear or read about.

Below, I've listed some books that I would recommend for kids.

## 'THE STORY OF KING ARTHUR & HIS KNIGHTS' BY HOWARD PYLE

The legend of King Arthur is filled with tales of magic, bravery, loyalty, and honor. Good and evil are shown in stark contrast, and characters face tests and temptations that demonstrate their inner character. The full story of King Arthur is quite the undertaking to read, but a version by author Howard Pyle, "The Story of King Arthur & His Knights," offers a retelling of the legend that is perfect for kids.

## 'THE ADVENTURES OF ODYSSEUS AND THE TALE OF TROY' BY PADRAIC COLUM

The battle of Troy is among the best known of the ancient world. The story begins with Helen, the queen of Sparta, being taken by the Trojan prince Paris, and tells the story of the hero Achilles, of the Trojan Horse, and of vengeance, betrayal, and the fall of a kingdom. This story then leads to "The Odyssey," where the ship of the hero, Odysseus, is blown off course into many adventures of magic, monsters, and otherworldly trials. This version for kids, "The Adventures of Odysseus and The Tale of Troy," includes both stories, and is written by the famed author Padraic Colum.

## 'THE GOLDEN FLEECE: AND THE HEROES WHO LIVED BEFORE ACHILLES' BY PADRAIC COLUM

The ancient Greek myth of the Golden Fleece tells of Jason and his group of Argonauts—the greatest warriors of

the time—as they set out on a quest to find the legendary fleece of the gold-haired winged ram. The story includes Hercules and the famed poet Orpheus, encounters with mythological creatures from sirens to sea serpents, and is filled with wonders and adventure.

## 'TREASURED TALES OF CHINA (VOL. 1)' BY ZHENG JIAN

Some of the greatest tales about morals and virtues are found in ancient Chinese literature, and are unfortunately not well-known in the West. This collection of stories pulls from China's 5,000 years of history and includes a selection of short stories that illustrate the virtues of filial piety, the causes and effects of good and evil, and tales of people who took efforts to refine their character.

## 'AESOP'S ILLUSTRATED FABLES'

Many people today may be familiar with sayings such as "Slow and steady wins the race," "Do not believe everything you hear," or "It is better to yield than to come to misfortune through stubbornness." All of these sayings actually date back from around 2,500 years ago, from a Greek slave and hunchback by the name of Aesop, who through wisdom and good counsel obtained his freedom and rose to become an adviser to kings. His stories are collected in his famed "Aesop's Fables."

## 'HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S COMPLETE FAIRY TALES'

The original story of The Little Mermaid was about self-sacrifice, the ability

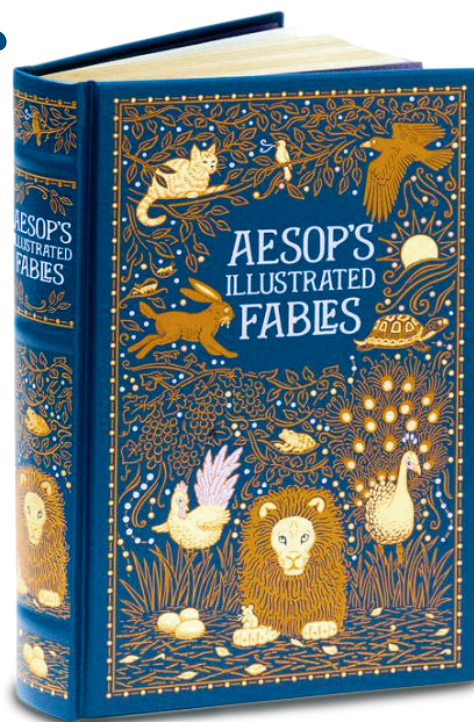
to endure hardship, and the hope for an immortal soul. The actual story is unfortunately not as well-known as the version in popular culture, yet it can be found alongside many classics with good values and deep lessons from its author, Hans Christian Andersen. We recommend his full set of stories, found in "Hans Christian Andersen's Complete Fairy Tales."

## 'IN THE DAYS OF GIANTS' BY ABBIE FARWELL BROWN

Many kids and adults alike may be familiar with legendary Norse gods such as Thor, Loki, and Odin, but their knowledge of these figures is often based on popular culture, rather than the stories and legends of bravery, adventure, self-sacrifice, valor, and tragedy. They tell of Baldur, the most beloved of the Norse gods, of the creation of Valhalla as a heaven for warriors, and of the last battle of Ragnarok. This version from 1902 has a simplified retelling of the legends, perfect for young readers.

## 'RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES' (THE PANTHEON FAIRY TALE AND FOLKLORE LIBRARY)

The Russians didn't hesitate to show the contrast between good and evil in their stories, such as those about the witch Baba Yaga, who traveled in a cauldron and lived in a house on chicken legs. Heroes undergo tests of character; ultimately evil is punished and good rewarded. The Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore Library has a large collection of these stories (672 pages!)



in its "Russian Fairy Tales."

## 'SWEDISH FOLK TALES' BY HOLGER LUNDBURGH

The folk tales from Sweden are filled with wonder, and are dark at times, but usually not without purpose. Many stories are about trolls, and there are others about gnomes, elves, changelings, and other fantastic creatures. "Swedish Folk Tales," translated by Holger Lundburgh, brings together 29 of these stories, and features the unique art of John Bauer.

## 'GREEK MYTHS' (CLASSIC STARTS SERIES)

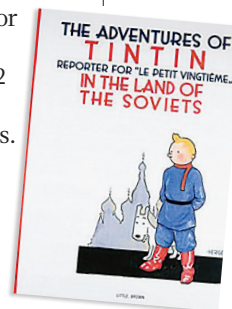
The Greek myths are filled with stories about moral choices, facing fears, love, adventure, and overcoming hardships. In this collection of 15 Greek myths from the Classic Starts Series for kids, we follow Theseus as he faces the fearsome Minotaur in its maze, learn about Icarus as he fails to obey his father, we learn of Pandora's box and how troubles and hope entered the world, and many others. For those looking for a more complete collection of Greek mythology, we recommend "Gods and Heroes of Ancient Greece" from the Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore Library, but this version is a great place to start for kids.

## 'THE TUTTLE TWINS AND THE GOLDEN RULE' BY CONNOR BOYACK

The "Golden Rule" is one of the foundations of moral values in western society, teaching the principle that we should treat others as we would like them to treat us. Author Connor Boyack illustrates this in "The Tuttle Twins and the Golden Rule," part of his series of books exploring concepts of morality, economics, and good governance.

## 'TINTIN IN THE LAND OF THE SOVIETS' BY HERGÉ

In the first book of the Tintin series, Hergé sends his famed cartoon character to the Soviet Union, where Tintin witnesses the disinformation, deception, and human rights abuses of communism. The book illustrates very real issues in a way that kids can understand, as Tintin demonstrates courage and upholds justice while facing the wrongs he encounters. The full Tintin series is a pleasure to read, but we highly recommend the first of the graphic novels, "Tintin in the Land of the Soviets."



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