

Finally, the book the whole world has been waiting for! In clear and practical detail, 'Peaceful Parenting' applies the logic and reason of science, psychology, evidence and rigorous morality to the healthy and ethical raising of our greatest treasures – our own children...

Peaceful Parenting

The morality, psychology, and
science of ethical child-raising.
Audiobook: www.fdrurl.com/pp

Stefan Molyneux, MA

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Peaceful Parenting – by Stefan Molyneux, host of Freedomain, the largest and most popular philosophy show in the world!

This book is FREE – and I hope that you will share it as widely as possible.

If you would like to help out the show, you can visit freedomain.com/donate

Prologue

I am fully aware that it seems melodramatic and precious to write an introduction that is basically a giant trigger warning – but it needs to be done.

This book is the culmination of forty years work in the fields of philosophy, self-knowledge, parenting and ethics.

Through my show Freedomain, I have had the privilege of having in-depth conversations with thousands of people about their early childhood experiences, and the effects that trauma has had over the course of their adult lives. They contact me in the hope that my training and experience in self-knowledge and moral philosophy will help them untangle the problems in their lives – I hope that I have served them well.¹

I have interviewed many experts in the fields of parenting, child abuse, family structures, therapy and self-knowledge – these interviews are also available on my website.

I myself experienced significant levels of child abuse. I was raised by a violent and crazy single mother, who ended up being institutionalized when I was in my early teens.

I did talk therapy for three hours a week, for almost 2 years.

At the end of my therapeutic process, and after months of trying to repair my relationship with my family, I decided to separate from them. I have not talked to my mother for twenty-five years. My father left when I was a baby, and I had little contact with him – he died a few years ago.

I have been happily married for over twenty years, and have been a stay-at-home father for the past fifteen years to my wonderful daughter.

My daughter is homeschooled, and we are part of a truly great community of like-minded parents.

My daughter and I do comedy shows together – mostly movie reviews – which are also available on my website.

Now for the trigger warning.

This is a very intense book.

I have tried to write it twice before, but faltered at the depth and enormity of the task.

¹ These conversations are all available on my website <https://www.freedomain.com>.

As a child, I experienced a constant, deep and genuine bewilderment. I was surrounded by people who claimed to be good – and who also claimed to be experts at identifying and punishing immorality. My relatives, my teachers, my parents, my boarding school masters, the priests who instructed me, my neighbours – they all claimed to have the ability to accurately identify immorality and take strong steps to contain and punish it.

I was punished in school – caned in boarding school – and in church, and by parents and relatives – all because they said that I had behaved badly, and deserved to be punished.

But it was most strange...

None of the hundreds of adults who judged and punished me over the course of my young life ever recognized that my mother was an evildoer who violently beat her own children.

They were able to detect subtle signs of rebellion or disobedience in my demeanour, and sharply or aggressively punish me – but they were utterly unable to identify my mother's obvious mental and moral dysfunctions – or ask me how I was doing, and take any actions to protect me, and oppose the violence I was subjected to.

I have been wrestling with this massive issue for over half a century.

How is it possible that adults can punish children for minor transgressions – I was once caned for climbing over a fence to get a soccer ball – but are utterly blind and helpless in the face of adult abusers of dependent and innocent children?

When I was a child, I watched endless movies and television shows about heroes confronting, combating and overcoming evildoers. The heroes were good, the villains were evil – the fight was clear, the victories tough but certain.

I was taught about religious and historical figures who found and fought evildoers almost to the death – and sometimes beyond it, sacrificing themselves to save the world from immorality...

These were the stories, the histories, the theology – yet *no one in my life* was able to detect or act against a clear evil in their midst – even in their own family, against their own flesh and blood...

Some expert trackers claim the ability to put their ears to a train track, and hear a locomotive coming from many miles away – if such a man were to claim this ability, and offer to listen to a train track – while failing to notice a giant thundering train bearing down on him, not 20 feet away, wouldn't that be rather – bizarre?

Wouldn't that be a sign that he was, in fact, insane?

Imagine hiring a safari guide to lead you deep into the jungle so you could take pictures of an incredibly rare white tiger. Imagine standing in the camp before you left, listening to him tell you all the complicated and mysterious tricks he was going to use to track this white tiger – and then imagine his speech continuing without pause as a white tiger walked up and sat right at his feet!

And your guide saw – *nothing!*

He just keeps rambling on and on, telling you how brilliant he was at tracking and spotting incredibly rare tigers, without noticing *at all* the giant animal at his feet!

Again, would he not be a candidate for a mental asylum?

Would you trust this madman to lead you deep into a trackless jungle?

This is the world.

The world of children.

The world of the victims of abuse.

We victims pass through the world – a world that claims deep expertise in the identification and punishment of evildoers – getting soundly punished for our most minor transgressions – while our abusers are either invisible, praised, or protected and defended.

This is, of course, why the abuse continues to exist.

Moral punishments are only meted out to helpless victims – never powerful aggressors.

If, at a family dinner, an adult victim of child abuse finally reveals the horrors he faced, his family will generally be more upset at the open mouth of the victim, rather than the closed fists of the abuser.

This is just the reality of where and how we live.

Our world is a long way from heaven – it is hell for the victims, a sadistic paradise for the abusers – and a weird kind of purgatory for the enablers of abuse, who wander around in a foggy disconnected avoidance, claiming virtue, but only punishing the victims who speak out.

Many people have been awaiting this book with great anticipation.

I am sure that I will disappoint them.

I'm sorry – I really am, but this book has to be the way it is.

Countless people have begged me for years to write this book – I am sure that I will both shock and disappoint them as well.

I'm sorry for that too.

But I stand by the necessity of what I have done.

People expect a book on peaceful parenting to be – well, peaceful, you know?

It makes sense, I get that...

But bringing about a peaceful world means exposing and opposing evil and violence.

You can bring peace to a town in the wild West, but you have to take down the bad guys first – and that is not very often a pretty process.

This book is not about being nice to children – though do I talk about that.

This book is not about reasoning with children – though I talk about that too.

This book promotes peaceful parenting by removing the obstacles to it.

This is not a pretty process.

I'm not sure how many people will ever listen to me, but I will say it anyway...

If you have hit your children, I beg you to engage with a good therapist before reading this book.

If you have yelled at, neglected or called your children names, same.

If you have significant unprocessed trauma from child abuse, same.

If you don't have a kind and trusted heart in your corner, this book is likely to be extremely destabilizing.

Philosophers and theologians have written about good and evil for thousands of years – but almost never about the ethics and virtues of children and parents.

Socialists have talked about the evils of power disparities – economic and political – for hundreds of years, but have never taken on the greatest power disparity in the human universe: the difference in power between parents and children.

Feminists have talked about the evils of the patriarchy for decades, claiming that men have economic and political powers far greater than women – but have never talked about the infinitely greater power that mothers have over their children – and how often it is misused and abused.

Communists talk about how the owners of the means of production exploit their workers by paying them less than the value of what they produce – but they never rail against the national debt, which is an exploitation and enslavement of the unborn – surely the greatest predatory theft in the history of mankind!

Everywhere in the world, you see this wild avoidance – people shout their moral condemnations from the rooftops – screaming into the faces of the abstract classes, the political elites, the wealthy and well-connected – but never make their way into the nurseries, into the darkened rooms of hidden and broken children.

You hear endless diatribes against the power of marketing, propaganda, and the evils of manipulative advertising – but how often is the rampant social programming inflicted on helpless and captive children in government schools even *acknowledged*, let alone condemned?

This book will take on all the hypocrisy, lies and manipulations that enable and cover up the abuse of children in our society – all around us.

In your family.

Because – you know, right?

You *know* some kid in your environment – that maybe you see every day – who is shy and downcast and avoidant and shaky, as if crushed under the weight of an invisible burden.

As he is, of course.

As she is...

The burden is not primarily the abuse he or she is suffering – but *your* silence and avoidance.

Of course, society is so configured that it is very hard to know what to do in situations of child abuse. If we try to protect the child, that might further provoke the abuser, who still maintains brutal power over the helpless child.

If we confront the abuser, same.

I used to think that all the adults around me failed to protect me because they were afraid of further provoking my mother – I dreamed that they would wait until I was independent, free of her, before sitting me down and giving me their sympathies, telling me their reasons for failing to help me.

I kicked my mother out when I was fifteen.

I worked three jobs, took in roommates, paid my bills, made my way.

I was free.

And I would sometimes look at the phone – my red dusty rotary-dial phone – waiting for it to ring, for the sympathy and explanations to pour in.

Nothing...

I waited a long, long time for all of this.

In my mid-twenties, when my relatives came into town for a family wedding, I spent days with them, waiting for a word, an acknowledgement – an apology, perhaps.

Again – *nothing*...

It's been thirty years since then – they are all dead now.

Pretty sure that old phone is never going to ring.

But they *have* helped me, in a way – and through their help, I hope to help the world.

The adults around me when I was a child did not lecture and punish me because they had moral understanding, a clear capacity to identify wrongdoing, and a strong will to correct immorality.

No – there was another reason *entirely*...

I will talk about that later.

You can join me, if you dare.

But it won't be pretty.

The authority figures of my childhood were not waiting until I was an adult to tell me how badly they felt that I was being abused.

They either didn't notice, or didn't care.

That is unacceptable.

Another family used to take me in regularly – half as a refugee from the violence – and met my mother many times.

Again, in my mid-twenties, I met up with this family again, and the mother asked me, with great sympathy and tenderness, “How is your poor mother doing?”

Jaw-dropping, really.

I do remember – even as a child – thinking that, if I ever got to any kind of public prominence, that I would do everything in my power to help the victims of child abuse.

While I have personally confronted aggressive parents in public, the bulk of my work has been online, listening to thousands of adult victims of child abuse, sympathizing with them, and providing moral clarity about their desperate situations.

How many of them ever told me that the adults in their lives tried to help them, when they themselves were children?

I understand that this is a self-selecting group, but the answer has been grindingly consistent.

Zero.

No adult in their life – past or present – has ever shown the slightest shred of awareness, understanding or sympathy for the abuse they suffered as children – even the adults who directly witnessed that abuse.

For 18 years, I have had an open channel to anyone and everyone to talk about whatever philosophical issues are on their minds. I have invited debates on ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, free will – you name it.

Any topic is open and welcomed.

And – what do people want to talk about, when they can talk about anything at all?

Their childhoods, almost every single time.

It sometimes feels like I am the only person in the world who will always listen, always sympathize, and always provide moral clarity to those who have suffered from evildoers.

I never tell anyone what to do, of course – I am a staunch believer in free will, and I would never try to get anyone to substitute my thoughts for their own judgement.

Perhaps I give people a car – but I never tell them where to drive.

Morality without control – morality that informs and liberates, rather than shames and punishes – can be deeply disturbing.

If you don’t understand this yet, you will over the course of reading this book.

I’m telling you this: if you choose to read this book, you will quickly realize why it has never been written before.

The arguments are not complicated – the moral clarity is disarmingly simple.

This is not a book detailing the mathematics of quantum physics, the wild contradictions of superstring theory, or how to navigate hyper-complex tax laws – or how to balance personal interests, social acceptance, and moral integrity.

This is a book that even a child can understand.

This is the book that your inner child has been waiting for.

I have always been impressed by the fact that Socrates never used technical language when discussing philosophy with people – you can't find a single example of him using the word "epistemology," for instance.

While I have certainly written more technical works of philosophical examination, I have worked *very hard* to keep this book as clear and accessible as humanly possible.

There is no point writing a complex moral manual for the improvement of the planet as a whole.

I normally write in fairly lengthy paragraphs – this book is mostly bullet points.

Bullets indeed.

If you were abused as a child – and most children in the world are, that is the way of the world – then you have my deepest and most heartfelt sympathies.

It was wrong, it is unacceptable – and it *must* change!

No one was there for me, and that is a real shame.

Some people inflict their pain on the world – some people provide what they were denied.

I'm so sorry that you are hurt – it was horribly unjust.

I'm so sorry that – most likely – no one helped, or noticed – either then or now.

I'm so sorry that no one was there for you.

With this book, I can be there for you.

Here for you, now.

It's time.

Let us begin.

Introduction

If the world is hell, it is because of childhood.

The unhappiness, misery, pain and violence of the world have all been "explained" according to various theories, all designed to distract us from the central, core and highly personal issue.

Socialists tell us that the world is hell because of economic and environmental exploitation – without ever asking *why* people end up so coldhearted that they can use and dispose of their fellow human beings via the chilly physics of grim economic utility.

Theologians explain that the world is hell because we are born sinful, and have to be beaten and terrorized into even a remote approximation of virtue.

Educators explain that the world is hell because children are willful and disobedient, and have to be threatened and bullied into pursuing knowledge and accepting conformity.

Antiracists explain that the world is hell because people mistrust and hate other ethnicities – without ever asking *why* people end up xenophobic, hateful and afraid.

Feminists explain that the world is hell because men hate and fear women, and thus lust to bully and control them – without ever explaining *why* men might hate and fear women – especially when they are raised by women!

Evolutionary biologists explain that the world is hell because mankind is an animal, with an animal's lusts and passions and thirst for dominance. No one ever explains why science is possible for mankind – but not for any other species – but virtue is not.

Every civil rights movement has striven to bring excluded groups into the moral center of society. Morals – both legal and social – that were set up to exclude various races, sexes and classes, have all been challenged and overthrown. The goal of the inclusion of all excluded groups into the core moral principles of society has been avidly pursued – and often achieved – often to the betterment of all.

Why has there never been a civil rights movement for the most abused, controlled and exploited class in society – the *children*?

All will be explained.

What else?

Well, skepticism of artificiality has also been a central thrust of modern thought – avoid plastics, chemicals, pesticides and so on. Buy organic, live naturally, embrace the wisdom of your ancestors – countless communities pursue these goals with avid abandon.

We have terms for sexism, racism, homophobia, Islamophobia, xenophobia, fatphobia, classism – the list these days is virtually endless. Fear and hatred of the “other,” it is said, leads to hateful language, violence, terrorism – war, even.

For all our modern moral wisdoms, one word remains conspicuously absent from our endless patrolling of language, exclusion and contempt.

Where is the word “*childism*”?

Why do we not even have a *word* for prejudice against children?

“Ah,” you may say, “this is because society treasures its children, devotes endless energies to training and raising its children – therefore it would make no more sense to have a word called ‘childism’ than it would to have a word called ‘loveism.’ We cannot be prejudiced against that which we love!”

Interesting...

But – is it true?

It is certainly true that society *claims* to worship and love its children, and does devote endless energies into training and raising them.

What do we always hear?

“The children are our future, our heritage, our worlds, the purpose of our life and being, the foundation of our civilization...” – you name it!

The late singer Whitney Houston had a famous song “The Greatest Love of All” which started off thus:

I believe the children are our future

Teach them well and let them lead the way

Show them all the beauty they possess inside

Give them a sense of pride to make it easier

Let the children's laughter remind us how we used to be...

Sadly, Whitney was a victim of childhood sexual abuse who grew up to be a drug addict – enacting all the inevitable abuse and neglect on her own daughter, who, like her mother, also died in a bathtub with a large number of drugs in her system.

Whitney sang about virtue, but lived a deeply broken and destructive life.

But – what is the general theory?

Well – that children are *loved* by society, and therefore we would never *need* a word to describe society's prejudice against its own children!

If you love chocolate, how can you be prejudiced against chocolate?

If you love your wife, by definition you cannot hate and exclude her.

What on *earth* are you talking about, Stef?

Well, philosophy is all about skepticism – and the longer the claim has been going on – and the more widespread it is – the more philosophers are inclined to question it.

The institution of slavery was universally accepted and practiced through the world, for all of history – until moral philosophers and theologians eventually questioned it.

The modern world is founded on skepticism of traditionally-accepted “wisdom.”

Science, technology, engineering, medicine – these are all founded on skepticism of formerly-accepted “absolute truths.”

The battles against exclusion were all founded on skepticism of the accepted wisdom of excluding other races, sexes, classes and groups.

Reason demands that we judge others – and ourselves – by deeds, not words.

If a man claims to passionately value a woman, then ghosts her after sex, would we accept his protestations of affection?

No – surely we would judge his actions, rather than his words.

Good words often camouflage bad actions.

Con artists charm us before robbing us; seducers woo us before exploiting and abandoning us. Politicians promise us heaven, then deliver hell. People pretend to be injured to bring you close, then rob you blind. Scammers pretend to want to help you, then steal from you.

And – believe it or not – criminals generally claim to be innocent, even when guilty.

Imagine a world where mere statements equaled objective truth.

If you fail an exam, but you tell your teacher that you passed it, then she would have to adjust your mark!

If you fail to pay your taxes, but then inform the government that you *did* in fact pay them, that would have to be accepted.

If you were caught shoplifting, you could tell the store owner that you are *not* stealing, and he would have to let you go.

You could claim to be a doctor, and no one could disagree with you.

As a toddler, you could be caught with chocolate all over your face, but justifiably deny that you had ever touched any chocolate!

If you were tired of making mortgage payments, you could simply phone the bank and tell them that you in fact owned the house free and clear, and all would be well!

Society would crumble in about forty-eight hours if mere statements were always accepted as truth.

No, we have standards of evidence and empiricism and logical consistency and proof – in order to separate liars exploiting morality from honest people pursuing virtue.

What do we say, if we are rational?

“This is your claim, what is the truth?”

This is the essence not of just philosophy, but society, rationality, functionality – and survival.

Imagine a primitive hunter coming home empty-handed, but claiming to have felled a giant deer. Would anyone eat?

Imagine a man in the jungle being hunted by a tiger – could he save himself by closing his eyes and repeating over and over, “there is no tiger, there is no tiger”?

Of course not – these examples are almost too foolish to mention.

We all understand that we only empower and embolden liars by refusing to look for reason and evidence.

Society claims to love its children – very well, let us look for reason and evidence.²

Before we take this journey, though, I need to repeat my warning.

This book will be horrible for you – but the alternative is far worse.

Some medical treatments can be horrible, but they beat dying.

It is horrible to look in the mirror and accept that you are fat, but it beats getting diabetes and heart disease.

It can be horrible to be self-critical, but it beats the corruption and decay of avoiding rational self-correction.

Learning is pain – but the alternative is usually far worse.

This book will be painful for you because it is not about abstract topics, windy philosophical ideals or gentle exhortation to future virtue.

This book is about your pain.

This book is about your life.

This book is about your childhood.

This book is painful – but the alternative is infinitely worse.

If society does in fact love its children, and raises them wisely, virtuously and well, then we are truly doomed – because the current hell is the best we can ever expect.

If you exercise and eat sensibly, but gain weight every week, something is seriously wrong with your body.

If you eat too much and don't exercise, then you have a solution to your weight gain – eat less, and exercise!

We must truly hope and pray that society does *not* love and treasure its children – otherwise little can ever be substantially improved!

In other words, if you're already doing the best you can, you can never improve the outcome.

If society treats its children wonderfully, then there is no path to improvement. The violence, discord, loneliness, lovelessness, exploitation, betrayal – all the evils that fester and grow in the human heart – and our social world – can never be cured.

² [Does society love its children?](#) Pg X.

We have spent the past few hundred years attempting to become more inclusive and create harmony in society, but disharmony is only increasing.

We have spent countless millennia trying to stop war, but war remains.

We have spent an eternity combating immorality, but evil still grows.

Either we are missing something essential, or we are truly doomed.

I choose hope.

However...

Choosing hope means accepting pain.

So be it.

We will ask and answer this question:

Does society truly love its children?

Do We Love Our Children?

Love and violence are opposites.

A man cannot justly claim to love a woman if he also beats her.

A woman cannot claim to have great affection for her cat if she starves it.

A bully who abuses his victim cannot claim to love that victim as well.

What about love and exploitation?

Can a boyfriend claim to love his girlfriend while surreptitiously running up massive bills on her credit cards?

Enslaving others through debt is the opposite of love.

It is time for a thought experiment.

I want you to imagine a purple-skinned race of people.

Society claims to love and value “the purples” – but what does that mean?

Claims of affection are not proof of love – abusers usually claim to love their victims – stalkers terrify those they claim to treasure, exploitive corporations often refer to employees as being part of a loyal company “family.”

Cults regularly engage in “love bombing” – the practice of showering affection on lonely people in order to stimulate a bond to an exploitive gang.

It is true that society claims to love and treasure “the purples” – but as sensible, rational individuals, we should compare society’s ideals to the actual facts.

How would we judge society's proclaimed "love" for "the purples" if we found out the following:

1. It is illegal to hit anyone in society – except the purples. You can hit the purples without repercussion. In fact, those who hit the purples are generally praised for "maintaining social order."
2. It is illegal to perform genital mutilation on anyone – except the purples. Carving up the genitalia of male purples is encouraged and praised.
3. It is both legal and encouraged to use the future earnings of even the unborn purples as collateral for government spending.
4. It is illegal to run up debt and force others to pay – except the purples. It is both legal and praised to greedily dump about a million dollars worth of debt on the newborn purples, who must submit to this enslavement and pay for this debt for the rest of their lives.
5. Purples are regularly sexually assaulted. It happens to about one in three females, and about one in five males. Although this is technically illegal, prosecutions are exceedingly rare.
6. Bad behaviours which are absolutely unacceptable in general society are accepted – and often praised – when inflicted against the purples. If a waiter gets your order wrong, it is absolutely unacceptable to yell insults at him – however, if a purple does something wrong, it is good to raise your voice at him or her.
7. Those who verbally intimidate anonymous retail workers are scorned and insulted as "Karens" – those who verbally intimidate the purples are praised as good and noble people.
8. In non-purple society, it is absolutely unacceptable – and often illegal – to physically punish or traumatize people who disappoint you, or disagree with you – or make mistakes. When dealing with purples, however, you are allowed to physically restrain them, hit them, scream at them, verbally abuse them, withhold necessary food, shake them and so on. As long as there is no permanent obvious injury afterwards, you're fine!
9. You are never allowed to force others to live with you against their will – that called kidnapping, a criminal action that is severely punished by decades in jail. Oh, but you can keep a purple in your house – or a couple of them for that matter – and they are legally barred from leaving, no matter how terrible the environment. If they try to escape, they will be dragged back and punished, usually violently.
10. You are not allowed to trap people in a room and inflict your ideology on them – that is either directly illegal, and would be prosecuted as dangerous cultish aggression and unlawful confinement. However, purples are forced to sit in a room for over six hours a day for twelve years straight – in an often-violent environment – and are relentlessly indoctrinated.
11. If you provide a service or a product, it would be unthinkable and illegal to involuntarily drug someone for not wanting your product. You are not allowed to inflict mind altering drugs on people who fall asleep during your movie. Oh, except for the *purples* – you can totally drug them if they fail to pay attention.

There are more examples – countless really – but let us move on.

Surely these basic facts would arise in your mind when everyone in society constantly trumpeted how much they loved, treasured, respected and valued the *purples*.

If, instead of the purples, these were women, we would be outraged at such blatant, violent and destructive sexism.

If, instead of the purples, these were blacks or Indians or Hispanics – or any other ethnic group – we would be outraged at such blatant, violent and destructive racism.

Racism...

Yet we don't even have a *word* for prejudice against children.

That is not an accident.

"Childism" is in part never defined so it can never be discussed.

Childism

What is "childism"?

It is the universal, relentless – and often institutional – prejudice against and hostility towards children,

In most countries, parents are allowed to hit their children. The vast majority of parents *do* hit their children, or deploy other forceful mechanisms to restrain them, such as using their size and strength to force them to stay in a sitting position, or be forcefully confined to a single room.

Parents deny their children necessary food, yell at them, call them names – scream abuse as well – dump them sobbing and crying into daycares – and ignore them at home too, very often.

Children are stuck at home, and cannot leave.

A society that truly loves its children would *never ever* have a national debt, or unfunded future liabilities such as healthcare and old age pensions, that children will be endlessly forced to pay for.³

A society that truly loves its children would never force them into mandated "schools" where the interests and preferences of the children are utterly immaterial – and where they are drugged for failing to pay attention while being relentlessly and pitilessly indoctrinated.

Children are far safer and happier in two-parent households, where the mother stays home to raise the children.

A society devoted to the safety and happiness of its children would do everything in its power to promote the nuclear family – because that is the most reliable way to secure the safety and happiness of children.

Society is the most safe and stable when children have secure bonds and attachments to their mothers. A society that cares about its children would never in a million years promote policies or perspectives that encouraged a mother to separate from her newborn child. Of course, if the mother dumps her baby in daycare in order to go to work, then her employer benefits, and governments benefit from her taxes – and the taxes of the daycare workers – but such a society is inevitably sowing the seeds of future chaos and violence by breaking the mother-child bond.

A society which truly loves and cares for its children would place its children's needs and happiness at the center of almost every social and legal decision.

³ We will get to all the studies and data that support these arguments shortly.

Every time any question of importance came up, the central driving factor would be:

- Is this best for our children?

Should children be spanked?

The answer is surprisingly simple, as we will talk about later in this book.

Spanking is disastrous for children.⁴

Should we yell at children?

The answer is also surprisingly simple.

Verbal abuse and intimidation is disastrous for children.

Should we put children in government schools?

Again, the answer is surprisingly simple.

Children do very badly in government schools.⁵

Should we fund society's current greed by enslaving our children to future debt?

To ask this question is to answer it.

To ask yourself whether society truly loves and treasures its children, we must simply ask the following:

- *What sacrifices does society currently make to ensure the best outcomes for its children?*

If you were to say to the voting public that they will have to forgo some government benefits in order to pay off the national debt – and free the children that everyone endlessly claims to love and treasure – would such a politician ever be elected?

If schools were to radically change their curricula based on what children actually want to study – and what benefited the children the most – would this be acceptable to school unions and authorities?

If people who inflict divorce on their children – enormously traumatizing and harmful – were roundly criticized in society, would this be considered a good thing?

⁴ [Is spanking disastrous for children?](#) Pg 302

⁵ [Government Schools and Child Abuse](#), Pg 305.

What about women who have children out of wedlock?

What about men who abandon their children?

(Well, we often do attack the men, but it is the women who initiate divorce far more often.)

Those merely *accused* of verbal bigotry in society are shunned and ostracized. Careers, reputations and incomes are all destroyed.

Yet those who directly *harm their own children* are very often praised.

People are destroyed over imaginary words, but praised for destructive deeds.

It is absolutely unacceptable to use slurs against other people – but yelling at children, hitting children, confining children and restraining children – and indoctrinating them – are all praised and rewarded.

The world is hell because of childhood.

Why We Punish Children...

Do you think this case is too strong, too radical?

Hey, no problem, let's listen to the other side!

The counterargument runs thus:

"Well, of *course* children have to be hit or restrained or controlled or yelled at – because their brains are immature, and they lack any sense of consequences. You don't let your child run into traffic, or grab at a pot of boiling water on the stove, do you? Children are impulsive and unaware of dangers, and thus you *have* to use physical consequences such as spanking or timeouts in order to prevent far worse outcomes such as grievous injury or death!"

This is an interesting argument, because it seems believable on the surface, but a moment's thought destroys it entirely.

It is part of our essential bigotry against children – our *childism* – to refuse to extract the moral essence behind the above argument.

The moral argument goes thus:

"It is both appropriate and necessary to use violence against those with limited cognitive abilities."

Do you see it yet?

If a cognitively impaired adult makes a mistake, or fails to think of consequences, is it acceptable for us to call him names, yell at him, beat him, restrain him, punish him for his 'badness'? Can we hold him down on the stairs for one minute for every one of his birthdays? Can we lower his pants and spank him on his bare buttocks for his 'immorality'?

In a group home for cognitively impaired adults, do we allow the orderlies to insult or hit the adults who don't obey?

If your elderly mother is cognitively impaired due to age – as most older people are, even to a small degree – are you allowed to lift her skirt and beat her buttocks if she forgets where she left her keys, or forgets to turn off the stove?

Of course not – such suggestions would be morally reprehensible.

So – the idea that we beat children because children are cognitively limited is utterly and completely *false*.

Again, we find the same pattern – every group in society that shares the exact same characteristics as children is protected – except for the children, who are exploited and attacked.

We would never countenance beating people for the inevitable results of their cognitive limitations – except children, of course. We *praise* beating children for the inevitable results of *their* cognitive limitations.

If a mother is asked *why* she hits her children, she might say: “Because they just don't *listen* to me!”

This is a complete lie.

Again, to extract the moral principle that it is good to hit people who do not listen to you, we can imagine the mother in a work situation, where she is trying to explain to her boss how something can't be done, but her boss just won't *listen*.

Does she then drag her boss across her knees, pull down his trousers and beat his bare buttocks?

Of course not.

She would be arrested for assault.

If she were to say to the arresting officers that she beat her boss because he just wouldn't listen, what would they say?

“You don't get to beat someone just because he doesn't listen to you.”

Imagine being a politician running on the platform of making it legal to beat anyone who you claimed did *not listen to you*.

People would regard his campaign as morally insane.

Yet we accept this as a “reason” why parents hit their children all the time.

If we say that we arrest black people for stealing – but let every other race go free for the exact same behaviour, then it is a lie to say that we are arresting black people for stealing.

If we say that we insult, hit and punish children for making mistakes and not listening – but we *never* insult any other people for the exact same behaviour, then we are utterly lying about our moral motivations.

Everywhere you look, you see the *exact same pattern*:

It's morally evil for us, it's morally good for children!

This is the essence of *childism*.

People also say: *Well, I have hit my children, because children are incapable of reasoning!*

Can you imagine?

Imagine this in society as a whole.

Do you find society to be overly full of people deeply capable of – and committed to – *reasoning*?

Again, the moral principle would be: *It is morally good to beat people if they do not reason.*

Thus – if somebody makes an irrational statement, he can be beaten, right?

If you provide clear evidence, but somebody denies said evidence, you can beat her.

If somebody rejects a rational argument, you can beat him.

Do you see how *insane* this is?

Do you see how when you apply moral rules universally, the vicious prejudice of *childism* starts to become clear?

Children Reasoning?!?

Of *course* children can reason – even starting at about fifteen months, they can perform deep moral reasoning.⁶ The grim reality is that most parents don't believe that their children *can* reason because they have *never tried reasoning with them!*

For so many parents 'reasoning' means *agreeing!*

"I've asked you nicely!" is usually a prelude to coercive escalation.

For most parents, disagreement or disappointment or inconvenience provokes violence – violence against their children, either physical or emotional.

This is beyond madness.

⁶ [Children can perform moral reasoning at 15 months](#)

If you are engaged in a verbal dispute with someone, and you pull out your gun, and he punches you – is that proof that he is not open to reason?

No, *you* provoked the violence by pulling out your gun. Your opponent was actually defending himself with remarkable self-restraint.

Parents do not struggle to reason with their children for months or years *before* hitting them – oh no, they hit them right at the start, from the very beginning. They do not have lengthy proofs that their children just refuse to reason – they literally *prevent* their children from developing the capacity to reason by hitting them from babyhood or toddlerhood onwards.

The hitting comes first – the “kids can’t reason” excuse comes much, much later.⁷

Morally speaking, society generally holds fast to two central principles.

Let’s examine the first:

1. A genuine incapacity should never be punished, but rather gently accommodated.

If a child – or adult – cannot hear, we do not punish him for his deafness, but rather should learn sign language or provide a hearing aid and gently accommodate this limitation.

If a man is in a wheelchair, we don’t hit him for failing to walk, but rather build a walkway to give him access to amenities.

If we genuinely believe that children cannot reason, we would view this as an incapacity, and never *dream* of punishing children for a deficiency that is quite obviously beyond their control!

If we are hosting a dinner party, and one of our adult guests pees on our carpet, we would be justly horrified and appalled.

If we are holding a baby, and the baby pees on our carpet, it would be insane to have the same reaction – because the baby lacks the capacity to control her bladder.

We would not excuse the adult but punish the baby – if we were sane, which is to say not in the grips of unconscious childism.

Yet if an adult is not rational, or does not listen, we do not punish him.

However, children – who are physically limited in their capacity to reason – are punished for this inevitable limitation *all the time*.

If a guest decides to write on the walls of our house, are we allowed to yell at him, put him in a timeout, hit him or punish him in some other fashion?

Of course not!

We might be upset and angry, but we would never *dream* of attacking him in these ways.

⁷ [The Hitting Comes First](#) Pg 346

The adult who has the capacity to know *better* is forgiven – but the child who cannot know better is punished.

None of this is about *virtue*.

It is all about *power*.

Why do we punish children?

Because we are good, and they are bad?

Nope.

Because they refuse to reason, and so aggression and violence is our only remaining moral option?

Nope.

Why do we attack and punish children?

For one reason, and one reason only.

Because we *can*.

When slavery was legal, slaveowners beat their slaves.

Why did they do this?

Because they could.

If a man is greatly tempted by pickpocketing, but denies this temptation, we would praise him as overcoming a potential vice.

However, if we find out later that this man has no arms, we would not praise his “virtue,” since he simply lacks the physical capacity to pick people’s pockets.

If we hit children – but never adults – scream at children – but never adults – punish children – but never adults – call children abusive names – but never adults – it’s just because we *can*.

If we are told that it is morally good to yell at, hit and punish our children, we will generally do so.

The world is hell, and those in charge are devils.

The second moral standard accepted by society is this:

2. As power disparities increase, moral standards also increase.

A man can ask a woman out – even at work. However, a boss should not ask out his employee, because he has too much power in the relationship.

Because his employee might fear retaliation if she does not go out with her boss, she cannot be objective in her evaluation of his proposal.

A policeman who abuses his power is generally considered worse than an abusive private citizen, because the policeman has so much more power. If a private citizen lies about a policeman, that is bad – but not nearly as bad as a policeman who lies about a private citizen – particularly under oath.

A corrupt judge is punished more severely than a corrupt salesman, because judges have so much power.

A private citizen does not get praised for refusing to declare war – a politician who possesses that power may be praised for embracing peace.

The more power that exists, the more virtue is required.

A man in a coma is not praised for his morality, since he has no capacity to act immorally.

A broke woman is not despised for failing to give to charity – a billionaire would be.

Power versus Virtue: A Love Story

We all accept the following to be morally foundational:

The greater the power disparity in a relationship, the more virtue is required from those who hold the most power.

Okay...

Are you ready?

Here is the rank prejudice – the *childism*.

There is no greater power disparity in the world than that between parents and children.

We balk at a boss asking out his secretary, because of the conflicts of interest and power disparities involved.

More power requires more virtue.

If a prisoner threatens to lock a guard in solitary confinement, this means little – if the guard threatens the prisoner, this means everything.

Imagine reproducing the power dynamics of parenthood in a marriage.

Shall we?

Okay.

Bob and Sally are married. Sally was assigned to Bob, and had no choice in the matter. She was forced to get married, and it is illegal for her to leave him until she has been married for at least eighteen years.

Sally is only allowed to leave the house when Bob leaves – or with someone else who has authority over her. She can never leave the house on her own, at least for the first eight or ten years of the marriage.

The husband Bob has *total* control over his wife Sally. Bob can hit her, restrain her, refuse to feed her, cut off her social contacts, confine her to her room, scream at her, call her names – and she is never allowed to leave, and has no right of self-defense.

If Bob hits Sally, and Sally tries to resist, Bob can then call the police, who will lecture Sally about the beating, saying that she has to strive to understand Bob more, and be more agreeable to his wishes.

If Sally ever attempts to talk about Bob's abusive behaviour, everyone will tell her that she has to forgive Bob, that Bob is doing his best, that he may not be perfect – but then nobody is – and that she absolutely *must* stay with Bob for the rest of her life, and take care of him as he ages and gets sick, and give him whatever money he needs, and surrender her will to his preferences – and *never* expect Bob to apologize or ask for forgiveness or change his abusive ways!

In fact, for Sally, even *talking* to Bob about his abusive behaviour is a bad idea – it will just upset Bob – who again, is doing the best he can with the knowledge he has!

Sally is *constantly* lectured to remember that Bob had a difficult life when he was younger, and that her job is to love and understand him – and never, *ever* leave!

So – what happens if, after twenty years of being abused – and begging for change, and offering to go to couples counselling – Sally finally decides to leave Bob?

Well, terrible things happen *then*.

Sally will have to strive to keep the guilty secret of her freedom for the *rest of her life* – because the few people she does confide in roundly condemn her for failing to be loving and supportive to her loving husband Bob!

Everyone gets acutely uncomfortable – and often hostile – whenever Sally mentions that she escaped an abusive relationship – one that she never chose in the first place, because it was an arranged marriage.

The coldness and hostility Sally receives when she confesses how she escaped from an abusive relationship is incomprehensible to her – as she slowly begins to approach one of the lowest and hottest circles of hell in our corrupt society.

Sally will inevitably notice that women who voluntarily dated, became girlfriends, got engaged, got married – and then decided to have multiple children with a man – after having years to evaluate him – are praised as noble and courageous for leaving a marriage they claim is merely “unsatisfying.”

The women who evaluate men for years, who *choose* to get married and have children – and who then break up their families because they are merely bored and under-stimulated – these women are endlessly praised for their courage and independence.

However, Sally, who was involuntarily incarcerated in an abusive relationship, who begged for improvement, who bent over backwards trying to accommodate Bob – and who finally fled for the sake of her own sanity – *she* is condemned and ostracized for her coldhearted immorality and lack of sympathy for Bob.

The world only seems sane if you refuse to think.

Leaving a boring relationship that you voluntarily chose – to the massive detriment of your children – is good and brave and noble and courageous!

Fleeing a relentlessly abusive relationship you *never* chose is coldhearted and immoral, and a betrayal of your husband who genuinely loves you and always wants what is best for you!

Please remember that I am not objecting to the inevitable!

Children *are* dependent on their parents, and have no practical capacity to leave the relationship.

This is not a moral or legal issue, but rather an evolutionary and biological fact.

The fact that children are involuntarily trapped with their parents is not a problem to be solved – since there is no solution – *but a power disparity to be recognized*.

It is a deeply strange fact in society that we expect and require the greatest morals from the most powerful people – except for parents, who have the most power in the universe, and are allowed to do pretty much whatever they want.

This is a bizarre kind of moral flip or reversal – we have a principle, that as power increases, moral standards must also increase – except at the very top, at the pinnacle and summit of power, where the wildest immoralities are not just accepted, but praised and rewarded!

This would be as bizarre as a feminist claiming that inappropriate comments, glances and touches are massively evil – but patriarchal leaders are only moral if they abuse and rape at will.

It is also a strange phenomenon of society that there are many people who claim to oppose violence and abuse and corruption and devilry of every kind – but who also refuse to touch the unjust use of parental power against helpless and dependent children. Billions of people are obsessed and panicked about possible tiny changes in temperatures 100 years from now, while resolutely stepping over the countless broken bodies of broken children scattered in their midst.⁸

If it is true that the environmental movement is driven by a concern for children and their future – and if the movement is also driven by deep concerns over the unnecessary utilization of nature's scarce resources in the present, then the environmental movement should be resolutely opposed to divorce, since divorce directly harms children, and contributes to massive overuse of our scarce resources.

For thousands of years, moralists have condemned and opposed war – while resolutely avoiding society's endless war against its own children.

⁸ [Reference](#).

Millions of people who support the nonaggression principle have steadfastly avoided condemning the greatest violation of this principle in the world: *physical and verbal violence against children*.

Reversing Principles

We cannot claim to have any morals *whatsoever* if we can reverse our principles at will.

We cannot claim that it is *wrong* for a boss to ask out his secretary, because he holds so much power over her – but that it is *right* for a parent to hit her child, where the power disparity is infinitely greater.

The secretary can complain, file a grievance, quit her job, transfer, work to get her boss fired – or refuse his advances and take her chances.

What choices do abused children have?

They cannot leave.

They cannot fight back.

They very rarely can get any support at all.

If they complain, they are rejected and dismissed.

If they fight back, punishments escalate, sometimes to the point of mortal danger.

Children have no economic independence, no legal standing, no choice, no freedom, no self-defense, no capacity to avoid their tormentors.

We often say to children bullied at school – just avoid the bully.

If the parent is the bully, there is no avoidance.

Let us return to Bob and Sally.

If Bob genuinely wants his wife to love him, but she is arranged to marry him against her will – and is never allowed to divorce him – what can he do?

It is not *impossible* for Sally to end up loving Bob – but Bob does have to overcome the involuntary nature of their union.

Involuntary relationships come with an inevitable deficit – the obvious fact that they are not chosen.

If we assume that a joyful marriage is a plus ten, then a forced marriage must start at a *minus* ten.

People who choose to get married are already happy and enthusiastic about the relationship, so they are probably starting at a plus six, seven or eight. To get to a plus ten is only 2 to 4 extra points of happiness.

People who are forced into a marriage are starting out at a minus ten – to get to a plus ten means twenty extra points of happiness!

How much work does Bob have to do to get Sally to *truly* love him, given that she never chose to marry him in the first place?

Surely this would be one of the greatest efforts imaginable – to turn a virtual prisoner into a truly happy partner.

Surely Bob would say to himself: “Well, my wife is not here by choice, and she cannot leave – therefore I have to be such a great husband that she would still choose me – even if she were given all the choice in the world! In other words, I have to act as if she were not forced to marry me, and could leave at any time – I have to have the very highest standards of benevolence, love, good humour and virtue, in order to overcome the deficit that she never chose me, and is forced to live and stay with me!”

The involuntary nature of the relationship would require the very highest possible standard from Bob’s behaviour in order to transform it from *unchosen* to *chosen*.

(This analogy has one limitation, which is that adults can leave abusive parents after eighteen years – but this is largely impractical, because it will cost them almost all their relationships to stand up to their abusers. This would be like a wife being allowed to leave her husband after eighteen years, but at the cost of all of her social and familial relationships.)

Parents *choose* to have children; children do not choose to be born – or choose their parents.

In a very real sense, children are trapped with their parents – again, this is not a moral or legal issue, but a stark biological reality.

It is an arranged marriage – arranged by parental choice.

If parents want their children to love them, they must think as Bob should.

Bob says: “Even though Sally never chose her relationship with me, I must act in such a way that, if Sally were able to choose any husband in the world – or not to be married at all – she would still choose me.”

In the same way, parents must say: “Even though my children never chose their relationship with me, I must act in such a way that, if my children were able to choose any parent in the world, they would still choose me.”

The greater the power disparity, the higher the requirement for virtue – we all accept and praise this as a moral absolute.

Except...

Except with parents.

If Bob were to say to Sally: “You owe me obedience, and I will physically and/or emotionally punish you if you disagree, disobey or inconvenience me,” – then what would the chances be that Sally would end up loving Bob?

To ask the question is to answer it.

Imaginary Obligations

One way to abuse someone is to create imaginary obligations, and then punish her for failing to pay what she “owes.”

Imagine a man who thinks that taking a woman out for dinner entitles him to have sex with her.

If she refuses sex, he will get angry and yell at her.

This would be unjust and abusive.

However, when parents create an imaginary obligation called “obedience,” or “respect,” or “convenience” – there are hundreds of such obligations of course – they then feel *fully justified* in punishing their children for failing to pay what they *damn well owe their parents!*

If you borrow my lawnmower, and refuse to give it back, I am allowed to take it back without consulting you – by force if need be.

If you rent a car, and refuse to return it, the rental company can take it back without consulting you – by force if need be.

If you take out a loan to buy a house, but refuse to pay the loan, the bank can take your home from you – by force if need be.

The person who borrows – and refuses to return or repay – is in the wrong, and aggression – even violence – is justified to right this wrong.

“Entitlement” is the idea that you are owed something that you do not have to earn.

A man who believes that women “owe” him sex is a dangerous person.

An employee who believes his boss “owes” him a paycheck – even if he never shows up to work – is deranged – and also dangerous.

People who believe that the government “owes” them a pension or welfare or healthcare are equally dangerous.

Billions of parents across the world genuinely believe that their children owe them something – and if those children refuse to pay, those parents are *entirely justified* in using aggression and violence to punish the children.

Here is a shocking fact.

Your children do not owe you obedience.

They do not owe you respect.

They do not owe you love, or support, or resources, or attention, or time, or phone calls, or money.

It is far easier to create imaginary obligations than to earn genuine respect.

It is far easier to threaten people until they claim to “love” you than to earn their true love through virtue and affection.

In other news, it is far easier to steal than to create.

It is far easier to copy an MP3 than to learn instruments, then write and record a song.

It is far easier to kill than birth and raise life.

It is far easier to bully and threaten children into obeying you, rather than inspiring emulation through virtuous action.

If a man did not borrow from you, but you take something of his, *you* are the thief, not him.

If you imagine that your children owe you obedience – and then you threaten, punish and bully them into “paying” you, *you* are immoral – not them.

If you force the woman who never chose to marry you to obey you and claim that she “loves you,” you are a vile bully, and nothing more.

Shooting the Messenger?

Now is the time for conciliation.

This book is doubtless deeply shocking and alarming to you – and I massively praise and respect you for making it this far – the worst is still ahead, to be sure, but there will be no shock like these first pages.

Isn't this all so blindingly obvious?

And, if so obvious, why has it been hidden from you?

Why have you suffered so much from this rank hypocrisy?

Well...

You were lied to – and everyone around you is doing the same terrible things.

This all comes as a shock to you – and I sympathize, I empathize – I really do – and your first impulse will be to hurl this book aside and condemn me.

When everyone has lied to you, your first impulse is to attack the first person who tells you the truth.

It is frankly horrifying to see the depths of moral falsehoods, hypocrisies and downright evil in the society around us. When we walk through the mall and see all the countless people there with children, and know for certain that the vast majority of them are bullying or hitting their children at home – this is deeply disturbing and alienating.

It is a “red pill” moment which we can never return from.

You will be mad at me, because my arguments are creating acute discomfort within you, and we are all very used to punishing anyone who causes us discomfort.

Frankly, this is just another effect of bad parenting.

In the common perception, children owe their parents obedience and love – and when the children fail to pay what they owe, this causes great upset in the parents, who then feel fully justified in punishing the children for “causing them pain.”

Attacking children is thus legitimately reframed – at least in the minds of the parents – as a form of self-defense against injurious disobedience.

In this way, the parents are not really “attacking” the children, but defending themselves against their children for the pain caused by the children’s noncompliance.

Almost all parental abuse falls under the imaginary category called: “Well kid, *you started it!*”

Conclusions

If you grow up believing that the world is flat – because it sure looks that way – and everyone around you tells you that the world is flat, and your teachers instruct you that the world is flat – and punish and fail you for believing anything else – and all the scientists tell you that the world is flat – and all the people who question whether the world is flat are called crazy, and attacked and ostracized – are you *really* to blame for believing that the world is flat?

I think it’s important to have some sympathy and gentleness for the errors you have absorbed – or which have been inflicted on you, more accurately.

Analogies involving science and physics are of limited use in moral questions, however, since they cannot be resolved with a moment’s thought.

Discovering that the world is a sphere and not a tabletop cannot be achieved with ten seconds of critical thinking.

However, we all know that violence is wrong – we all know that excluding entire swaths of humanity from the moral law – or rather reversing the moral law for them – is *wrong*.

The American Declaration of Independence is criticized for saying that all men are created equal, but then allowing for slavery.

This is a rank contradiction obvious even to people at the time.

It barely takes a moment’s thought to notice it.

It does not take an advanced degree in physics to notice that your children *did not choose you as their parent* – this is obvious to everyone who takes a moment to think about it.

It does not take a significant number of physical experiments to notice that we hold those in power to higher moral standards.

You do not need to be excellent at vector calculus to notice that those with disabilities are treated more gently in society.

You do not need the moral acuity of Aristotle to note that we do not generally encourage the use of violence against the most vulnerable members of society.

These are all simple principles, accepted by everyone in society.

Everyone reading this has known for many years about the national debt, about failing schools and the hitting of children.

Everyone reading this was mindlessly bored in school, and desperately wished for someone – anyone – to listen to our preferences.

We know all of this – we have experienced all of this, and perhaps that is the difficulty...

It's one thing to believe that the world is flat, when it looks that way and everyone tells you so.

It's quite another thing to believe that the world is flat, after we have been taken out into orbit, lived there for years, and have spent countless hours gazing out the window at the obvious sphere of the planet.

We all experienced this as children – this contempt, this hostility, this aggression, this violence, this abuse. We were either raised in bad families, and experienced this directly – or were raised in great families, and saw the difference all around us.

We are either in danger because we were lied to, or we are in danger because everyone *else* was lied to.

There is no escape but the truth.

There is no way forward but through.

We are going to talk about the facts, we are going to reason through the ethics, we are going to reveal and break up the bottomless prejudice of *childism* – we are going to finally live up to what we proclaim: that we love and treasure our children.

We will do what is the hardest.

We will accept nothing less than honesty, truth and virtue.

We will grind through our pain to get to our moral destination.

We will do all this because the alternative is not in fact hell, but death.

PART 1: THEORY

Peaceful Parenting: What Is It?

The strangest thing about peaceful parenting is that it is nothing other than what we all accept and practice in the vast majority of our daily lives.

Peaceful parenting is nothing alien or foreign or revolutionary or contradictory.

Peaceful parenting is exactly what you teach your children – how you live your life – what you praise and want and prefer in almost everything you do.

Is this incomprehensible to you?

Let's look at the larger picture. The historical picture, if you like.

Peaceful parenting is the greatest moral revolution in the history of the world.

It is the greatest progress that can be imagined.

It both falls in line with – and extends – all prior moral progress.

What do I mean?

Well – science, technology and morality all progress when *exceptions are eliminated*.

The more that local principles can be distilled into simple universals, the more power we gather over knowledge, nature – and ourselves.

Early moral commandments forbade stealing – but only from one's own tribe.

It was fine to steal from those outside your tribe, but you should respect the property of your fellow cultists.

Every planet and sun is a sphere – imagining that the Earth is flat creates an exception to a universal rule – and an exception to the physical laws which cause large masses of matter to collapse into spherical shapes.

In ancient societies – and even in some contemporary ones – human rights and privileges are reserved for only some people – while those in the lower castes – as well as women and slaves – remain largely unprotected.

Why do we allow these complications?

Why do we invent rules – and then immediately start creating exceptions?

Well, that is all about *power*.

That which is complicated is almost certainly corrupt.

Sometimes, changing a single variable can simplify the entire system – transforming it from corrupt to moral, from convoluted to correct.

In the ancient world, when the Earth was considered the center of the universe, the retrograde motion of Mars – the fact that Mars seems to move backwards in the sky at times – was “explained” using the Ptolemaic system. This system was based on the belief that the Earth was at the center of the universe, and all orbits were perfect circles. Thus, in order to calculate the position of Mars, hundreds of calculations were required.

After the early Middle Ages, when astronomers began to toy with the idea that the sun was the center of the solar system, the movement of Mars became enormously simple – the fact was that the Earth sometimes moves faster around the sun than Mars, because the Earth is closer – which makes Mars appear to move backwards in the sky.

Simple.

One of Isaac Newton’s greatest insights was the theory of gravity, which states that everything falls. An apple falls to the ground – the Earth falls around the sun, the moon falls around the Earth, and so on.

Einstein also vastly simplified our understanding of the universe by rejecting the 19th-century theory of ether, and substituting the theory of relativity, and the famous equation $E = MC^2$.

The extension of the rights of self-ownership and property – as well as voting rights – to all adult human beings eradicated prior moral justifications for the existence of slavery.

Every human being owns himself, and owns the effects of his actions – this is the foundation of political liberty and property rights.

Morality with an asterisk has always been a central curse of humanity – the asterisk refers to all who are exempted from the general moral principle.

“Everyone has the right to enter into contracts – except women!”

“Everyone can vote – except slaves!”

“Only the King has freedom of speech!”

In some religions, only the priestly class can commune with God – in others, everyone has access to the divine.

What is the most important moral principle that desperately needs to be extended?

The Non-Aggression Principle

We all accept and enforce something called the *nonaggression principle*, or NAP.

The nonaggression principle states that it is immoral to *initiate* the use of force against another human being. Self-defense is acceptable in an extremity of danger, but you cannot just walk up to someone and punch, kick, strangle, rape or murder him or her.

The nonaggression principle has been accepted throughout all of human history – but with an enormous set of asterisks that limit it in practical terms to various specific groups.

Nobles can sell their own land without selling themselves, but serfs are tied to the land, and bought and sold with it, like cattle.

Members of an in-group are allowed to strike or steal from those outside the group, but have to respect the nonaggression principle and property rights for members of their own group.

So – what is peaceful parenting?

Why, it's so simple that it's almost embarrassing!

Peaceful parenting simply takes the nonaggression principle and fully extends it to children.

Does this sound obvious?

Crazy?

Redundant – I mean, we already protect our children, right?

Give me a moment, let me blow your mind.

Here...

The extension of the nonaggression principle to previously-excluded members of society defines the moral progress of our entire species – throughout history, across the world – but we seem to have a strange barrier to understanding this – and thus to extending our moral and physical protections to the most helpless and vulnerable members of our society: our own children.

Peaceful parenting universalizes the nonaggression principle – it is immoral to initiate the use of force against children.

It is immoral to enter into contracts on behalf of children.

It is immoral for individuals – and societies – to borrow against the collateral of children's future earnings.

Are you beginning to see?

The extension of the non-aggression principle to children means that it is immoral to initiate the use of force against children – just as it is immoral to initiate the use of force against adults.

As a result, it is utterly immoral to beat, hit, confine, spank or otherwise physically abuse or restrain children.

Wait, wait!

I know...

I know that a thousand strenuous arguments against this principle are erupting in your mind as you read, as you listen – and I truly do sympathize with that, and I will work very hard to overcome them over the course of this book.

But just bear with me for a moment...

Wouldn't it just be so much *simpler* to have one moral rule, rather than one rule for adults, and a complete *opposite* rule for children?

I mean, wouldn't it be considerably less confusing for children who are being told not to hit anyone, to not be hit themselves?

Wouldn't it be good for authority figures to follow their own rules, and not hit others?

A certain proportion of you – about 10-20%, by all measures – will accept that hitting children is wrong, and I thank you and appreciate you for that!

However, that is only one part of peaceful parenting.

The second part of peaceful parenting is to recognize that verbal abuse against children violates the nonaggression principle.

Verbal abuse can take many forms – from telling a child that she is stupid, lazy, selfish, mean, thoughtless, careless, clumsy – to telling her that the world is going to end soon, that she is immoral for genetic characteristics beyond her control – or that his masculinity is bad, inconvenient and negative to the educational system.

If you kidnap a woman, lock her in your basement – and then brainwash her for a year or two – you are charged with psychological abuse, as well as forcible confinement.

Many court cases seek damages for the infliction of emotional pain and suffering.

Cult leaders who confine and indoctrinate their members are charged with grievous crimes.

Children have no chance to leave their family environments – and their brains are deeply shaped and formed by the words their parents use.

We have laws against libel and defamation – as well as false accusations, which can result in lengthy jail terms – because we understand that words have the power to cause real-world harm.

In other words, we ban physical violence and verbal abuse against adults – why would we not also ban them against children?

I understand if you reject the statements as they stand – but be patient please, I will go into these arguments in more detail throughout the course of this book.

Remember – science, technology and morality all advance when simple, widely-accepted rules are simply extended to everything and everyone.

We accept that moral laws exist to protect those who cannot protect themselves – the biggest and strongest man in the village rarely has to fear physical assault.

Moral laws exist to protect those who cannot protect themselves...

All right, who are the most vulnerable members of society?

Come on...

We all know this one!

By *far* the most vulnerable and helpless members of society are *children* – but children remain largely excluded from all the moral laws that we have developed to protect powerful, independent adults.

Independent, free and powerful adults are protected – dependent, trapped and helpless children are thrown to the wolves.

This is no longer acceptable.

It never was, but the time has come to change everything.

What The World Should Be

Why do we find it so hard to live our values?

This is not by accident – it is by design.

Pretending to be virtuous in order to do evil is the oldest con of mankind.

“Virtue” was invented not to make mankind good, but rather to exploit us.

You don’t believe me?

Good!

You shouldn’t believe anything I say just because I say it!

Let me prove it to you.

I want you to think of two warring tribes in the distant past – the Hatfields and the McCoys.

One respects property rights, one does not.

In the Hatfields, you can own land, machinery, make and sell weapons – everyone can trade, allowing for specialization and the division of labour.

As a result, the Hatfields become quite wealthy.

Among the McCoys, however, property ownership is virtually impossible – everyone steals from everyone else. No one bothers to plant crops, because the crops will just be stolen. No one researches and develops weapons, because they can’t reliably build and sell them.

It’s clear that, when the Hatfields and the McCoys run up against each other, that the Hatfields will always defeat the McCoys, because the Hatfields have stronger warriors, superior weapons, and extra food.

Thus every tribe, nation and group has a very strong incentive to respect property rights. When Christianity universalized the Biblical commandment “Thou shalt not steal,” Christianity spread worldwide, by the book and the blade.

Teaching a respect for property rights creates wealth – this wealth can then be taxed away by the elites, and used to control the masses and expand their own power.

“Honesty” is only a virtue when you are in possession of information that those in power wish to extract from you.

It is not a virtue – in fact it is roundly punished – when you tell truths inconvenient to those in charge.

Then, it is labelled “rude” or “insensitive” or “blasphemous” or “heretical” or “seditious” or “hate speech.”

“Courage” is generally praised because it undermines the self-preservation instincts of soldiers and other enforcement agents.

“Courage” in service of the elites is a virtue – when “courage” is used to *oppose* the elites, however, it is called *terrorism* and *treason*.

If you unpack each one of these “virtues,” you will see that – in every single instance – “virtues” are always the behaviours that benefit those in power.

The exact same virtues are then punished if they go *against* the benefit of those in power.

If a soldier kills an enemy of those in power, he is given medals, parades and pensions.

If he kills someone out of uniform – a tax-paying citizen – he is severely punished.

Make sense?

Now – virtues such as “honesty” and “courage” are indeed good. My goal in explaining all this is not to make you cynical about morality, but rather to help you understand why it is so difficult to apply *consistently*.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander...

Moral Reversals

If an action is good in one situation, but evil in another, we can call this a *moral reversal*.

Sadly, we experience these *moral reversals* in our personal lives all the time – from the very start of our lives!

Would you like an example?

Well, our parents raised us to tell the truth – but when we told truths inconvenient to our parents, we were often punished.

When your mother demanded to know who broke the lamp in the living room, she wanted you to tell the truth, and praised truth telling as a virtue.

If, however, at a family dinner, you mentioned that you saw your mother kissing another man – does she continue to praise your honesty as a virtue?

Of course not.

If your mother tells you to go and kiss your Aunt Edna goodbye, but you loudly state that you don't want to, because her breath stinks – are you praised for your honesty?

No, you are punished for your “rudeness.”

Virtues are praised when they serve those in charge – those exact same virtues are then *punished* when they upset those in charge.

Your school teachers probably always wanted you to tell the truth – unless you honestly told them that they were boring and incompetent – in which case you were *punished* for telling the truth!

Those same teachers told you that it was *never* OK to use force and threats to get what you want – but then went on strike, shutting down the entire educational system and half the economy, in order to get what *they* want!

Teachers and principals always told you to stand up to bullies, and that bullying was unacceptable – but when you or your friends went to them to complain about being bullied, did those teachers and principals stand up to the bullies and their volatile parents?

Nope!

You see?

You, at the age of 5 or 10 or 15, were supposed to stand up to bullies – but teachers and administrators didn't do that at all!

Naturally, the virtues inflicted on you are all *described* as universal – without exceptions – but are never *applied* universally – yet this *moral reversal* is never explained, or even talked about!

This is why we don't even *notice* when our society claims to love and treasure children, but then abuses and exploits them.

The “morality” is a cover for the exploitation.

If a moral philosopher, say, comes along and insists that we actually consistently *live* our values – accepting and enacting all the claims of universality – we feel existential horror at the concept – because throughout all of human history, attempting to live as if morals claimed to be universal were in *fact* universal – was largely suicidal.

We were, in essence, told:

“These morals are universal and absolute – but if you live as *if* they are moral and absolute, we will destroy you. We will also destroy you if you ever talk about these obvious contradictions.”

Again – killing *against* the wishes of the elites is murder – killing *with* the approval of the elites will get you a chest full of metals, tickertape parades and a lifelong pension.

We generally only feel safe when we speak nobly about our universal ethics, but then do the exact opposite when required – and never *ever* notice the contradiction.

Noticing this moral reversal is very humiliating, because it reveals our fundamental enslavement.

The world, in other words, is hell *precisely because* it pretends to be heaven.

What Should Be

Let us imagine a world where we truly lived our values of loving and treasuring our children.

Imagine a world where every decision that impacted children was designed to benefit them the most.

Let us begin this journey.

Children care most of all about the *virtues* of their parents, because consistently positive actions are the basis of loving bonds and emotional security – which children crave most of all.

In a world devoted to the happiness of children, men and women would choose each other based on demonstrable virtues, rather than shapely faces.

There is nothing wrong with shapely faces, of course – I am not some radical idealist attempting to overthrow billions of years of evolution. Shapely faces indicate physical health – studies have shown that more attractive people tend to have better health outcomes over time – and physical health is important.

However, love is our involuntary response to virtue, if we are virtuous – and children desperately *want* to love their parents – and *respect* their parents – which is only possible if the parents are consistently virtuous.

It's hard to imagine a company hiring a man, paying him for months or years – and only *then* casually inquiring if he was in fact an engineer, after all his bridges had collapsed.

It's hard to imagine an employee taking a job, working for months or years – and only then inquiring about salary.

No, those in economic relationships define and negotiate mutual values upfront, ahead of time.

Employee credentials are checked, salaries are negotiated and contracted, mutual goals are established, contracts are signed – and only *then* does the economic relationship begin.

That's not how dating works – certainly not in the modern world.

Dating exists for the sake of future children – to create the most secure and positive environment for raising a family.

Dating does *not* exist for your vanity, or your mere sexual satisfaction, or your pride and conquest – or for thirst-posting on social media.

Dating exists as a mechanism for checking compatible values before embarking on creating a family.⁹

⁹ Just to put aside the inevitable nitpicking, of course people who can't or don't want to have children can date and marry – so what? That doesn't change what dating and marriage are *for*. Bicyclists can use roads – that doesn't mean that the roads were created only for cyclists.

In the past, dating was managed by tribal elders, and the tribe was *defined* by shared values, so the chances of ending up with someone with incompatible or opposing values was virtually zero.

In the modern world, we are in charge of our own dating – and are so consumed by lust and vanity that we often *avoid* bringing up our values, for fear of torpedoing our sexual conquests.

Sexual bonding is designed to cement compatible values into a permanent monogamous relationship – but we go about ‘bonding’ very differently these days.

Now, we have sex as a result of mere physical attraction, and then steadfastly avoid talking about values. These values inevitably diverge – or are revealed as divergent over time – and then we break up.

Our emotional mechanisms interpret this breakup as death or disappearance – and so refuse to provide the same level of bonding the next time.

As we go through half a dozen or more relationships, our bonding mechanisms cease to operate – to protect us from despair, since they interpret these constant breakups as indications of an extremely dangerous and violent environment. Throughout most of human history, the only reason you would go through six or more partners is because of war, starvation, disease or rampant predation.

Over time, we lose our capacity to pair-bond – even more so for women than men – and become cold, hard-eyed and suspicious. We are constantly paranoid, anticipating inevitable betrayal or abandonment, which makes us hard to get along with, and impossible to love.

Like clear plastic sticky tape, the more bonds we make and break, the less we are able to bond, until we can’t really achieve it all.

In our thirties, panicking about fertility, we try to settle down and have kids, but become increasingly depressed and anxious when we fail to bond with our spouse – and also often, tragically, with our own children.

If you don’t bond with your children, it’s really hard to enjoy parenting, and really easy to slip into depression.

Who we *love* is who we *are* – if we cannot love, we feel our identity slipping away – and so we dump our children in daycare and run back to work for a prefabricated identity and purpose.¹⁰

Things generally get even worse from there – we will talk about this in more data-driven detail later in this book.

This is not how we are designed.

This is not survivable.

We are designed to pair-bond with mutual values – good moral values, of course, not random preferences.

¹⁰ [Early Parent Child Bond and Stress](#)

Countless couples have dated for years without *ever discussing* whether they want children, or how to raise them. They have never negotiated the inevitable value divergence of two independent souls – and so are bonded – emotionally and legally – with no ability to navigate opposing ideas and approaches.

It can't be overemphasized how insane this would be in any other relationship.

Would you consider taking a job and signing a lifelong contract without ever discussing responsibilities or salary?

Would you consider having a child without even thinking about what your life will look like after you become a parent?

Would you sign up for a 40-year mortgage without any discussion of interest rates or payments?

Of course not.

People date for reasons of lust and enjoyment – fun and sex – utterly hijacking the purpose of dating and sexuality, which is to filter for value alignment, and then emotionally pair-bond with mutually compatible morals.

Since dating comes before children, any society which truly valued its children would start by reforming dating.

Dating is the process of looking for empirical evidence for stated value compatibility. Before going on a date, you talk about values. Once compatible values are established verbally, dating is the skeptical process of testing these claims against reality. If a man claims he wants to provide for his family, dating is the process of checking out his education, assets, income and potential in order to verify that he can in fact do so. If a woman claims she wants to resolve conflicts peacefully and reasonably, dating is the process of practicing disagreement, in order to establish the truth of her claim.

Power tends to corrupt humanity, and dating is the process of giving another person ever-escalating power over your own happiness and security. No one starts as a CEO – employees are given progressively more responsibility, to see if they can handle it productively.

Dating is the process of asking and answering questions about virtue – is the person on time? Is she thoughtful? Is he kind and courageous? Are they reliable? Does he or she consistently make my life better for being in it? Knowing the power of lust, do I enjoy this person's company in the absence of sexual opportunity? Is this person a good conversationalist? Does he or she have good social skills? How is this person around children? Does this person have a vice such as gambling, drinking – or a bad temper? Is this person conscientious?

Once emotional trust is established through empirical verification of value statements, pair-bonding and sexual activity commence.

Sex is the reward for value compatibility – truly putting the cart before the horse, modern dating attempts to use sex as a reward for proximity.

This leads to disaster – and disaster leads to lying.

Parents who divorce – and I am including couples who never married, since if you separate after having children, that equals a divorce – are not acting in the best interests of their children.

The data on this is very clear – we will discuss this in detail later.

Single mothers in particular often claim that their children are their highest value – which is empirically false, since treating children as your highest value would mean making *absolutely sure* you do not get pregnant with a man who will not stick around.

If a woman's partner abandons his children, there are only two possibilities:

1. He was a bad man to begin with.
2. He was a good man, but she drove him away.

If he was a bad man, the mother is responsible for choosing him as a father.

If he was a good man, the mother is responsible for driving him away.

In either outcome, what is best for her children is empirically *not* her highest priority.

Thus – if society wishes to even *begin* living up to its values of placing children first, and loving and treasuring the next generation, it will start by reforming dating to align the process of pair-bonding with the best and safest outcomes for children.

Marriage, welfare and divorce laws would change to promote stable and permanent marriages, since children are *by far* the safest and most secure in the protection of a stable marriage.

After conception, what is best for children?

Pair-bonding with the mother is best for children.

Breast-feeding is best for children.

For the first five years at least, a stay-at-home mother is best for children.¹¹

If we want to genuinely live up to our values of loving and nurturing children, women would stay home with their babies, love them and breast-feed them.¹²

Of course, women who stay home with their babies don't work in the economy or pay taxes, so this lowers gross domestic product and general economic activity – not to mention lowering tax receipts.

However, stay-at-home mothers also raise the wages of men by not competing with them.

¹¹ [The Importance of a Stay-At-Home-Mother](#)

¹² Again, there are edge-situations where it is either only possible or most desirable for the father to stay home, and the mother to work. But the vast majority of stay-at-home parents are mothers, and this book aims to do the greatest good, and so speaks to the majority.

If we were hyper-focused on economic activity, GDP and taxable income, we would encourage women to abandon their babies to daycare. This also creates additional tax receipts and economic activity from the daycare workers – as well as giving governments enormous power over early childhood.

Do we value our children, or lust for political power and moneymaking?

Do we want happy babies, or short-term higher bars on economic charts?

Of course, very few women make enough money to pay for taxes, expenses and daycare, and have much left over.¹³

The most tragic fact is that women are not abandoning their children for wealth, but for a pittance – or even a net loss.

The average mother makes only a few dollars an hour after expenses.

If we cared about our children, this would almost never happen.

Do we care about our children?

Well, as mentioned above, this is a value statement which needs to be verified.

Verification is easy.

We simply ask: what is best for children?

Then we see if society is doing that.

If society is *not* doing that – as it is empirically not at present – then that is either because society does not *want* to do what is best for children, or does not *know* what is best for children.

If society claims that it wants to do what is best for children, but empirically does *not* do what is best for children, it is essential to point out this hypocrisy.

If society claims that it wants to do what is best for children, but never examines what is in fact best for children, it is essential to point out this hypocrisy.

If I claim that I want to lose weight, but steadfastly avoid learning anything about weight loss – and get very angry at people who try to instruct me – it is safe to assume that I do not in fact *want* to lose weight.

The purpose of pointing out this hypocrisy is not to shame or change the hypocrites, but rather to prevent everyone from wasting their time trying to reform the hypocrites.

Open hypocrisy is a confession that no change is intended.

¹³ [Cost of Daycare](#), Pg 420.

If my friend claims that he wants to lose weight, but keeps gaining weight, and I point out that he is eating too much and avoiding exercise, and he yells at me and storms out, then it is clear that I should not waste any more time trying to help him.

My friend has no intention of actually losing weight – he just talks about it to feel better in some way, or to trap me in the same nihilistic frustration that he feels.

If a woman claims that she wants a stable, moral man, but keeps dating alcoholic losers, a good friend will point out this contradiction to her. If she ends up yelling at her friend and attacking him, it would be irrational for him to waste any more time trying to instruct her.

Of course, *some* people will change for the better when their hypocrisy is pointed out – this is wonderful, and worthy of further investment.

This tends to be the exception, however.

Look, we all do wrong from time to time – the wrongs we do tend to be recoverable when we can admit our fault, make restitution and work hard to prevent recurrence.

If a man cannot admit fault, he cannot prevent recurrence – and he will never make restitution, any more than you would happily pay a bill you never incurred.

If restitution has become impossible, fault will almost never be admitted.

If you hit someone's car, you can pay for the damage and repair the car.

If you hit someone's car and kill his wife, restitution is impossible.

If a parent snaps at a child, the parent can apologize, make restitution and work on anger management to ensure it does not happen again.

If a parent violently abuses a child for fifteen years straight, no restitution is possible, because the child can never be made whole again.

Restitution occurs when emotions become neutral.

If someone dings your car, pays to repair it, and throws in a few hundred dollars for your time, he has paid reasonable restitution.

If you had a terrible childhood, what would it take for you to be okay with what happened?

To put it another way, when we work for pay, we do things we probably wouldn't do without being paid. If we take a job for \$20 an hour, we know ahead of time that we will sacrifice an hour doing what someone else wants, in return for the \$20.

The restitution paid for us doing what our boss wants is \$20 an hour.

But things are very, very different with childhood.

To deeply understand why, try this...

Imagine you are floating above the world before you are born, a potential soul in orbit.

Now imagine that a screen pops up, and shows you your life from before you are born to about the age of 18.

You don't know what happens after that, you only know what happens over the course of your childhood.

You are then asked if you wish to take the gift of life.

If the childhood you see is full of abuse and tension and stress and terror, would you take this supposed "gift"?

How much would you have to be offered to accept being born, if being born meant that you would be abused for almost twenty years straight?

If you take an unpleasant job for \$20 an hour, you are agreeing ahead of time to do something you don't really want to do in return for the \$20.

If you had a bad childhood, and were given the choice before being born of whether to accept the gift of life or not, what would you choose?

If you would *not* choose to live – knowing ahead of time that you would be subjected to 18 years of abuse – then clearly no restitution is possible.

Your abusers can *never* make it right.

They are unforgiveable.

If you find the above analogy too mystical for your tastes, we can always apply it to your present life instead.

If someone knocked on your door today – interrupting this essential reading of course – and made you the following offer, would you accept?

"Hello there! How much would I have to pay you in order to surrender yourself to someone else's control, and be abused for the next 18 years?"

I can't think that any sane person would name any amount.

In fact, most people pay taxes and obey the laws so they don't get thrown in jail, where they will doubtless be abused for months, years or decades.

Since there is no amount of money that you would take to surrender to somebody else's control and abuse for the next 18 years – and you had an abusive childhood – then you can never receive restitution for your tragic and violent history.

A person who refuses to apologize and make restitution cannot be forgiven – since forgiveness is earned, not granted.

In the same way, no one can be forgiven *whose wrongdoing is beyond restitution*.

Earlier, I talked about how virtues that served those in power were praised, while the exact same virtues that harmed the interests of those in power were condemned – well, forgiveness follows exactly the same pattern.

As a child, if you made a mistake, and were punished, then clearly you were not forgiven!

Punishment was the ideal, not forgiveness.

On the other hand, when you grow up and confront your parents for any of the wrongs they did to you, ah, how things abruptly reverse!

Now, suddenly *forgiveness* is the ideal, not *punishment*!

Do you remember?

If you failed to study for a test as a child, then you were not forgiven, but rather punished – you received a failing grade, and were probably yelled at, spanked or confined to your room.

This happens to billions of children when they are seven, eight or nine years of age.

Parents will very often get angry at children who come to them at the last minute, saying that there is some school project that they need parental time and resources to finish. Perhaps it is practice for a spelling bee, or materials for a science project, or a stack of permission slips to be signed.

We all know what parents say...

“You’ve known this has been coming for *weeks*, why are you bringing it to me *now*?”

To extract the principle – which is the job of philosophy of course – we would say that the essence of their criticism is this:

Failing to prepare for known deadlines is a punishable offense!

So – parents get angry when children fail to prepare ahead of time for known deadlines.

They *punish* those children!

It is part of the moral madness of society – not just our own, of course, but all across the world, all throughout history – that we hold children to *infinitely higher moral standards than adults*.

Actually, it’s far worse than that.

Refusing to forgive children for their lack of preparation is a *virtue* – refusing to forgive *adults* for their lack of preparation is a stone evil vice, deserving of condemnation and ostracism!

Do you see?

Punishing children for failing to prepare is *good* – punishing *adults* for failing to prepare is *evil*!

You think I exaggerate?

Deep down, you know that I do not.

From the time that people first learn how babies are made – to the time that they actually *make* a baby – parents have *years* to learn how to parent best.

Except in fundamentalist circles, most parenting books written since the end of the Second World War – almost three generations by now – have discouraged hitting children.

Most parenting books discourage yelling at children, calling children abusive names – and encourage parents to reason positively with their children, and spend lots of time with their children, so that the children feel loved and treasured.

People have many, many years to study best practices in parenting before having children.

Quick question – which do you think is more important – a grade 7 spelling bee, or peaceful and healthy parenting practices?

Is it more important to be adequately prepared for a science project when you are 11 years old – or to research whether violence and aggression should be used against your own helpless and dependent children?

You see how this goes?

Who should be held more morally accountable – a child whose brain is still a decade or more away from final maturity – or a fully-grown adult?

At the moment, society fully believes that 40-year-old adults should *never* be punished for their failures to prepare for the most important test of life – *parenting* – while an eight-year-old child *should* be punished for failing to prepare for an inconsequential make-work school quiz.

Parents who failed to crack a book about parenting – well, they should *never* be punished for any of their inevitable failings!

A nine-year-old girl who forgets about an upcoming quiz – well, *she* gets an ‘F’!

A child who fails to prepare for an inconsequential test must be punished – and parents who fail to punish are *negligent*, prone to producing entitled brats to the detriment of society as a whole!

However, parents who failed to prepare for parenting – the most important moral task of mankind – must *never* be punished, but rather eternally forgiven!

It’s one thing for parents to demand forgiveness for their failure to prepare – it’s quite another thing for parents who regularly punished little children for *their* failure to prepare for inconsequential tasks to later aggressively demand forgiveness for their own failures to prepare for their most important task – moral parenting.

If a child fails to prepare for a test, and does very badly – does that child get to use the excuse “Well, you can’t get too mad at me, because I did the best I could with the knowledge I had!”

No, of course not.

If a man who can’t drive steals a car, then crashes it into a schoolyard – does he get to escape punishment by saying: “Hey, I did the best I could with the knowledge I had at the time!”

He does not.

The child who fails is told that it was *his* responsibility to get the knowledge before the test – and if he failed to get that knowledge, he cannot claim his lack of knowledge as an excuse for failing!

We are all constantly told: “Ignorance of the law is no excuse!”

Yet parents who never learned anything about good parenting practices constantly claim that they *did the best they could with the knowledge they had!*

Tax systems are notoriously complicated, but failure to follow all of the myriad and complex laws is no excuse – you get punished, fined and prosecuted anyway!

Do you see it now?

Children are subjected to the very highest moral standards in society – but when parents are subjected to those same moral standards – the same standards they inflicted on their children – they are *outraged!*

If an adult victim of child abuse says to his parents: “You yelled at me, hit me, called me names – that was really bad! Why didn’t you read any books about parenting, or consult any experts, or go to therapy, before becoming a parent? Why were you so *unprepared?*”

First of all, naturally, the parents will deny, minimize and gaslight – but if these strategies fail, the parents will fall back on the aggressive demand for forgiveness by saying that parenting is really hard, that they did the best they could – and that their own childhoods were bad, so it was hard for them to be good parents.

Again, philosophically, we have to extract the core moral principles from these excuses, to see if they can be applied universally – or are accepted at all, if so applied.

“Parenting is really hard!”

Okay, is it acceptable for a child to fail a math test because, according to the child, math is really hard?

No, of course not – the child will be told that he has to work even harder, because math doesn’t come quite as easily.

“We did the best we could with the knowledge we had!”

Okay, so is it acceptable for a child who fails a test to say that he did the best could with the knowledge he had?

No, of course not – the child will be told that he was responsible for failing to study the necessary facts in preparation for the test.

“I had a bad childhood, so it was tougher for me to be a good parent!”

Okay, is it acceptable for a child who fails a math test to say that he always found math tough, and he had a bad teacher when he was younger, so clearly it’s fine for him to fail the test?

Of course not.

If a parent tries to help his child study for a math test – and then the child fails that math test – is it an acceptable excuse for the child to say that the parent was a bad tutor?

No, of course not.

Parents will say: “Well, if you know that you’re not great at math, then you need to study extra hard to make up for that. Being bad at something is no excuse for not studying – in fact, you are even more responsible for failing to study, since you knew ahead of time that you were bad at the subject.”

You see how this goes?

If a child says that he failed the test because it’s too hard for him to study when he has his phone in his room, because the phone is too distracting – what do his parents reply?

“Come on – if you knew ahead of time that having your phone in your room made studying too difficult – then clearly you should have not kept your phone in your room! If you know about a problem ahead of time, you are all the more responsible for fixing the effects of that problem! If you know that you burn easily, you are all the more responsible for putting on sunscreen! You can’t say – well, I got a really bad sunburn because I know that I burn easily, and I didn’t put on any sunscreen!”

So, this is the principle – *if you know ahead of time about a particular weakness, you are even **more** responsible for working even harder to achieve your goal!*

If a child claims that he is going to watch a movie – and study for his math test at the same time – no one will believe that is possible.

It’s clear that you cannot study for a math test while also watching a movie – so when he fails the math test, the boy cannot claim that his knowledge was deficient because he was watching a movie while trying to study.

What will his parents say?

We all know!

“Well, if you *know* that you can’t study while watching a movie, you are responsible for failing the test!”

If a mother knows that she had a bad childhood, and that this will negatively affect her parenting, then she is *fully responsible for overcoming her problems*.

If a man knows that every time he hangs out with a particular friend, he gets falling-down drunk – then choosing to hang out with that friend is also choosing to get falling-down drunk.

He can’t say: “Well, I’m not responsible for getting falling-down drunk, because I was hanging out with my *friend!*”

If a man compulsively gambles every time he goes to a casino, then he can’t claim that he had no choice to gamble, because he was at the casino!

If we know cause and effect, then we cannot claim to have no responsibility for the effect.

If a boy knows that he is too distracted by his phone to study effectively, then he is responsible for failing to study effectively – because he decides to keep his phone in his room.

If we held parents to the same standards that they hold their children to, peaceful parenting would have already been achieved!

However, as usual, it's even worse than that!

Children and Control

In our society, children are not only punished for actions which adults demand forgiveness for – children are punished for things *entirely beyond their control!*

Imagine two children: Bob and Sally.

Sally has wonderful, educated parents who encourage reading, discuss books with her, and make sure that the house she lives in is conducive to reading, studying and writing.

Bob, on the other hand, lives in a house of violence and chaos. His parents don't read, and mock him for opening a book. Drunken parties constantly interrupt him, and prevent him from getting a good night's sleep.

Sally and Bob are both judged by the same standards on tests.

Bob will often fail, while Sally will get straight A's.

Obviously, Bob is not responsible for his family situation – but he is still punished for it!

Sally did not earn her good fortune, but is constantly rewarded for it.

Children who get good food are judged by the same standards as children who are fed junk food on a daily basis.

By doing this, we are saying to the children: "You will be rewarded and punished for things utterly beyond your control!"

This same society will absolutely condemn adult children who criticize abusive parents.

Parents are in control of the household – but must never be punished for their bad choices.

Children have no control over the household – but must always be punished for their parents' bad choices.

Parents must never be punished for what they themselves choose – but helpless children must always be punished for what their parents choose!

Are you beginning to truly see what I mean about the deeply insane moral reversals in our society?

Are you beginning to understand the deep, widespread and systematic – and institutional – bigotry of *childism*?

Childism

In many ways, children can be thought of as slaves.

Slaves do not choose who has power over them – neither do children.

Slaves are provided with food, shelter and healthcare – as are children.

Slaves are not allowed to talk back, or punish their masters – neither are children.

Slaves can be punished at the whim of their owners – but the slaves can never hold their owners accountable for anything!

Same goes for children.

For a master to aggress against his slave is fully acceptable – for a slave to aggress against his master is absolutely unacceptable.

Slaves are not free to leave, and are subject to the random rules of their masters.

Same with children.

In fact, the relationship between master and slave is far more honest, because masters at least do not say that the entire purpose of human society is to love, praise and elevate the slaves.

Society does not cry out that the slaves are the most important members of society, that the slaves must be respected and treasured, that the slaves are the future, and that society lives for the sake of the slaves, etc.

Historically, slaves got to keep well over half of what they produced – children are born into perpetual debt, greater than their lifetime income!

No, the slaves are owned and beaten and bought and sold, and treated as human chattel and livestock – without moral falsehood, without sentimentality, without hypocrisy – through the brute exercise of violent power.

And slaves who escape to safer countries are praised for their courage – not ostracized and attacked for their lack of gratitude!

A slave who makes a mistake is punished – a master who mistakenly punishes must be forgiven.

A slave who is beaten is given little sympathy, because clearly he brought the beating on himself, through disobedience or neglect or malice or mistakes.

When we look back through the bloody tunnels of time – and see slaves being punished for the sins of their masters, we recoil in moral horror.

A slaveowner driving a carriage, who crashes into someone – and then blames his slave, saying that the *slave* was driving – what would we think of such a monster?

We would say that it was terrible that the master was blaming the slave for the mistakes of the master!

If we saw the master lecturing the slave on the need to take responsibility for his actions, we would be revolted by this level of hypocrisy!

If the slave protested, saying that he was not in fact driving the carriage, and that it was the master who had to take responsibility for his own actions, would we support the master, or the slave?

Currently, in society as it stands – and as society has always stood – with regards to children, we always support the master, never the slave.

If a master hits his slave, it is always the slave's fault, we say.

If the slave gets free of an abusive master, we attack the slave for failing to forgive the master – who was just doing the best he could with the knowledge he had – and had been raised with slavery, and so is not responsible for being a slaveowner!

The master is always praised for refusing to forgive the slave – but the slave is always attacked for refusing to forgive the master.

Parents are praised for punishing their children – but adult children are always attacked for holding their parents responsible for their abuses.

The way we look at slavery in the past, the future will look at most parenting in the present.

It will be even worse for us, though – because we regularly hold people in the past accountable for their moral misdeeds – while regularly excusing the greatest violations of universal ethics in our own lives, in the present, in our own *houses*.

We condemn the historical slaveowner – while neglecting, beating and verbally abusing our own children.

We condemn the slaveowner for dehumanizing those under his control – while verbally abusing and denigrating our own children.

We condemn the slaveowner for preventing his slaves from becoming educated – while throwing our own children into brain-deadening Gulags for 16,000 hours.

We condemn the slaveowner for attacking any slaves who fought back, or spoke back – or who escaped, or fought for the freedoms of all slaves – while endlessly attacking moral philosophers who speak up for the moral rights of children.

We see how good men and women throughout history were attacked for saying and doing the right thing – but then mindlessly attack good people in the present for speaking up for the rights of the abused.

We have *no excuses* anymore!

We either look in the mirror and see the true face of evil – or we pretend we are angels, thus imagining our children are devils, and becoming worse and worse thereby.

There are no rights without children's rights.

We have no morality unless we apply it to children first – and always!

We have no honour if we punish helpless children for the same actions that we – as adults – demand forgiveness for.

We have no integrity if we bury our children in debt in order to satisfy our own political material greed.

We condemn ancient cultures for sacrificing their children to irrational gods – but we sacrifice our children to the irrational mob.

We attack our own children, claiming an utter lack of knowledge about how to parent peacefully.

But this is a complete and total lie – everyone knows everything about how to parent peacefully!

You don't believe this?

I can prove it very quickly!

Parenting in the Media

For many decades, child abuse has been virtually absent from popular media. If child abuse ever *was* shown, it was utterly condemned.

The vast majority of parents hit their children – if they are truly comfortable with this, *why is it never portrayed in popular family shows?*

We can think of countless sitcoms – certainly from the Second World War onwards – where parents have conflicts with their children.

Did Fred McMurray beat his children in the 1950s sitcom “My Three Sons”?

Of course not – he reasoned with them.

Family Ties, Eight Is Enough, Leave It to Beaver, Wait Till Your Father Gets Home, The Cosby Show, Full House, Happy Days, Growing Pains, Who's the Boss?, Diff'rent Strokes, The Facts of Life, Silver Spoons, Mr. Belvedere, Saved by the Bell – all these shows modelled peaceful parenting for many hours a week – and were watched by *billions* of parents over the decades.¹⁴

Can parents who avidly consume thousands of hours of edifying examples of peaceful parenting really claim to have *no idea* what it is?

Imagine this...

Imagine the reaction if, in one of these sitcoms, a child who made a mistake, or who disagreed with – or disobeyed – her parents – was dragged over her parent's knee and soundly beaten.

Imagine if a child who came home late was verbally abused – yelled at, called names etc.

Can you imagine the complaints that would pour into the network, the regulatory agencies – perhaps even law enforcement itself?

Endless raging articles would be published – networks, actors and writers would all be ostracized and boycotted.

Do you see the problem here?

Parents justify their own attacks on their children by claiming that such parental punishments are morally good – well, if this is the case, why would they be so outraged when seeing their own behaviour reflected back on the television screen?

I mean, parents like it when violence is used to punish bad guys in movies, right?

¹⁴ Occasionally, aggression was suggested – such as when Andy Griffith suggested taking a violent child who wanted to put his father in jail to get his bike back out to the ‘woodshed’ – but it was never shown on screen, and it was always in the most extreme situations.

I'm sure you are well aware that people who create sitcoms and other forms of entertainment are constantly looking for what pleases audiences the most.

Without a doubt, many sitcom scenarios with harsh parenting were tested with various audiences.

Countless groups were gathered together and asked to evaluate potential scenes, television executives standing by with clipboards to record the test audience's reactions – and every single time, the test audience members recoiled from accurate portrayals of most parenting – their *own* parenting – claiming bottomless offense and upset.

That's *why* we don't see children being hit or yelled at on television.

Isn't this strange?

We don't see children being hit or yelled at on television because it horrifies people. It enrages and angers them, and they *never* want to see it – even though most of them *do* it, every day!

If a man works out every day, why would he be outraged to see a character working out on a comedy show?

Wouldn't he be *happy* that his healthy lifestyle was being promoted?

If yelling at and hitting children is good and right and proper, why don't parents ever want to see it in movies and on television?

Since when do people recoil from seeing morally good heroism in their entertainment?

Doesn't most entertainment exist for the sake of portraying moral heroism in a positive light?

I mean, we don't see Superman joining a child trafficking gang, or Batman teaming up with the Joker to take out Commissioner Gordon.

We don't see Wolverine attacking schoolyards, or setting mass murderers free from prison.

No, we want to see moral heroism reflected back to us.

In particular, we want to see our *own* moral heroism reflected back to us!

If hitting children and yelling at children is so good and right and proper and moral and necessary for the salvation of society – why do we *never* see it in popular entertainment?

Or, on the occasions that we do see it, why is it always a *villain* doing these terrible things?

It gets more and more bizarre, the more that you think about it.

Since parents on television and in movies do not yell at or hit their children, they end up reasoning with their children in a positive and patient manner.

Billions of parents the whole world over have watched thousands of hours of detailed depictions of how to parent peacefully.

It's not foreign or unknown – remember, I said that earlier?

Peaceful parenting is *exactly* what people tune in to watch!

They know exactly what it is – and how to practice it!

And, because they tune in to see it – and praise it – and *never* want to see their own aggressive parenting – everyone knows exactly how good and right and proper and moral it is to reason with your children, rather than yell at them, call them names and hit them.

Even with very little children, television parents are sweet and reasonable and patient – they do not hit them, yell at them – or grab them physically and push them down on the stairs in a “timeout.”

Do you understand?

None of it seems to make the slightest sense!

Why do parents recoil from the aggressive parenting they claim is so moral and necessary?

This would be like a policeman who claims that his work is essential for society to function being horrified at seeing a policeman arrest a criminal on television.

Would a doctor who believes in vaccines be appalled at seeing a television doctor administer a vaccine?

It’s almost beyond crazy...

Every good parent in movies and television is a peaceful parent.

This is because everyone wants to see peaceful parenting on the screen.

Good parents in movies and television do not yell at, hit or otherwise abuse their children.

This is because everyone recoils from abuse against children.

And then so many of them get up from the couch and abuse their children.

People watch thousands of hours of peaceful parenting on the screen – and then claim that they have no knowledge of how to do anything better.

People demand that on-screen parents reason with their children, and never abuse them – and then claim that they had no choice but to yell at and hit their children, because they didn’t know any better, and had no way of *knowing* any better!

The world is an asylum because it pretends to be sane.

If parents have no knowledge of better parenting, why do they always demand to see better parenting on television, and would be horrified if their own parenting is accurately depicted on the screen?

Because...

Because they *know*.

You can’t consistently demand something decade after decade – and oppose any deviation – and then claim to have no knowledge of that thing!

(Part of the reason why good parenting is so consistently shown on television – apart from appealing to the horrified vanity of parental abusers – is to make the victims of child abuse feel more alone, as if everyone else is having an infinitely better time than they are.)

Peaceful Parenting Media Training

One central question – *the* central question – is why parents who claim that aggressive parenting is good parenting *never* want to see aggressive parenting in the shows they watch.

It can't be because people don't like seeing conflict in art – otherwise there would be no shootouts, no war movies, no torture scenes – no fighting – verbally or physically – between spouses, friends, business partners, you name it. The entire basis of art is conflict – man versus man, man versus nature – man versus himself. Included in man versus man is parents versus children.

So – it's not *that*!

Every show that involves children also involves disagreements between parents and their offspring. If people genuinely believed that reasoning with children leads to disaster – then surely they would rail against shows where parents merely reasoned with their children.

How would a group of nutritionists respond to endless shows that promoted junk food – especially to kids?

Wouldn't they be outraged?

Wouldn't they prefer shows that promoted feeding children healthy meals?

Now, imagine that same exact group of nutritionists also constantly enjoying shows promoting junk food to kids – and sending endless raging letters to any and all authorities should a child ever be shown getting within 10 feet of a salad!

Would that not be utterly incomprehensible?

Wouldn't we say to these nutritionists: "Wait a minute – you have dedicated your lives to promoting healthy eating – why do you love shows promoting junk food, and rage against the shows that promote the very healthy eating you claim is so essential to human health and happiness?"

But, as usual, it's even worse than that.

Nutritious eating – at least for adults – is a matter of health, not morality.

Imagine a prominent group of feminists who endlessly and happily consumed media depicting women being humiliated and beaten – and wrote endless letters of rage and complaints to any and all authorities should a show ever reach the public depicting women being treated with dignity and respect...

If parents truly believe that reasoning with children – instead of aggressing against them – produces entitled brats, undermining the security and safety of society – then those parents should rail against any and all shows that promote the practice of reasoning with children!

A group solely focused on promoting healthy consent for sexual activity should not endlessly praise shows depicting sexual assault as comedy – and violently oppose any and all shows depicting healthy consent.

Again, it's almost incomprehensible.

Aggressive parents do not just believe that aggression is good for their *own* family – they believe it is good for *all* families, for society as a whole – and that reasoning with children is not just bad for their own family – but is bad for *all* families – and for society as a whole!

To them, aggressive parenting is not a mistake, or an accident, or a bad thing – it is a good thing, infinitely superior to the alternative, which produces spoiled entitled brats with no sense of boundaries or respect for authority.

How many people who genuinely claim to care for children would want to see practices advocated on television that would result in the maiming and death of children?

Imagine comedies that showed children having a great time crossing high railway bridges in the middle of the night, and jumping away from onrushing trains.

Imagine programs showing children laughing while grabbing at poisonous snakes – and the children who avoided such dangers being laughed at, mocked, ostracized – and coming to very bad ends indeed.

Imagine seeing a show that portrayed children having great fun daring each other to cross highways at night.

Come on!

Parents would *rail* against the promotion of such dangerous activities!

Remember – aggressive parents genuinely believe that children *need* to be hit and controlled, so that they don't get injured or killed – the two inevitable examples are a child who gets terrible burns by grabbing a pot of boiling water, and a child running towards a busy road.

The only way to prevent children from receiving terrible injuries – or being killed – is to aggress against them by yelling, hitting, punishing and restraining them.

Thus, shows which promote only *reasoning* with children are exposing children to injury, maiming and death!

Aggression against children saves their lives – reasoning with children gets them maimed and killed.

By cheering on shows that promote reasoning with children, aggressive parents are cheering on practices which they truly believe lead to children getting maimed and killed – and also which lead children to become selfish, entitled adults who undermine and destroy society.

Again, this is incomprehensible.

Almost...

But nothing in the human mind escapes philosophy.

Reasoning in Media – The Answer

So – what on earth is going on?

Why would parents give time and money to advertisers on shows that promote child injury and death – and the destruction of their entire society?

Why would aggressive parents rail against shows that promote the very parenting practices they claim are necessary to keep children safe and happy – and keep society functional and sustainable?

This would be like an army showing endless training videos to new recruits instructing them on how to reason and negotiate with their opponents – and filing legal complaints against any instructor who tried to teach the new soldiers how to actually use a weapon.

Clearly, this would be an army that was setting up its recruits to get killed in combat.

We can clearly see the true insanity of any group that claims to dedicate itself to promoting 'X' – but which only promotes and consumes material advocating for the opposite of 'x' – and rails against any material that actually promotes 'x.'

What is the answer to this riddle?

In a movie called "The Remains of the Day," a harsh, strict and emotionally cold butler is revealed to have a soft spot for reading sappy romantic novels.

In this fairly Jungian approach to psychology, the exterior shell of the personality is a reactive response to an unacceptable emotional core.

In the movie "American Beauty," a violent neighbour who hates homosexuals is revealed to be secretly gay himself – he really hates the gay part of himself, but projects that hatred onto homosexuals in the world.

Earlier, I talked about the unconscious and unspoken "moral reversal."

To believe that something is moral – and also believe that the opposite of that thing is also moral – requires the creation of at least two personalities that have no contact with each other.

The psychological concept of ambivalence describes two opposing forces in the personality. A woman might love dating bad boys, but knows that a good man would be far better for her.

An addict both needs and hates his own addiction.

When a boy first asks out a girl, he feels a combination of desire and fear – the desire draws him to her, the fear is trying to keep him away from the pain of rejection.

Having opposing feelings is natural in life.

So...

In parents, there are usually two personalities – one aggressive, and one reasonable.

The *reasonable* personality tries talking to children – if the children don't listen, the *aggressive* personality takes over.

It's the good cop/bad cop switch so often seen in television, movies – and reality, no doubt.

If a woman tries reasoning with an abusive husband, but he becomes increasingly aggressive – she will probably call the police, and turn over her self-defense to them, and their capacity for aggression.

Parents use the same process with their children.

“If you won’t listen to me, then clearly you have to be forcefully controlled!”

In other words, the aggression is the result of the child *not* listening to the parent.

From the children’s standpoint, the fact that aggression will be deployed if the child doesn’t listen means that the “listening” is just a charade, a farce.

It’s similar to a thug cornering you in a dark alley and demanding that you give him your wallet – while pointing a gun at you.

Of course, he’s just “asking” for your wallet – but his verbal request is backed up by a very real gun that could end you if you do not comply.

Since potential violence is present in the interaction, nothing the thug says is reasonable. The gun is doing the real talking – he is just mouthing the words.

Or, to put it another way, the thug is telling you the purpose of the gun, which is to get you to comply with his verbal commands.

Parents perfectly willing to resort to aggression are never in fact “reasoning” with their children – because the aggression is always part of the equation.

You can never “reason” with someone if the result of her failing to agree with you is violence.

A schoolyard bully with his fist raised is not “requesting” the smaller child’s lunch money.

Sure, he’s only speaking words – but the raised fist is the essence of the interaction.

A child who knows he could be hit is never being “reasoned with.”

The “nice” parent is one personality – the *aggressive* parent is another – and they do not connect with each other.

Victims of child abuse constantly note that their parents are fully capable of restraining their abusive habits in the presence of external authority or social repercussions.

Children who are beaten at home are never beaten at the mall, or in front of teachers or policeman or priests or extended family.

Parents are fully able to restrain their aggression when the consequences of that aggression would be negative to them – they wait until they get home, and then they beat their children.

The peaceful parent reigns supreme in social situations – the aggressive parent comes out in the dark, behind closed doors.

The peaceful parent personality loves watching sitcoms where families laugh together, and parents never yell or hit, and children listen with good humour and respect.

If a parent on television were to suddenly haul off and hit a child for disagreeing with her, the peaceful parent would see the effects of abuse without the personality transitioning to the aggressive parent. The peaceful parent would see the actions of the aggressive parent without the dissociating provocation of a real disagreeable child in the vicinity.

We have often seen shows where a mass murderer has a second personality – a sweet mild-mannered innocent character who is horrified by the actions of the murderous personality.

The *aggressive parent* personality is motivated by the belief that children owe obedience – and if children do not pay what they owe, they can be aggressed against.

However, the switch from the *peaceful parent* to the *aggressive parent* requires a real disagreeing child in the vicinity.

How you feel about what you watch on screen is often the complete opposite of what you would feel in real life.

People enjoy listening to true crime podcasts – but would distinctly *not* enjoy being the victim of those crimes in their real lives.

Women in particular made the abusive pornographic novel “50 Shades of Grey” the biggest selling book in human history – much to the despair of more literary authors – but most of them would be appalled to be beaten during sex in real life.

The aggressive parent personality runs on the principle that “my own children must be aggressed against if they defy me.”

However, when watching a show on television, child actors do not fall into the category of “my own real children disobeying me.”

Thus the tripwire for the aggressive personality is not triggered.

As a result, watching a television parent suddenly hit a television child gives the peaceful parent personality a sudden and unfiltered glimpse of the aggressive parent personality.

Imagine how horrified you would be if you suddenly received irrefutable proof that you were a mass murderer. Imagine that someone sent you video footage of you sleepwalking and sleep-killing in the middle of the night.

I’m sure that you, a most moral and mild-mannered reader, would be utterly appalled, shocked and horrified to the depths of your very soul to find out that you had an unknown second personality that did great evil in the world.

You would probably feel great rage against the person who exposed your evils to you.

Of course, as a moral and good reader, I’m sure that you would want to turn yourself in, get help, and make sure that you didn’t kill anyone else while sleepwalking in the middle of the night.

The existence of this second murderous personality would be so deeply shocking to you that it would destabilize and destroy your entire life, your entire conception of yourself.

To bring the analogy closer to home, imagine that you had a dog, and could never understand why your dog kept getting more and more aggressive, even though you loved and petted that dog constantly.

Imagine you installed home security cameras inside your house, and then saw yourself terrorizing and beating your dog in the middle of the night – while having no memory of this whatsoever in the morning.

Imagine how unbelievably destabilizing it would be to suddenly realize that – although you thought every part of you loved this dog – that you are inhabited by a kind of midnight demon who brutalized and tortured a helpless and defenseless animal.

Before you knew all of this, you probably enjoyed watching videos of dog owners playing with their pets – and would be utterly shocked and appalled to see videos of pet owners torturing their dogs.

You would be incredibly angry that you had been exposed to these ghastly abusive images, and would report them to the social media company, or perhaps even to the authorities.

In the classic movie “Manchurian Candidate,” a man is programmed to murder when he hears a particular sequence of words. He goes into a psychological fugue state – the summoning of another personality that entirely eclipses his regular self – commits his murder, escapes the scene, and then has no idea what he actually did.

The universal absolute of the moral reversal creates two distinct and opposing personalities that never communicate with each other – because if they *did* communicate, the contradiction would be exposed, and possibly efforts to reconcile this contradiction would be undertaken.

If the peaceful parent personality suddenly encounters depictions of the aggressive parent personality, the personality as a whole is deeply destabilized. If the peaceful parent personality suddenly sees on television the aggressive parent personality – the aggressive parent personality within the mind recoils at being exposed – just as a bank robber will punch or shoot a security guard who catches him in the act.

The powers that run this world never want us to try to reconcile these moral reversals – because they rely on these moral reversals in order to maintain their power.

In the ancient world, when Alexander the Great captured a pirate and demanded to know why he used violence to prey upon others on the high seas – the pirate replied that he was only called a pirate because he had only one ship – if he had more ships, he would be called a Navy – as Alexander the Great called his own gang of violent seagoers.

In the novel “Crime and Punishment,” the petty thief and murderer demands to know why Napoleon – who killed millions – is celebrated as a great historical figure, while the murderer who killed only two is imprisoned.

Ah – this is running a bloody finger along the bladed edge of the moral reversal.

In the classic novel “The Godfather” – an organized crime boss admits that his organization kills people – but compares their own paltry death count to the millions murdered by political leaders in wartime.

The Joker in “The Dark Knight” says that people recoil from murder in their city, while celebrating mass murder in a foreign country under the guise of “war,” since the latter is part of a plan they accept, while the former is not.

We all hate murderers, but love soldiers.

We fear and punish those who kill *without* permission – but praise and reward those who kill *with* permission.

Moral reversal.

Of course, there are antiwar activists – pacifists often – but they tend to want further expansions of government power in the realm of social programs and income redistribution – just different coercive actions.

We cannot genuinely oppose violence because we hide from ourselves how much we love violence, commit violence, justify violence, and advocate for the expansion of violence.

We cannot oppose the predations of the elites because we prey on our own children.

We cannot reduce the violence in the world until we confront the violence in ourselves.

An aggressive parent who sees her own behaviour accurately depicted on television rails against that depiction, because it holds a mirror up to her own actions, which she cannot accept.

She empathizes infinitely more with a child actor on television than the offspring of her own body – her own *children*.

It is unacceptable and evil to hit a child on television – while moral and necessary to hit her own child in real life.

It is morally wrong for a television parent to scream at a television child – but it is morally necessary for her to verbally abuse her own children, because apparently they *just don't listen*.

The world is an asylum founded on unconscious moral contradictions.

Here's a tip though.

It's free, like this whole book.

If you would hate and loathe seeing your own parenting depicted on television, maybe don't do it at home.

If it's appalling to see a pretend parent pretending to hit a pretend child on television, maybe don't really hit your own real child in your own house.

It would be crazy to smash a mirror for accurately showing your obesity.

The problem is not in the mirror, but in yourself.

The camera does not add 10 pounds.

That's just how you look.

You must accept it in order to change.

In order to save the world.

In order to protect your children from yourself.

The Evolution of Abuse

Imagine having to use the same communications technology your grandfather used.

Rotary dial phones, switchboard operators – the telegraph system, hand-written letters sent through snail mail...

What effect would these restrictions have on, say, your business career?

How about hanging out with friends?

What about your dating life?

It would be almost impossible to navigate the modern world using communications technology from just a generation or two ago.

Why is this important?

Well...

There is no absolute or objective reason why child abuse tends to replicate through the generations.

There is no reason why a boy raised in violence tends to become more violent – this is evolution, not physics.

Why does a girl raised without a father menstruate earlier, and tend to be more promiscuous?^{15 16}

Why do people who were abused tend to abuse their own children?

These are not facts of the universe like gravity and radiation – these are all subject to the whittling whims of evolutionary pressures.

Let us unpack the reasons why, so we can have more compassion for the present.

It's almost impossible in our ever-changing modern world to understand just how repetitive the experiences of prior generations were.

Depending on how it is measured, humanity is about 150,000 years old – but until a little over a century ago, going to a doctor usually meant you got *more* sick.

Until a few hundred years ago, human beings didn't even know the shape of the solar system.

The Internet is only forty years old.

Modern cell phones are only two decades old.

The rate of change we experience in the modern world is inconceivable to anyone born even 100 years ago.

¹⁵ [Promiscuity](#)

¹⁶ [Father Absence and Earlier Menstruation](#)

These massive changes are contained on the whole in less than a single generation – compared to the 5,000 generations that came before.

We have evolved mental and emotional systems designed for unchanging repetition – which are striving to navigate a truly kaleidoscopic pace of constant change.

The modern world, in a very real sense, is an unending drug trip.

Sexual Success

When you are born, you are in the presence of two people who have successfully reproduced.

They are your templates for sexual success.

Given that human beings generally evolved in small tribes with fixed beliefs, to succeed in dating and mating, you had to do what your father did, because the females that surrounded you would all be just like your mother.

If your father beat you, that signaled to you that the women in your tribe were eager to mate with men who beat their children.

If your mother screamed at you, that meant that the men of the tribe were happy to have children with women who screamed at their children.

Forget your happiness for a moment – even forget morality, since we are talking about prehistory.

Remember, your genes don't particularly care about your happiness – all they care about is their own reproduction.

If happiness serves reproduction, sure, be happy!

If unhappiness serves reproduction, go be unhappy – just breed!

To put it another way, men and women who pursued happiness at the expense of genetic reproduction reproduced far less than those who pursued genetic reproduction even at the expense of happiness.

You are designed to *breed*, not to be happy.

Of course, to the degree that happiness *helps* your breeding success, it is encouraged – think of the orgasm.

But any happiness that interferes with your breeding success will be ruthlessly whittled out of the gene pool over time.

What we call “love” serves the genes, not morality or our own personal happiness.

Human pair-bonding exists because it raises the chances of our offspring growing to an age where they can successfully reproduce.

Imagine you are a boy in a primitive tribe.

Your father beats you, your mother screams at you – but let's say that you find this highly objectionable, and grow up telling every potential mate that you intend to raise your children peacefully.

Unfortunately, everyone else in the tribe is a big fan of aggressive parenting.

So – who will mate with you?

The reason women will shy away from mating with you – aside from the obvious imprinted habits from their own parents – is because if tribal members prefer aggressive parenting, but you raise your children peacefully, then your kids will face greater obstacles to reproductive success than if you raise them aggressively.

You would in fact be teaching your offspring an entirely different language – a language which no one else in the tribe speaks.

If you went to live in Japan, and never learned Japanese – and never met anyone who spoke anything other than Japanese – what would your reproductive odds be?

You don't need to be Asian to understand that they would be very, very low – virtually impossible, really.

If you do the opposite of what your parents did, you will very likely end up with the opposite outcomes – since your parents reproduced, you will *not* reproduce, and the genes that influence this behaviour will end with you.

Parental Compliance

The same pressure applies to the question of whether or not to comply with your parents.

Throughout most of our evolution, resources were scarce, predators were everywhere, and competition was fierce.

At least half of children died before the age of five, which meant that parents sometimes had to choose to withhold scarce resources from sickly children.

If you have five children, and one of them is weak and sickly – but you don't have enough food for all of them – well, we all know what happens to the weak and sickly child.

Again, we're not talking about morality at this point – just simple evolutionary pressures.

If you have a child who defies you at every turn, fighting you constantly and opposing everything you say, you will be unable to implant your cultural and reproductive customs and habits in that child.

If it is the custom in your tribe for the males to spend two weeks doing mating dances in front of potential mates – but you have a son who opposes everything you try to teach him – then he will be an evolutionary dead end, and there's no point spending a lot of time and effort keeping him alive.

Of course, countless children were born throughout human history with rebellious streaks, who fought and opposed their parents – even as toddlers – and what happened to them?

Well, their parents were just a little bit slower to rescue them from predators – a little bit more hesitant to give them any extra food – a little less careful in protecting them from dangers – because the parents just didn't particularly *like* that child, because their instincts were telling them to *stop wasting resources!*

In this way, blind rebellion against parents was selected out of the gene pool over tens of thousands of years – or really, hundreds of millions of years.

As a child, you *had* to submit to your parents – because if you didn't, the odds of you making it to adulthood went down considerably.

Reversing Aggression

Ah, but a definite switch is required.

If parents are aggressive – as they all were throughout human history – then it is *essential* for their children to submit to their will.

Rebellion, in other words, is the most dangerous predator.

However, upon reaching sexual maturity – puberty – it is equally essential that the children rebel and become aggressive themselves – particularly the males.

Remember, the women were raised by aggressive males – which tells them that aggressive males are sexually successful. If a male child remains submissive and compliant to his own parents after the age of sexual maturity, then the females will not find him attractive – because he is the opposite of the father who raised her, who is her template for sexual success.

This is the well-established pattern of children becoming aggressive – particularly males – during and after puberty.

To put it another way – boys who did *not* become aggressive and rebellious during and after puberty were not selected as mates by the females, which means that this passivity would quickly vanish from the gene pool.

Negotiation versus Violence

It is important to understand what a recent miracle it is that *negotiation* – rather than violence – is able to gain resources and success in human society.

Trade requires property rights – and property rights are a very new phenomenon in our species.

Property rights require relative peace, a high trust society, an honourable judicial system, empathy, literacy, education, reasonably inexpensive contract enforcement – and a whole host of other factors not exactly common throughout most of our evolution.

Property rights allow for specialization, which then requires trade for survival. A blacksmith does not grow his own food – a farmer does not forge his own tools. The blacksmith trades his output for the farmer's food, and both become wealthier thereby.

Unfortunately, as we all know, *trading* societies always end up being preyed upon by *warrior* societies. The wealth of trade societies draws in the violence of the warrior societies, since it is far easier to steal than to create.

In a trade society, excessive violence in the raising of children produces volatile and unstable adults who cannot defer gratification, and have no real capacity to negotiate.

Of course, parents do have to have some flexibility in their parenting styles – if a warrior society has settled into a more trade-based society, then children need to be raised less violently.

If trade is a better method of acquiring resources – and violent criminals are jailed or killed – then children need to be raised with better negotiating skills, and a lower capacity for violence.

For instance, for hundreds of years, England killed off about 1% of its population – the most violent male criminals, generally.

Wars also tend to kill off the most aggressive members of society.

Dead criminals – or jailed criminals – face significant barrier to reproduction, which is one reason why England evolved into a polite society that enforced its moral standards through icy ostracism, rather than bloody violence.

Some parents are more reasonable, some are more violent. In a more peaceful society, the children of reasonable parents do better – in a more violent society, the bullies rule.

So – a boy raised by violent parents must assume that his entire society is violent – and that fertile women prefer violent men – and that he must first *submit* to his parents, and then rebel against them. The submission ensures that he reaches sexual maturity – the rebellion means that he will attract a woman who prefers an aggressive male.

Abuse – at least, what we now call abuse – was *survival*.

Moral philosophers can quibble with this all they want, but they are only alive to quibble because this was a basic fact common throughout our entire history.

In every parent is both a coward and a bully – in every human soul, for that matter.

The coward complied with the parents as a child – the bully rebels against the parents as a teenager.

The child survives by nodding with the parents – the teenager reproduces by shaking his fists at them.

In other words, throughout our history, it was abusive to your genes to *not* abuse your children.

The submissive child is the parent of the aggressive teenager.

It is rational to submit when you are little – and equally rational to be violent when you get big.

In the modern world, things are much more complex.

In our modern world, the most resources are generally acquired by people who pretend to be rational, but actually profit from violence.

Heads of corporations sit down with politicians to work out how to use the power of the state to profit both parties.

Politicians make millions trading stocks, most likely with insider information about upcoming laws, rulings and regulations.

What looks like a peaceful negotiation is actually a violent predation.

As the old saying goes, only amateur thieves rob banks – professionals *own* banks. (And the gods of criminality own central banks.)

Poor people vote for free government money – this all looks like a civilized and peaceful negotiation, with politicians making speeches, and people shuffling into booths and checking boxes on a piece of paper.

It looks like a negotiation, but it is actually predation – taxes are collected, money is printed and borrowed – and other people are forced to pay, or go to jail.

Negotiation in public, violence in hidden practice.

Negotiation as a *cover* for violence.

Words as camouflage for fists.

You see how this relates the modern parenting?

The Duality of Modern Parenting

Modern parents pretend to negotiate in public, and usually use violence in private.

They are simply mirroring the society in which they live – which in turn feeds off their parenting in order to swell its own political power.

It is the ultimate – and most literal – vicious circle.

Modern citizens generally recoil from open violence – so the violence must be cloaked in rituals and language.

Everyone raised by an abusive parent knows the magic power of that random phone call. The parent can be screaming bloody murder at the child, but if the phone rings, and the parent is expecting a call – sweet and gentle tones instantly replace blue-veined yelling.

In this moment, what has happened in the mind of the parent is that the abusive adult has been replaced by the sweet and compliant child.

This *moral reversal* that I have spoken of repeatedly has its deep roots in early childhood.

When you are aggressed against as a child, you dislike it – no one likes being bullied and hit and screamed at and insulted.

You dislike it, but you have no choice but to comply – because if you don't comply, your odds of survival are significantly reduced.

So, you swallow and bottle up this anger – and then release it as a teenager, in order to model the aggression that is clearly the most attractive trait in your tribe.

When you are a child, you cannot conceivably allow yourself to experience just how horrible it is to be abused – because if you have genuine sympathy for yourself as a child, you will fail to achieve the aggression necessary for reproductive success as a teenager.

You must deny your sorrow and anger at being abused as a child. This dehumanizes you as a child even to yourself – but this is necessary so that you can in turn dehumanize others, which is required for you to be aggressive and threaten violence against them.

Throughout all of human history, excessive empathy prevented the development of the capacity for violence necessary for reproductive success.

The *moral reversal* is the inevitable result of the psychological split from *I hate being hurt* to *I enjoy hurting others*.

You can't empathize with others more than you empathize with yourself.

If empathizing with others interferes with reproductive success, then it must be abandoned. If the only way to abandon empathizing with others is to stop empathizing with yourself – well, you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.

Evolutionarily speaking, parents raised by violence are actually *protecting* their children by abusing them – the real abuse – genetically speaking – would be to cripple their chances of reproductive success by raising them in a highly unattractive peaceful and reasonable manner.

Parental Hypocrisy

You might be wondering how I can combine a sensitive and accurate analysis of how abuse came to be with a fair amount of hostility towards abusive parents.

Well, really it is the hypocrisy that bothers me the most, to be honest. When I studied the aboriginal tribes of Australia and New Zealand in preparation for a speaking tour, it was evident that abuse against children was openly practiced, without hypocrisy. Children were beaten, raped and killed right out in the open – without lies, without hysterical claims that all the tribal elders wanted to do was protect and nurture the wonderful children.

Hypocrisy is when we pretend to be virtuous, while actually doing evil.

A parent who accidentally hurts a child – through playfighting, say – immediately apologizes and vows to take fewer risks next time.

However, if a child gets injured by a parent, and then complains to the parent about the pain – and the parent smiles and does it again, but harder – then that child is doomed, because the parent is a sadist.

If you convincingly pretend to be good, that's because you know what goodness is, and how to achieve it.

Someone who already knows what virtue is – at least enough to convincingly emulate it – but then happily does evil whenever possible – well, such a person can never be reformed.

Somebody who wants to be good, but does not know how to be good – well, they have a chance to be good if instructed on the true nature of virtue.

A lack of knowledge can be fixed by providing knowledge – hypocrisy is irredeemable, because the hypocrite does not lack knowledge.

A con man knows exactly what trust is – and trustworthiness as well – which is why he pretends to be trustworthy in order to rip people off.

Telling a con man that it is better to be trustworthy is a complete waste of time – he already knows that trust is of great value, and how to appear trustworthy.

It's like going to a counterfeiter to loftily instruct him that paper currency has value – he already knows that, which is *why he counterfeits!*

No, what bothers me about abusive parents is their *pretense* of virtue. This informs me that they already know what virtue is, and how to be good.

They use virtue as a camouflage, which means it will be forever inaccessible to them as a practice.

Aggressive Parenting: The Steelman Case

Parents don't set out to harm and/or abuse their children.

They claim – and may in fact believe – that they have the *best of intentions*.

If you ask parents *why* they hit their children, they will say that the purpose of spanking is to teach children boundaries and respect.

“Since children are too young to reason, or understand the consequences of their actions, you must apply immediate negative stimuli to them to ensure their safety.”

“If a child gets into the kitchen drawer and starts playing with a sharp knife, that child can conceivably cut himself so badly that he bleeds to death. A few light smacks on the behind is a small price to pay to keep the child alive!”

A few needle vaccines is far better than your child becoming maimed or killed by some terrible disease!

It is essential for the parent to have the respect and obedience of the child, so that if the child is doing something dangerous, when the parent cries out “STOP!” – the child does in fact stop immediately, without question.

The child needs to be at least a little bit afraid of the parent, so that parental commands to keep the child safe are obeyed without hesitation. Parents know almost infinitely better, and can see consequences invisible to the child.

Children are incapable of reason – that is one of the key definitions of childhood – and it makes no more sense to reason with your offspring when they are very young than to give a cat a calm lecture about peeing on the sofa.

Particularly with multiple children – and a busy parenting schedule – endlessly debating and arguing with every single child about everything that needs to be done quickly creates an exhausting logjam of paralysis.

Sometimes, children just need to get out of bed, eat their food, take care of their siblings, go to the doctor, submit to the dentist, do their damn homework – and not argue about *every single little thing!*

Children can absorb new knowledge when they know that knowledge is missing – children's brains are so immature that they don't even know the knowledge they lack.

When they grow up, life will teach them consequences – and those consequences will most likely be very painful. If they fail to apply sunscreen, they will get a terrible sunburn, which could endanger their health

in the future. If they fail to show up to work, they will get fired. If they fail to study for a test, or pay their taxes, or obey the law, terrible consequences can – and will – occur.

As adults, if they fail to take care of their health, go to the dentist, eat sensibly and exercise – they will be punished infinitely worse than a forgettable spanking at the age of five.

Nature, bosses, the government, health – these do not “negotiate” with people – they say “jump,” and all you can do is ask: “how high?”

Adult life is not a theme park, or a vacation, or a place where everyone asks nicely, or shields you from the consequences of your own bad choices – adult life is a harsh world of unforgiving blowback.

If all you do is endlessly discuss everything with your children, how on earth are they supposed to navigate a world full of aggressive people, and dire consequences?

If all you do is debate with your kids, what happens when they get pulled over by a cop, or have to pay their taxes, or some bully shoves them in a bar?

They will be helpless bleating useless lambs, falling to their knees and begging for negotiation in a world full of brutal absolutes.

You are literally sending them as lambs to the slaughter.

As adults, your sensitive precious “reasoned with” children will go out into the world and meekly try to compete and reason with those raised with absolute strictness and dire consequences.

If you had to bet your life savings on a running race, would you choose the runner whose coach had meekly reasoned and negotiated with him – or the coach who dragged the runner out of bed at five in the morning, and forced him to run sprints until lunchtime?

Like it or not, sunshine, you are going to have to go out and compete in a world full of people raised very strictly – even brutally, if you like – and they are going to have an iron will and a discipline that the talky-talky children simply will not possess.

The simple truth of society is that most people cannot be reasoned with; they use guile, manipulation, force and threats to get what they want. Are you preparing your children to compete in a Darwinian world by raising them with the pretense of angelic virtue?

Again, lambs to slaughter...

If your child wants to eat junk food all day, and you try to reason with him, but he pushes aside his vegetables and reaches for another dingdong – what are you going to do?

Well, I guess if you’re one of these “talk and talk” parents, you meekly remind him that vegetables are *better* for him, that junk food is *bad* for him – and cross your fingers behind your back that one day he just might make the right decision.

Total crap!

It’s almost unbelievable to encounter this perspective – for one simple reason: *If children were capable of making the right decisions, they wouldn’t be children!*

These “reasonable” parents know *for a fact* that their children are not adults, but rather under the care, control and custody of the parents. They know *for a fact* that a child’s brain is no more developed than his or her body – but still they want to treat those children as if they were adults.

In a military context, they would be the equivalent of generals forcing children to become soldiers.

No – being a soldier is the job of an adult, not a child.

Making good decisions is the job of an adult, not a child.

We don’t give children drivers licenses, heavy weights to lift, bills to pay, jobs – or contracts to sign.

Why not?

Well, *because they are children!*

We don’t give mentally defective adults full rights, responsibilities and freedoms – because they are mentally defective, and thus need to be contained and managed and controlled.

If we encounter a thirty-year-old with the mentality of an eight-year-old, we know that something really bad has happened to his development, and he cannot be a truly free and independent adult.

In other words, *we don’t let him make his own decisions!*

You think yelling and spanking is harsh?

A parent uses corporal or verbal punishment as a *far more gentle* form of inflicting consequences than nature – or others – will inflict.

Exercise can be unpleasant – but it is infinitely preferable to muscle atrophy and bone degeneration.

We make children exercise in order to build a good foundation of health and a strong body – we make them eat well for the same reason. We take them to the dentist, to the doctor, to the nutritionist if need be – and to a coach, if they want to achieve any kind of excellence in sports.

All these experts will inflict pain and discomfort on the children – out of the truly benevolent goal of bringing them health, wealth and excellence in the future.

Children don’t know what is good for them in the long run – and often even the short run – but parents do. Should parents allow children to eat junk food and avoid exercise, and then deliver those children to adulthood severely obese, diabetic and short of breath?

Should parents indulge their children’s desire to avoid the dentist, and deliver them to adulthood with half-missing, half-rotten teeth?

Should parents indulge their children’s desire to stay in and play video games, and deliver them to adulthood with flaccid muscles and weakened bones?

Is it better to inflict a small amount of suffering when the children are usually too young to even remember it – or is it better for the children to face lifelong sickness and disability, because the parents were too frightened – or too weirdly ideological – to discipline their children at all?

Would children rather read challenging books, or play brain-dead video games?

Books train language skills, empathy, self-knowledge and the deferral of gratification – video games train stress, reflexes and a crushingly short attention span.

When children grow up with no literary skills – and having gained useless immaterial trinkets in some long-gone video game – will they turn around and *thank* their parents for failing to discipline them, and point them in the right direction?

When fat children grow up to be sickly unattractive adults, will they *thank* their indulgent parents?

Parenting by its very definition is instructing children on what children cannot know themselves, either through brain immaturity, a lack of experience, or an inability to foresee consequences.

The idea that you can instruct children without inflicting any negative consequences is truly insane – and deeply immoral.

Maybe it's fine if you have just one child – a girl, probably – who is naturally compliant and agreeable.

But try that with a house full of crazed boys – I dare you!

Maybe you let your children run into the street – maybe you let them ride a bike without a helmet – maybe you let them play with knives and electrical sockets and grab at pots of boiling water on the stove – and maybe all that works out for you, but statistically you are basically playing Russian roulette with your children's lives.

Such laxness is not about what is best for children – it is about what the *parents* prefer.

It's not fun to physically discipline your children – any more than it's fun to diet and exercise – but we do it because it is the right thing to do.

The so-called “peaceful” parents are simply pursuing their own peace of mind, at the expense of their children's security, safety and maturity.

They don't like disciplining their children, because they want to be “best buds” with their offspring – they can't stand the idea of their children looking at them critically, or negatively, or with any fear or hostility.

The fact of the matter is that their children *will* look at them that way – later on, as adults, when they realize that they have been *crippled* by all that spineless agreeableness and absence of consequences – and have no capacity to deal with the real world – a world that *refuses* to endlessly negotiate with them to ensure that they never feel any discomfort whatsoever!

Give your kids candy instead of vegetables – yeah, they like you in the moment, but hate you later, when they realize the damage that your appeasement has done to their health and future.

Boys who avoid suffering never ask girls out on dates – girls who avoid suffering get fat and lazy, and never get asked out on dates.

Everyone who succeeds knows that rigid discipline is essential for achievement.

It's far better to teach discipline to children when they are young, through the judicious application of negative consequences – lectures, coldness, raised voices or spanking – because anyone who succeeds is

going to need discipline at some point, and it's far better to learn it early, when the stakes are lower and the negative consequences far less severe.

If you've ever tried learning a foreign language as an adult, you know that it is infinitely harder than learning a native language as a toddler.

Would you never bother teaching your children how to read, and let them try and figure it out when they are adults?

That's a terrible idea – because children have a window of language learning opportunity which, if missed, leaves them crippled for life.

Would you let your children go to bed whenever they wanted, sleep as long as they wanted, nap during the day, as they saw fit?

Again – a terrible idea, because children with sleep disturbances grow up to be adults with sleep disturbances – and they're going to have to get up to go to a job at some point in their lazy lives!

No – your kids are going to have to learn language, good sleep hygiene, nutrition, exercise and discipline at some point – it is infinitely easier to learn all this when they are little, so that it becomes innate, rather than struggling to learn it later on, against all of the lazy habits of their first eighteen years.

The key question that pro-discipline parents answer – that the so-called “peaceful” parents constantly avoid – is this:

Will my children thank me when they reach adulthood?

If assertive parenting – what is called sometimes “aggressive” parenting – produces strong bodies, disciplined minds and healthy habits – then without a doubt children raised this way will thank their parents when they reach adulthood.

If a child is afraid of the dentist, and therefore his “peaceful” parents keep him away from the dentist – the child feels enormous relief in the moment, but will be very angry at his parents later on in life, when he has to deal with endless tooth pain and gum disease.

What kind of citizens will these spoiled children – yes, I'm going to say it – *spoiled!* – turn into when they reach adulthood?

Will they respect the laws of society?

How could they?

No rules were ever inflicted on them!

Will they think deeply and reasonably about the consequences of their actions?

Of course not – their parents never inflicted any consequences, and shielded them from any and all bad effects!

Will they be hard workers?

Of course not – they've never been exposed to any difficult discipline!

Will they be strong and healthy?

I'll let you figure that out, given that their parents let them eat whatever they wanted, and avoid exercise if they didn't feel like it.

A central definition of maturity is *damn well doing things that you don't want to do!*

You don't need any discipline to eat cheesecake, or sit on the couch, or watch your favourite show, or light another cigarette if you're a smoker!

Drinkers don't need any discipline to have another drink – it's easy and pleasant for gamblers to roll the dice one more time!

No, the purpose of parenting is to teach children the value of doing what they *don't want to do*.

Children don't understand the benefits of deferring gratification – they don't understand the value of doing what they don't want to do, because they live in the moment, for the hedonism and pleasure of the next five seconds.

Try taking Halloween candy from a six-year-old, telling her that it is better for you to hold onto it, so that she doesn't eat too much.

Will she gravely nod, and thank you for your thoughtful consideration?

Of course not – she will cry and scream and hang onto her candy like grim death!

There's nothing wrong with this – she is a child, after all!

Exactly the point – she is a *child!*

"Peaceful" parents avoid disciplining their children because the parents find it unpleasant to do so. In other words, they are modelling hedonism, and somehow expecting discipline to magically appear.

One of the great values of spanking, for instance, is that the parent doesn't *want* to spank the child – but is willing to do so for the sake of benefiting the child in the long run.

Spanking a child shows discipline, and the deferral of gratification, and a willingness to undergo the negative experience of your child disliking you for a short period of time – which models *exactly* the behaviour you want to produce in your children *to* your children!

The child being spanked will at some point understand that the spanking goes against the immediate happiness of the parent, and is for the long-term benefit of the child.

In this way, the child internalizes the habit of going against his own immediate happiness, for the sake of his long-term well-being.

The "peaceful" parent refuses to undergo anything unpleasant – either for herself or for the child – thus teaching the child that it's always great to avoid negative experiences.

Inevitably, the child ends up self-indulgent, pleasure-based, discipline-avoidant, weak and – yes – *narcissistic* – as an adult.

I say “narcissistic” because the child is only interested in his or her own pleasure – and utterly unused to sacrificing immediate pleasures for the happiness of other people – even his or her own future self!

Parents who sacrifice their own immediate happiness – through spanking – for the long-term benefit of the child are teaching children the value of thinking of the happiness of others, even at your own expense in the moment.

When the child reaches adulthood, and looks back in gratitude at the harsh lessons inflicted by the parents – he thoroughly understands, in a deep and visceral manner, how important it is to sacrifice immediate happiness for the sake of long-term well-being – his own, as well as others!

Peaceful Parenting: The Rebuttal

Just a gentle reminder – a caution, to help you, which is my greatest goal.

If you have had power over children over the course of your life, please check with them. This is not just for parents, but also for aunts, uncles, grandparents, elder siblings and so on.

If the children you had power over have complaints, please listen to them before consuming this next chapter.

I have always strongly recommended talk therapy. If you have unresolved childhood or parenting traumas, please work to deal with them before continuing.

All right?

Good.

So – here is an interesting challenge.

If we say that children need to be spanked, we are saying that being hit prepares them for adulthood.

However, it is illegal to hit adults.

If we say that verbal abuse is necessary to prepare children for adulthood, we face the challenging problem of explaining *why* we generally tell people in verbally abusive relationships to get the hell out!

I mean, we don’t raise children speaking our native language – and then punish them for speaking that same language as adults.

We don’t spend countless hours teaching children how to read and do math – only to launch them into an adulthood where reading and doing math are illegal.

Parents are thrilled when they help their toddlers learn how to walk, because we walk for our entire lives – we don’t get thrown in jail for walking the moment we turn eighteen.

Try to think of teaching methods for children that are illegal for adults.

(I don’t mean teaching environments such as school, but teaching methods such as instruction, repetition and testing.)

We teach children to take care of their things, and put them away when done, and keep their environment clean – all these habits are praised in adults as well.

We teach children to brush their hair and teeth – we don't throw them in jail for basic grooming and hygiene as adults.

If a boss verbally abuses his employees, he is not loved and respected as a great teacher.

If a boss hits his employees, we would be appalled, and he would be charged criminally.

It makes less than no sense to train children using violent and abusive methods – when those violent and abusive methods are illegal for adults.

Spanking

A child who is hit will change his behaviour in the short run, out of fear of violence and pain.

He has not internalized or learned the value of changing his behaviour – he has not learned the value of the new behaviour at all – he is only avoiding pain.

What does the parent who spansks really teach his child?

Well, he teaches his child that larger authorities can use violence to inflict pain on a whim, if they are disobeyed, or if the child displeases them in some important way.

He does not learn that the parent is bigger and stronger, because that is obvious to all children.

He learns that he has no physical boundaries or autonomy, and that his own nervous system can be hijacked to inflict pain against him if he displeases his parent.

He learns that “love” includes violence and pain.

Although spanking is often portrayed as an act of reason and self-control – give warnings, explain why the spanking is going to happen, never spank in anger, explain afterwards *why* it happened, etc – everyone knows that most spanking violates any and all of these supposed standards.

Most spanking is done in anger, out of a desire to punish – not in a state of calmness, and a desire to instruct.¹⁷

In other words, children are told to control themselves by parents who are out of control.

Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse – raised voices, intimidating words, insulting phrases – is inflicted against children on a regular basis.

What does it teach those children?

Children are often verbally abused for “talking back,” or “defying orders,” or “not listening,” and so on.

¹⁷ “The study also found that parents tend to strike their children out of anger and quite quickly after the children misbehaved — in other words, not as last resort.”

<https://www.minnpost.com/second-opinion/2014/04/parents-often-spank-out-anger-and-trivial-reasons-real-time-study-finds/>

The Hitting Comes First

In other words, they have verbally “misbehaved,” and their parental protectors then deploy an *extreme* form of verbal misbehaviour called abuse.

This is like hitting a child while yelling that hitting is always wrong – a not uncommon occurrence.

One essential aspect of peaceful parenting is that it is immoral and unjust to expect behaviours from children that you are not first consistently modelling yourself.

You would never punish a child for failing to learn a language he or she had never been exposed to – or if you did, you would be a complete monster!

If you want your child to know what a tree is, you must first point at trees and use the word repeatedly.

If you want children to listen, you must first model listening.

If you want the child to respect you, you must first respect the child.

If you want the child to reason, you must first reason with the child.

You are the cause of your child’s effects.

Your child’s choices are the shadows of your own prior decisions.

Tantrums

Parents often say: “Well, that is all well and good in theory, but what happens when my child throws a tantrum, and refuses to listen because of extreme emotional upset?”

The ubiquity of child abuse leads to the myth of *natural tantrums*.¹⁸

According to this myth, children are so prone to hyper-excitement and overstimulation that they just kind of “tip over” into wildly emotional meltdowns.

Childhood is perceived to start as a series of random emotional “seizures,” which can only be cured by steadfastly ignoring or punishing said “seizures.”

The mindset is:

“When contradicted, children escalate hysterical aggression and emotional upset to the point where they lose their minds completely, throwing themselves on the floor and kicking and screaming in loud spasms of hyper-emotional insanity. Patient parents must ride out this storm, without giving into this emotional bullying and manipulation. The children will calm down eventually – and over time, will learn that these meltdowns do not achieve the intended effect, and will stop having these silly tantrums.”

This is the complete *opposite* of the truth.

¹⁸ Sisterhen LL, Wy PAW. Temper Tantrums. [Updated 2023 Feb 4]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2023 Jan-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK544286/>

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001922.htm>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/temper-tantrums>

To understand tantrums, imagine that you are a diabetic, and you wake up naked in some strange cage in the middle of nowhere. There are people outside, but they do not speak your language, and don't seem to understand anything that you say.

You have to get your insulin right now, or your health will be in grave danger.

When you try to indicate injecting something, they just laugh at you, or ignore you – or get strangely angry at you.

How would you react?

Your increasing panic will cause you to raise your voice, gesture more frantically, beg and plead and cajole.

However, the more desperate you become, the more people laugh at you, turn away, mock you, make silly faces, roll their eyes and indicate that you must be *crazy*!

Terrified, enraged, you try to break through their contemptuous, amused indifference by showing your emotional desperation.

They just walk away, into the darkness, leaving you alone, facing severe illness and death in your cage.

You scream, cry out for them, beg them to return and save your life – but they do not return, and you are left alone in your little pool of light, staring out into the blank darkness around you.

At some point, your emotions will fade as you accept your fate. You will become resigned, and swallow the grim facts of the situation.

Tantrums arise because children are unable to satisfy their own physical, mental and emotional requirements.

Children cannot get what they want – they are in a powerless cage of inability.

Childhood Paralysis

We have reformed society to allow people in wheelchairs far greater access to buildings and amenities – because we recognize that a person in a wheelchair cannot climb a set of stairs.

Young children are disabled in similar ways.

They cannot get their own drinks or snacks, or buy their own toys.

They cannot comprehend or deal with the aches and pains of their own bodies.

They cannot even comfort themselves when upset – they require their parents to comfort them, so that they learn how to do it over time.

Expecting a child to comfort his own unhappiness is like expecting him to invent his own language, or grow his own food.

When a child is upset, it is because she feels that she is in danger, or there is a barrier between what she needs and what she can achieve, or there is a discontent that only the parent can solve – which is a test of love, connection, bonding and devotion.

A baby in a high chair who drops a toy on his plate can pick it up himself, and so does not cry.

A baby in a high chair who drops his toy onto the floor cannot pick it up, and so cries for the parent to solve the problem – just as you would beg the people outside your cage to give you life-saving medicine.

Babies and toddlers are effectively disabled – and we so often ignore, mock and shame them for their disabilities.

Tantrums are the natural panic that arises when children are not listened to, and then mocked for their increasing desperation.

“Oh come on!” say many parents. “So a toy dropped off the high chair, it’s no big deal!”

These are the same parents who get enraged if someone cuts them off on the road, or their Internet goes down, or a crack forms on the screen of their cell phone.

Everything is a big deal to a toddler, because toddlers have not learned how to prioritize importance – as is also true of the majority of adults.

When the toy falls off the high chair, the baby cries, to signal to the parent to return the toy.

Babies are in a near-constant state of ferociously attentive learning – the toy is being explored so that the baby’s brain learns about the nature and facts of reality – which is essential for the baby’s survival over time.

The baby is not “playing with a toy” – the baby is studying the facts of reality, so that the baby doesn’t die.

Imagine being back in your cage, and your potentially cruel jailers give you two plates of food – one with red berries, one with blue berries. They point at each plate, shrug their shoulders, then draw their fingers across their necks, indicating that one of plates is fatally poisonous.

Naturally, you would be absolutely desperate to know whether the red berries or the blue berries were poisonous, because you are starving, but don’t want to die.

Oh look, you’re about to have another tantrum!

You see how this works?

Babies are desperate to learn about reality, but they need their parents help to achieve knowledge – and so survive.

If parents fail to fulfil the needs of their babies, then the babies panic, because without their parents, their chances of survival are slim to none.

Failing to attend to your baby is handing your baby a very legible death threat.

Without parental care, supervision and instruction, that baby is going to die.

Babies thus clamour for parental attention – in the same way that they clamour for breastmilk when they are hungry.

Parents often feel that a baby’s crying is difficult and unpleasant – which is very strange!

Of course, a toothache is very unpleasant – but your tooth is trying to save your life, because if you don't deal with it, the infection can easily spread to your heart and kill you outright.

Both you and your tooth have the goal of your long-term survival – and your tooth is trying to help you achieve your goal.

A crying baby is trying to *help* you!

Of course you don't want your baby to die, so when your baby needs something, and can only communicate by crying, your baby is trying to help you achieve your shared goal of keeping the baby alive!

People sometimes feel that babies who cry are being intrusive, or lack empathy – but imagine how horrified and appalled a mother would be if her baby decided to let her sleep late rather than cry out for breastmilk – then died of starvation before she woke up.

My gosh – the mother would be infinitely more miserable standing over a dead baby than she would have been being woken up for the second or third time overnight.

Crying babies are trying to *help* you!

Unless you are an outright sadist – and thus highly unlikely to be reading this book – you want your baby to be happy and healthy, right?

You cannot directly mind-meld with your baby, and so you need audio and visual cues as to what is best for your baby, what your baby needs to survive and thrive.

The audio cues can be crying or laughter – the visual cues are tears or smiles.

This is your baby trying to help you achieve your greatest goal, which is the survival and happiness of your child.

If you've ever been in a situation where you are desperately trying to help someone, but that person reacts with rage, hostility or indifference, you know how frustrating this can be.

A standard example is trying to help your father fix something in the darkness by holding a flashlight, or passing him tools.

You are really trying to help him, but he snaps and snarls at you for “getting it wrong!”

You want to please your mother by helping out in the kitchen, but she rolls her eyes and orders you away because you just don't know how to do things *properly*.

As an adult, your friend asks you what you think of her new boyfriend – you think he is handsome but unintelligent, so you gently tell her that, “He seems like a nice fellow, but he does I think lack your level of insight...”

This is about as mild statement as you can make – but she takes great offense, shuts down the conversation, and never talks to you again.

If someone who has gained weight asks you if you think she has gained weight, and you answer honestly, and she storms out, this is not an overly pleasant experience.

Being attacked for trying to help can be kind of difficult – I can tell you this from significant lifelong personal experience.

Children who communicate their upsets to parents are trying to *help* their parents – but their parents so often react with impatience, hostility or indifference.

A tantrum is a child's desperate attempt to break through the emotional hostility or indifference of his parents. The child cannot feel secure or safe – because the child *is* neither secure nor safe – if the parent remains unresponsive or hostile to the child's emotional and physical needs.

If you can't supply your own life-saving medicine, you desperately need your jailers to listen to you – otherwise, you die.

All who are trapped and tortured become desperate over time – the hysteria arises from the existential panic of realizing that you are going to have to find a way to survive a dangerous world *without* the help of your parents.

The *rage* element of tantrums arises from the hostility that children feel towards their parents, based on the simple, savage, instinctual question: *If you didn't want to take **care** of your children, why bother **having** them?*

Or, more personally: *Why **have** me – why **keep** me – if you don't **love** me?*

The dying down of the tantrum is the death knell of the connection – the abandonment of the need for support, and the ghastly, grim acceptance that you're going to find some way to make it alone.

Tantrum Appeasement

Is the solution to a tantrum to appease the child?

Perhaps – but not always.

If a child feels listened to, and understood, the chances of a tantrum are very slim.

Tantrums occur when a child's emotions are mocked and ignored – not when the child doesn't get what he wants.

You know how frustrating it is when someone says 'NO' to you without even bothering to listen to what you want.

If you are listened to, and empathized with, the "no" becomes much less important.

When my daughter was little, and wanted candy at a store, I would tell her how much I wanted the candy too – that I would eat a whole row if I could – but I had to think of my teeth and my belly. I would mime my teeth falling out and my belly getting huge. I used one hand to grab at my other hand that was reaching for the candy, striving to pull it back and save myself.

We usually ended up laughing.

She has never ever had a tantrum.

“But My Childhood...”

Many – most – parents say that they raise children the way that they themselves were raised.

If adult children bring up childrearing deficiencies to their parents, after a suitable period of gaslighting, avoidance and denigration, those parents may eventually admit some problems, but then claim as their defense that they parented as they themselves were parented, and there was really no possibility of doing better.

That is a very interesting argument, and worth unpacking in detail.

Parents who claim that they had no choice but to parent as they themselves were parented face a fascinating objection, which goes something like this:

Are you still using the same phone or computer that you used forty years ago?

Do you have a car with air conditioning or a GPS?

You have new clothes, right? Have you adapted to any new fashions over the past few decades, mom?

Are you still doing the same job that you had as a teenager?

Hey – do you use any new words that you didn’t learn as a child?

Do you still have the same haircut?

These questions could continue almost to infinity – I’m sure the central point is very clear.

*People have an endless ability to upgrade everything about their lives – technology, clothing, housing, jobs, education, contacts, language – so why on earth would **parenting** – the most **important** thing – be excluded from this universal pattern?*

If your mother suffers from tinnitus, and a new miracle cure for the condition arrives, surely she would seize the opportunity, and put a final stop to the ringing in her ears.

Billions of people eagerly accept new treatments for illnesses – but they could never have read a few books to upgrade their parenting?

People upgrade *everything* in their lives, all the time.

Do you still have the same cell phone plan that you had ten years ago?

You read new books, articles, tweets – watch new movies, documentaries – sometimes take new courses, training, or pursue informal education.

When I was the Chief Technical Officer of a software company, I constantly had to learn new technology and tools – and encouraged my employees to learn with me.

Older parents had almost no access to credit cards when they were younger – I bet they have them now.

Do parents still do all their banking in a physical branch, or have they figured out how to bank online?

You get the picture.

When parents say that they had no choice but to parent as they themselves were parented, they are saying that they can upgrade everything in their lives – learn new tasks, new skills, new responsibilities – except for the *most* important thing, which is actually being a good parent.

But it gets even worse than that, as it usually does.

Spanking and Free Will

If your mother hits you, and later says that she had no real choice, because she was herself hit as a child – then she is saying that she had no capacity to be a peaceful parent at all.

All right – but the fact of the matter is that she *upgraded her parenting every single time you were in public*.

When you misbehaved or disobeyed her in public, maybe she shot you a venomous look, or maybe she pulled you aside and hissed that you were gonna pay for it later – but she probably didn't haul off and belt you in front of everyone else – at the mall, at a friend's house, at a parent-teacher conference, at church – or anywhere!

So, your mother later says that she had no choice but to hit you – but she constantly exercised that exact choice to not hit you – everywhere, all the time, whenever you were in public, or when the consequences of hitting you could be negative to her.

This would be like moving you to Japan when you were five years old, then later complaining that she didn't know any Japanese, but fluently speaking Japanese at the time whenever you were in public.

I don't speak Japanese, so I never have the option to speak Japanese – whether in public, private, on top of a mountain, in the subway, at a restaurant, or in my dreams.

If a parent says that she has no choice but to hit her children, because she was hit as a child, then the moment that she exercises her choice *not* to hit her children – anywhere, any time – then she reveals that she *did* have the choice, she *always* had the choice – and that she *chose* to hit her children every single time she did so!

If a father hits his son until the son hits puberty, and gets big and strong – then the father always had the choice to not hit his son.

We don't blame parents because we are subjected to gravity, because neither the parents nor us have any choice to avoid gravity – it is a fact of life, a reality of physics, an inescapable force.

When parents say that they had *no choice* – finding even one counterexample destroys the entire defense!

If I say I cannot speak Japanese, one recording of me having a fluent conversation in Japanese *destroys my claim*.

A man with epilepsy cannot control his seizures – a man with Tourette syndrome cannot control his outbursts. A man with no arms cannot choose to clap.

A man who claims to be disabled only has to get out of his wheelchair and walk *one time* for his claim to be utterly debunked.

If your parents never hit you in public, or in front of authority figures, then they clearly had the capacity to refrain from hitting you.

That's how they hid it from the world.

If your parents hit you – and then claim that they had no choice in the matter – then if they were never caught or seen hitting you, their claim is false.

It is not only false – it is a *continuation* of the abuse.

Childhood and Moral Free Will

But it gets even worse than that, as usual.

A thirty-year-old father who hits his five-year-old daughter has already assigned a moral will and philosophical free choice to his five-year-old daughter.

If he hits her for, say, sneaking candy, then he is saying the following:

I am hitting you because you are taking candy without permission – which you know is wrong, and have the full and free choice to refrain from doing!

You know where this is going by now, right?

Later, when the father is fifty, and his daughter is twenty-five, and she comes to him and complains that he hit her, and he says that he had no real choice in the matter, because he himself was hit as a child – then he is explicitly stating that *she had full moral responsibility and free will at the age of five*, but that he, at the age of *thirty*, *had absolutely zero moral responsibility, and no free will at all!*

This is morally insane and corrupt beyond words!

But – it gets even worse, as I warned you at the beginning of this book – and this chapter.

The fifty year old father says that he had no moral choice or free will at the age of thirty – and that this was the result of being hit when he was a boy.

In other words, he fully *knows* that the result of being hit as a child is the stripping of moral free will and responsibility – and then he goes and hits his daughter anyway – destroying *her* capacity for moral choice and free will, just as it was destroyed in him.

His equation is this:

“Children *start* with moral responsibility and free will – then you hit them and, over time, hitting them destroys their moral responsibility and free will. In other words, I hit you because you have moral choice and free will, with the certain knowledge that hitting you will destroy your moral choice and free will – just as it did to me!”

Also:

“I knew that I hit you because I was hit myself, but knowing *why* you are doing something does not give you any power to change what you are doing. Of course, you took candy without permission because you wanted the sweet taste – you knew that ahead of time. However, knowing why you were taking candy ahead of time does not give you any power to change your actions – any more than me knowing

why I was hitting you ahead of time did not give me any power to stop hitting you. I will hit you when you are five, because knowing *why* I am doing something gives me no power to change it – even though I expect you to change your actions at the age of five – especially because you know why you are acting!”

It makes no sense for an adult with self-knowledge to make excuses for *his* behaviour – but punish a five-year-old for *her* behaviour, when her capacity for self-knowledge is far lower.

A father claims that he has no moral responsibility because he was hit as a child – but then claims that his five-year-old daughter has *full* moral responsibility, even though he is hitting her.

Does being hit remove someone’s moral responsibility?

Apparently – *yes* for the thirty-year-old, *no* for the five-year-old.

Does knowing *why* you want to do wrong prevent you from *doing* wrong?

Apparently – *no* for the thirty-year-old, *yes* for the five-year-old.

It’s almost impossible to imagine the moral viciousness and cowardice it takes to pretend that a five-year-old child has infinitely more moral responsibility and free will than a thirty-year-old adult.

The father says to his five year old: “You did wrong because you are bad – I wasn’t wrong because I was wronged!”

“You as a child are bad, and must be punished – I as an adult am a victim, and must be sympathized with!”

“Five-year-old children must be punished, not forgiven – but thirty-year-old men must be forgiven, and never punished!”

I hope you truly understand how *repulsive* this all is.

I have to take a break and get some air.

Humanity Versus Power

It is an old adage that human beings are corrupted by power.

The greater the power, the greater the corruption.

One of the paramount sleights-of-hand of human history has been distracting everyone from the chief power in human society – which they have the most control over – to a distant, lesser power, that they have no control over at all.

As the Biblical question goes – why do you focus on the speck of dust in your brother’s eye, while ignoring the log in your own?

Human beings – particularly males – are obsessed with controlling political power, because of its danger to us all.

Feminists are obsessed with controlling the supposed power of the patriarchy; economists of the Austrian school are almost solely focused on controlling the power of central bankers; political scientists

focus on laws and constitutions designed to limit the power of the state; and lawsuits and courts often aim to limit the arbitrary powers of those in charge.

This is all largely nonsense – not because abuses of power by the powerful do not exist, but because it is all a distraction.

You and I will not be presidents or prime ministers or kings, or governors or members of Parliament – but most of us will be parents.

The most power we will ever experience over the course of our lives is *our power over our own children*.

In Western democracies, parents have almost infinitely more power over their own children than governments have over their citizens.

Laws certainly affect us – often negatively – but the lawmakers do not live in our own homes, and have no immediate power to control us in the form of spanking, physical restraint, hunger, time-outs, confiscation, confinement and so on.

As adults, we can often conform to unjust laws, and escape punishment.

Unjust parenting is designed to *inflict* punishment. “Rules” change constantly, so that the child can be perpetually aggressed against.

Citizens have legal remedies against governmental abuses – children have no such recourse.

Citizens can avoid becoming the focus of governmental attention, by avoiding contentious topics.

Citizens can move countries, go off the grid, live quietly and unobtrusively – and escape negative attention from state power.

Children have no such options.

Children have no legal standing, no ability to enter into contracts, no recourse against injustice, no capacity to live alone.

Arguably, even soldiers fare better than the victims of child abuse.

Some soldiers will face injury or death in combat – but most people in the military do not engage in direct combat.

Soldiers have companions – brothers in arms – uniforms, commendations, the support of the community, medals, pensions, tickertape parades and so on.

The trauma inflicted upon soldiers is inflicted on already-formed adult personalities.

Soldiers choose to enter their profession – children do not choose their families.

The soldier also has an entire regimen of support, therapy, medication – and friendship, which heals most wounds.

Combat soldiers usually spend only a few months fighting – and then have time off before returning to the fray. Most soldiers only fight for a few years, off and on.

This is not to say that soldiers have it easy, or that combat is not traumatic – they don't, and it is.

However, the victims of child abuse are under the direct control of cruel people who manage and bully every aspect of their lives – and who terrify and abuse them constantly – and who live in the same house.

The victims of child abuse usually remain under the direct control of their abusers for at least eighteen years straight.

The victims of child abuse are often bathed in destructive stress hormones even in the womb, as their parents fight.

The victims of child abuse are isolated in society – in a way that soldiers could never imagine.

Many children are also maimed and killed by their parents, just as soldiers are by their enemies.

In the USA alone, more children are murdered by parents every 18 months (2,630) than soldiers were killed in the Afghanistan war over two decades (2,448).¹⁹

Soldiers are trained and equipped to fight back – children cannot resist.

Child abuse is inflicted on an unformed personality – it shapes and defines that personality, in a way that soldiers never experience.

Childhood is like a soft mixed concrete mush – by adulthood, it has hardened into immobility.

You can leave a handprint – a fist impact, in the case of child abuse – on soft concrete – but hardened concrete steadfastly resists your touch.

Every adult is called unpleasant names from time to time – a crazy person on the street yells a rude word at you – but we usually shrug it off, and move on.

Verbal abuse is unbelievably destructive to children, because the words sink into their core, shaping and defining their personalities irrevocably.

Children who resist being abused face escalation of that abuse – so they have to conform, swallow their resistance and go along with whatever the parent says and wants.

If the parent tells the child that she is lazy, selfish, careless, stupid, entitled, greedy, thoughtless – the list is endless – then the child has to accept and absorb these definitions of her personality.

It is impossible to push back against verbal abuse – at least until the teenage years – because the parent will escalate, perhaps even to the point of life-threatening violence or abandonment.

To put it another way, children who resisted abuse survived less, so those patterns of behaviour have been weeded out of the gene pool.

Verbal abuse is the implantation of the child's passing negative actions into the root and definition of the entire personality.

¹⁹ <https://www.statista.com/topics/5910/child-abuse-in-the-united-states/#topicOverview>
<https://www.newsweek.com/number-us-soldiers-who-died-afghanistan-war-1619685>

“You did” is turned into “you are.”

When a child lies – as we all do – the abusive parent does not say that the child told a lie – the parent says that the child *is a liar*.

If an inattentive child knocks over a cup, the parent does not say that the child was momentarily distracted – no, the child is thoughtless and careless and clumsy and so on.

The redefinition of negative actions to include the entire personality is constant, when you see it clearly. It’s not great to say to your children, “Well, that was kind of dumb” – but it’s way better than saying: “You’re just stupid.”

If a parent says to a child: “I don’t feel I can reason with you right now” – that is an accurate statement.

If the parent says: “You can’t be reasoned with” – that is a very different statement, much more dishonest.

If the parent says: “You’re just irrational!” – that is even more dishonest.

If the parent hits the child, that is an implicit statement that the child is beyond reason, and must be punished for his “badness.”

The ability to define an entire personality by passing negative actions is a function of power.

The state has the capacity to brand you a “criminal.”

Government schools have the ability to brand you a “failure.”

The media has the ability to brand you a “hater.”

Religion has the power to brand you a “sinner.”

And parents have the ability to define you as “bad.”

The Restraint of Power

So – what restrains power?

This is the most essential question of moral philosophy – because if political power is unrestrained, morality becomes worse than useless – it becomes actively dangerous, and often violently attacked by those in power.

A man prepared for a verbal debate will always lose to a boxer.

What restrains parental power?

Think of a communist restaurant in the Soviet Union in the 1950s.

The cooks, waiters and managers get paid whether they have any customers or not.

They get paid whether they serve good food or bad food.

You have no choice but to pay them, because they are paid by the State, which takes money from you by force.

What incentives do the people in this restaurant have to provide quality food and service?

They have no incentives – in fact, they have strong *disincentives*.

It's more difficult to make good food than serve bad food.

It's more pleasant to sit and play cards than to get up and serve customers.

Even if you want to serve good food – well, you're in a centrally controlled economy, so none of your suppliers have any incentive to deliver quality ingredients – in fact, just like you, they have disincentives, because it's harder to provide quality than it is to do the bare minimum.

The quality of goods and services under communism is a bitter joke to those who've lived under such despotism – there is an old Soviet joke, which goes something like this: "A man who arrives at work early is yelled at, because he makes the other workers look bad – the man who arrives at work late is yelled at, because he is being lazy – the man who arrives at work on time is sent to a Gulag, because he must own a foreign watch."

The only cure for low-quality is *voluntarism*.

If you're not forced to pay for the restaurant, then the restaurant has to earn your money by providing good food, good service and good prices.

The transition from *force* to *choice* is the transition from *exploitation* to *service*.

To take a brutal example, a man trailing a woman in the dark with the intention of raping her does not have to bring flowers and chocolates, and try to woo her with his charm and good humour.

No, he is going to force his evil will upon her, and therefore he does not have to bring any qualities of character or seduction to the scene of his crime.

Government-protected unions are notoriously inefficient. State-protected monopolies tend not to fire inefficient employees, or strive to reduce costs, or work hard to ensure that customers are satisfied.

Monopoly and exploitation go hand-in-hand.

Coercion and abuse are two sides of the same bloody coin.

How do we fix this with regards to parenting?

Well, imagine that you are a government worker, and have become lazy and inefficient over the years.

One morning, you find out that your entire industry is going to be privatized in six months.

What are you going to do?

Some hard-eyed capitalist entrepreneur is going to take over your department, look for any waste and inefficiency, and ruthlessly cut it.

Also, if you get fired, you get zero severance pay – and lose your entire pension!

In a few short months, no one is going to be forced to pay you, or forced to accept your indifferent “service” – and since it is your whole *industry* that is moving to the free market, you can’t even jump ship to another cushy government job.

What will you do?

Assuming that early retirement is not on the table – and rioting and striking will not help you – you have only one choice.

You will start coming to work early, doing your job with blinding efficiency, stay late, and keep close tabs on any and all metrics that will prove to your incoming employer how incredibly valuable – indeed, irreplaceable – you are.

You will improve, stop being lazy, work hard and do better.

The difference will be night and day.

I’m sure you see the parallel.

Why do parents so often fail to improve?

Parents provide services to their children – but nature puts parents in a monopoly position.

Children are not consumers, who can choose from different parents in the same way that they can choose which games to play at an arcade, or which videos to watch online.

Parents fail to improve for the same reason that the communist restaurant workers fail to improve.

The communist restaurant workers fail to improve because they get the all benefits of improvement – job security, salaries, pensions – without the effort required to actually improve.

It’s the same with parents.

Parents fail to improve because they get all the benefits of parenthood, without the effort required to actually improve.

What are the benefits of parenthood?

The lifelong devotion of their children.

In the realm of *relationships*, practically, legally and morally, children inevitably move from a coercive monopoly to the voluntary free-market.

When they are young, children have to go home – and stay home.

Children have to interact with their parents, have to obey their parents, have to submit to their parents, have to agree with their parents, have to eat the food their parents provide, and submit to any abuse and violence that may be inflicted.

When children reach adulthood, they don’t have to do *any* of that!

The coercive monopoly inevitably gets privatized.

Communism turns into capitalism.

Fascism turns into the free-market.

Violence becomes voluntarism.

And voluntarism *is* quality.

That which is coerced is always the opposite of quality – because if it was quality, it would not need to be coerced.

If somebody wants to sell you a brand-new Lamborghini for twenty dollars, they don't have to threaten, bully or manipulate you to make the purchase.

A convenience store owner who sells a winning lottery ticket does not have to lock the door, pull out his gun and force the winner to cash it in.

A beautiful woman comes up to a young single man and asks him to go out for coffee, she does not need to chloroform him, put a bag over his head and drag him into her windowless van in order to get him to the coffee shop.

Parenthood starts with monopoly – and ends with voluntarism.

In the example above, the lazy government employee starts working as if her job was immediately subject to strict free-market reviews – because it very soon will be.

Good parents look at their children every single day and say: "I am going to parent as if you could choose from any parents in the world – even in your own imagination – or have no parents at all."

Parenthood starts with power, and ends with pleading.

You are everything when your children are young – they don't have to call you when they get older.

Imagine the thoughts of a man whose wife was forced to marry him – but the laws are changing, so that she can divorce him at will in the very near future.

Will he change his behaviour at all?

Of course he will – he will become more thoughtful, more loving, more attentive – a better husband overall.

Both the government worker and the entitled husband might in fact be far happier working harder and doing better.

They might look back at this transition in their lives and thank their lucky stars that they were dragged out of their quicksand of laziness, hostility and entitlement – and moved into the quicksilver light of actual love and productivity.

Most parents parent as if their children will *never* have a choice about spending time with them.

So many parents start off with aggression, and end up with guilt trips, continued verbal abuse and play-the-victim manipulations.

But the simple fact of the matter is that adult children do not have to see their abusive parents.

If adult children continue to see and provide resources to relentlessly abusive parents, they are rewarding their parents for deeply immoral behaviour.

They are ensuring the continuation of abuse in this darkening world – in the same way that the new owner of the government industry who never fired any unproductive employees would continue to support and reward laziness.

The Most Hidden Secrets

There are a number of secrets in the world that are kept amazingly well-hidden.

The propaganda – across much of the world – has been that it is right and good and proper and virtuous and noble and admirable to get out of an abusive relationship that you voluntarily chose – but that it is ungrateful and evil and wrong and cruel and selfish to escape an abusive relationship that you never ever chose!

Who runs the world?

The people who make up and propagate these contradictory tangles of moral horrors.

Parents abuse their children because they *never expect to suffer any negative consequences for their abuse*.

Politicians start useless wars because they never expect to suffer any negative consequences for their evils.

We can't do much about the military-industrial complex, but we damn well *can* do something about our own parents – and our own parenting.

There are truly grand souls in this world who do the right thing no matter what. Even if it costs them everything, they will stand up for what is right and good and true and noble.

We cannot build society on these wild exceptions to the general rule.

Most people respond to incentives.

They do not do what is *right*, they do what benefits *them*.

If abusive parents never suffer any negative consequences for their abuse, then their abuse remains a net positive to them.

How do we know what people want to do?

We look at what they actually do – particularly when no one forces them to do it.

A man who has an affair cannot reasonably claim that he never *wanted* to have that affair – because he had it. The proof is in the pudding, as the saying goes.

A man who goes to the beach instead of writing an exam cannot reasonably claim that all he wanted to do was write the exam!

Abusers prefer to abuse – how do we know this?

Because they choose to abuse.

Contrary to popular belief, child abusers do not have a gun to their heads, forcing them to abuse their children.

There are in fact no laws compelling people to abuse their children.

You don't go to jail for not hitting your children – you don't get fined for failing to verbally abuse them – you don't receive twenty lashes for refusing to confine them to their rooms or jam them down on the stairs.

Not abusing children is perfectly legal – at least in the West.

You don't even go to jail for failing to genitally mutilate your sons.

If a woman is not compelled to do something, but chooses to do that thing, then clearly she prefers to do that thing.

She may have regrets, but that is a different matter.

A man who smokes for forty years obviously prefers smoking to not smoking – when he gets sick, he may bitterly regret smoking, but he can't say that he never *wanted* to smoke in the past.

A sober woman who voluntarily sleeps with a man may regret it the next day, but it makes little moral sense to say that she never wanted to sleep with him at all.

We know she wanted to sleep with him because she did in fact sleep with him!

We know that abusive parents want to abuse their children, because they do in fact abuse their children.

If someone wants to do X – and will never experience any negative repercussions from doing X – and continually does X – then we know for a certain fact that that the person prefers doing X – and will probably never stop doing X.

If parents who abuse their children can convince their adult children to continue to see them, provide for them, give them time, energy, money and resources – and comfort in their old age, and endless visits when they get sick – then why on earth would parents who prefer to abuse their children ever refrain from abusing their children?

You can't stop evil without consequences.

You can't reform coercion without voluntarism.

You can't reform parenting without choice.

Parents will never do better until they face consequences for doing worse.

If you have relentlessly abusive parents, and as an adult you continue to provide them time, energy, money, resources, "respect," and "love," then you have zero cause to complain about the terrible state of the world.

You are providing massive positive incentives to evildoers – and thus have no cause to complain about the evils that surround you.

You're like a woman paying \$100,000 a year to a conman, who then complains about the existence of conmen.

Whatever you subsidize, you get more of.

If you subsidize evil, you get more evil.

Lotteries would collapse overnight if they stopped paying out winnings – you keep paying your abusive parents, and then complain that the world is full of corrupt people who abuse power.

Human beings are always corrupted by power.

As a parent, you resist this corruption by remembering the voluntary nature of parent/adult child relationships.

Parents have power while their children are young – if they continue to retain all that power, and all those benefits, when their children grow up, then yet another log is thrown on the bonfire that burns down the world.

Now, if you were abused as a child, as an adult I think it's worth talking to your parents, explaining the wrongs they did, and telling them your own thoughts, experiences and feelings.

You can ask for acknowledgement, apologies and restitution.

The best-case scenario is that they admit fault, take responsibility, go to therapy, make restitution – and who knows, that might be enough to convince you to continue the relationship.

There is no worst-case scenario.

If they escalate and abuse and attack and gaslight – then you know for a fact that the abuse will never end, and you have just saved yourself decades of continued horror.

If your parents double down on their abusive habits, then you know for certain that they will abuse your own children – either directly, or indirectly, by undermining and abusing you.

It's painful, of course – but so what?

Pain is often the price of progress.

This kind of conversation is painful for your abusive parents – but that's all right, you can just tell them this:

"I'm sorry that it's so painful for you, but if there's one thing you taught me by hitting me, it's that it's essential to experience negative consequences for your bad deeds."

I mean, if they hit you for talking back when you were five, surely they accept that bad behaviour can only be solved by negative consequences – and so you holding them to account as adults falls entirely in line with their entire moral philosophy!

Either they accept their "punishment" – or they rail against you, thus proving that they were utterly wrong and immoral to hit you, or call you names, since bad behaviour should apparently *never be punished!*

Also, I'm sure that you were punished as a child for lying – now, as an adult, when you tell the truth about your experiences as a child, your parents punish you for telling the truth!

The punishment is the constant – the abuse is the goal. The “morals” are just the gas-lighting excuse, which is as vile a set of justifications as can possibly be imagined.

Parenting will improve when parents understand that they have no guarantees that their adult children will never confront them, tell the truth, and hold them to account.

Knowing that parenting is going to get privatized is the only chance that parenting will improve.

The Rules of Peaceful Parenting

Peaceful Parenting is based on the simple but radical notion that your highest moral standards should be applied to your children.

If you would never dream of hitting an adult, don't hit your children.

If you would never dream of insulting your boss, don't insult your children.

If you would never dream of screaming at a policeman, don't scream at your children.

If you could never be persuaded to punish a waiter for getting your order wrong, don't punish your children for making mistakes.

If you would find it unbearably humiliating if your boss forced you to sit on a set of stairs in public for making a mistake at work, don't give your children "timeouts."

If you want your children to tell the truth – first, tell the truth yourself, then never punish them for telling the truth.

If you want your children to respect other people's property, you must first respect your children's property.

If you want your children to use their words rather than their fists, you must first use your words rather than your fists with your children.

If you want your children to treat you and others well, first treat your children well.

If you want your children to respect you, you must first act in a manner worthy of respect – and of course, if you look in your heart, you will clearly see that you would never respect someone who lost her temper, yelled at, insulted or hit helpless and defenseless little children.

If you want your children to listen to you, you must first listen to them.

If you don't like the idea of your children becoming bullies, don't bully your children.

When you find yourself upset at your children's behaviour, first look in the mirror and ask yourself: *what did I do to create this in my children?*

I mean, if you were solely responsible for teaching your children language, who would be to blame if they used the wrong words?

Complaining about your children is like ridiculing a mirror – they are accurate reflections of your behaviour, just as a mirror is an accurate reflection of your face.

If you want your children to resist peer pressure, you must first model resisting peer pressure yourself.

If you want your children to avoid bad company, you must first avoid bad company yourself – even if that bad company is your own parents or siblings.

If you want your children to develop self-discipline, you must first develop self-discipline yourself – in particular, eating well, exercising, and being in control of your temper.

If you want your children to spend less time using electronics, you must become more entertaining and interesting to them than tablets.

If your children are playing a lot of video games, either join in with their play, or create activities that engage them more.

In general, if you want your children to behave in a certain manner, you must consistently behave in that manner for months or years ahead of time.

No one would expect a toddler to learn English if his parents did not already speak it.

You must be fluent in the language you want to teach your child.

Morality is just another kind of language.

If you want your children to be good, first be good *yourself*.

If you want your children to have integrity, you must consistently model integrity for years beforehand.

If you want your children to take responsibility for their actions, you must take full responsibility for your own actions for years beforehand.

If you want your children to apologize when they are in the wrong, you must first model apologizing to them when *you* are in the wrong – as happens with every parent from time to time.

If you want your children to stand up to bullies, you first must stand up to bullies – even if those bullies are within your own family of origin.

If you want your children to develop good habits, you must model those habits for years ahead of time.

Whatever you wish to create in your children, you must first manifest in your own behaviour.

You cannot teach a language to a child that you are only starting to learn yourself. Preparing for parenthood requires the learning and practice of the highest ethical standards for years before welcoming a child into your life.

It is still possible to be a Peaceful Parent if you have failed to prepare in this way, but you must acknowledge this deficiency, and apologize to your children for your inevitable lapses in the morality you failed to consistently practice before they came along.

If you have abusive parents, either they must apologize, reform and make restitution – or you must accept the inevitable results of having abusers around your children.

If you expose your children to abusive people, you are telling them *very clearly* that you would rather appease bad people than actually protect your offspring.

Your children will then clearly see the hierarchy of life, which is that people pretend to be virtuous, while constantly giving way to and appeasing wrongdoers.

They will clearly understand that abusers run the world, and have the most power, and only have to snap their fingers to have all of the supposed “moral” people bend to their will.

If you expose your children to abusive people, those children will understand at a deep and visceral level that “virtue” is a mere gobbledygook of self-serving syllables – while wrongdoers always get their way, and run the world.

“Virtue” is thus revealed to your children as a fundamental hypocrisy – a smug camouflage covering up a very real enslavement.

Since “virtue” equals hypocrisy and enslavement, when you tell your children to be good, all they hear is that you really, really want them to be hypocritical and enslaved.

What do they truly understand from your words and deeds?

Simply this:

“Moral” people defer to evildoers and call themselves “good.”

Then they want their *children* to be “good” – which means: lying about virtue and serving evildoers until the day they die.

And then these parents wonder why their children roll their eyes when receiving moral lectures.

You must be different.

You must *show* your children that virtue equals strength – this means having strength over your own negative impulses, and showing them that virtue is stronger than evil, by keeping evil at a distance, and never giving it direct power over you or your children.

Children – especially boys – have no love for weakness, and every time you defer to and appease evildoers – while calling yourself noble and virtuous – you provoke them in to feel contempt and disgust at the pretense of virtue.

If you trained your children in martial arts, then sent them into combat with their arms and legs bound, how receptive would they be to your future instructions?

They would roll their eyes and scorn you if you ever tried to train them again.

If your children see you get bullied – by parents, relatives, siblings – then they will lose respect for you, and gain respect for the bullies.

You have nothing to complain about when this happens – because you only get bullied because you have lost respect for yourself, and retained your respect for the bullies.

Peaceful Parenting and Moral Mistakes

Children make mistakes – and adults make mistakes.

Children are born error-free – babies can’t be considered to “make mistakes.”

Thus, in the parent-child relationship, it is the *adults* who make mistakes first.

Naturally, we want our children to own up to their mistakes, tell the truth, apologize and make restitution where necessary and possible.

Since we as parents make mistakes *first*, we must clearly model our moral responses to our mistakes in front of our children.

It is a strange fact of life that most people believe that taking responsibility for one's mistakes – and apologizing and making restitution – somehow destroys the respect that other people have for them.

It is true that in many dysfunctional families, apologizing and admitting fault is used as a weapon against people for years or decades to come – but everyone understands that this is destructive.

If you have ever been in the fortunate position of being on the receiving end of a heartfelt apology, appropriate restitution and a solemn promise to avoid repetition of the wrong – you know that your admiration and respect for that person goes through the roof!

If a man genuinely apologizes to a woman, and she snarls and sneers and holds it over him in the future, then she is a dysfunctional person, and unworthy to be the custodian of his heart or the mother of his children.

When we see a parent screaming at and/or hitting a child, it is clear to us that the parent has completely lost control – and is in grave danger of doing great harm.

We have no respect for such a raging parent.

Raging parents very often abuse their children on the grounds that their children have lacked self-control in some area. Their children have done something “bad” such as sneaking candy, hiding something broken, hitting a sibling and so on – because those children lacked self-control and the willingness to defer gratification.

However, a parent who indulges her own vicious temper is displaying *a thousand-fold the exact vice she is attacking her children for!*

Don't imagine for a moment that her children do not deeply understand this.

A little boy loses control of his temper and hits his sister – his mother then loses control of *her* temper and hits her boy.

Who is more in the wrong?

The little boy, or the fully-grown adult?

Also, how did the little boy learn that it was okay to lose control and hit someone?

Because he has doubtless seen his mother do it a hundred times.

A thousand times perhaps...

A little girl calls her brother “stupid” – her father yells at her that she is “bad” for using such a word.

So, it's wrong for a child to call another child a bad word – but it's *good* for an adult to call a child a bad word.

A mother snaps in irritation at her daughter for “not listening” – but that very morning, the daughter struggled to tell her mother about her dream, while her mother was checking her phone.

Parents get angry at a child for taking something, then use the magical word “confiscation” to cover up their own taking of the child’s property.

If a brother locks his sister in a room, the parents get enraged, and punish the brother by locking him in his room.

Now, of course, parents respond to these “contradictions” by saying that they are only acting in reaction to the actions of their children.

“We are punishing the child by locking him in his room, so that he understands how bad it is for him to lock his sister in her room!”

But that is a central question – the chicken and the egg, so to speak.

Where did the child learn the behaviour?

If the parent has never modelled bad behaviour, then the bad behaviour must be innate to the child in some manner – a form of Original Sin.

However, if the bad behaviour is innate to the child, then it really can’t be considered “bad.”

We don’t blame, denigrate or punish children for going through puberty – because the process of puberty is innate to the body of the child.

We don’t punish boys for getting taller, or girls for developing hips.

We don’t punish children for having the wrong eye colour, or a single nose, or a genetic defect such as a harelip or hearing problems.

Punishing a child for something he has no control over is abusive – by definition.

Even abusive people recognize this.

If the parents have been perfect, but the child is “bad,” then the “badness” of the child does not come from the environment, but rather is innate to his nature.

In other words, he has no control over his tendencies to “badness.”

“Ah,” say his parents, “but children are *born* bad, and have to be punished and controlled into becoming good.”

Interesting.

This means that any “bad” behaviours which continue must be blamed on the parents.

For instance, cats do not naturally do their business in a litterbox, but have to be trained to do so.

If a cat fails to poop in a litterbox, we don’t blame the cat, but rather the owner.

Do you understand?

No matter which way you look at it – *there is no rational basis for punishing children.*

How many parents get angry at their teenagers for choosing peers over their parents – when those same parents chose careers – peers – over their children in years past?

If you have modelled bad behaviour, such as not paying attention, hitting, yelling, name-calling, losing your temper, blaming the child for something that is in fact your fault – then the “bad” child is simply mirroring what you have done, and the fault lies with yourself, not your offspring.

If you have never modelled any bad behaviour – if such actual angels truly walk among us – then the child’s bad behaviour is either coming from somebody else’s bad behaviour – a dysfunctional uncle, say – or it is innate to the nature of the child.

If the child’s bad behaviour has come from someone other than you, then it is still entirely your fault and responsibility as the parent – for the simple and obvious reason that *you are in complete control of who your children are exposed to.*

If you have an uncle who behaves badly, and you allow this uncle around your children, then your children will accept that you must – at least to some degree – approve of this behaviour.

If your uncle is responsible for your children’s bad behaviour, then it is your uncle who must be punished, not your children.

If you choose a tutor who teaches your children rude words, who is to blame? The tutor, of course – but also you for hiring him – and certainly *not* your children.

If the equation is that children must be “punished out” of their bad behaviour, and your uncle still manifests bad behaviour, then the blame lies not with your child for mirroring that behaviour, but with your uncle’s parents, for failing to train *him* out of his bad behaviour!

If your child exhibits bad behaviour, but everyone around him has been a perfect angel since before he was born – an impossibility, of course, but let’s run with it – then this “bad” behaviour is innate to your child, which means that he should not be punished for it.

(I don’t believe that – absent significant brain injury – “bad” behaviour can arise from good modelling – any more than I believe that speaking Japanese can spontaneously arise from children never exposed to Japanese. If your child broke his arm, and you took him to the doctor, and the doctor asked how he broke his arm, and you replied: “Nothing – nothing happened, it just broke on its own, with no outside force or impact” – well, your doctor would not believe you – or if he did, he would be very alarmed. If no outside force broke your son’s arm, then his bones are just dissolving for some terrible medical reason.)

Naturally, most children – especially boys – exhibit significant levels of aggression in infancy and toddlerhood – but that has no more moral significance than the fact that they wake up crying and disturb their parents. These are just instincts, beyond the conscious control of infants and toddlers, and therefore cannot be judged morally.

If your roommate wakes you up by screaming several times a night, that is thoughtless, rude and abusive.

He has a choice.

Your baby does not.

It is immoral and abusive to punish children for unchosen, innate characteristics and actions.

I mean – we would never *dream* of punishing a child for having epilepsy, or asthma – because children have no control over these ailments.

If your theory is that children are just innately bad – that they never mirror any bad actions of others – and that the “cure” for this badness is punishment until the badness disappears – then why do you not apply this rule to any of the bad people in your adult life?

If your uncle gets drunk and yells at people, then surely he should be punished, until this bad behaviour disappears?

However, your children see you continually inviting your uncle to family gatherings – and then, perhaps complaining about him afterwards – but the invitations continue to stand.

If your own parents insult or demean you in front of your children, but you continue to invite them over, then your kids clearly understand that in no way do you believe that “bad” behaviours must be punished until they disappear – in fact, they see you rewarding all sorts of bad behaviours with continual invitations to drinks, dinner and a wide variety of engaging and enjoyable social events.

In other words, they know that being punished for “bad” behaviour is just a characteristic of being a child – adults get away with whatever they want!

Emulating Adults

Now, if you can find a child who never wants to emulate adults, or grow into and achieve the power of adulthood, then congratulations – you have found a child from an alien species!

Since adults are almost never punished for their bad behaviour – and only children are – then children fully and deeply understand that such “punishments” are merely acts of *power*, not of *morality*.

How did they know this?

It’s simple – adults who misbehave are not punished, but rather rewarded.

Adults clearly have greater moral responsibility than children do – therefore those who have the least excuse for their bad behaviour get rewarded the most – while those who have the best excuse for their “bad” behaviour get punished the most.

Therefore, the equation is not “punishment for bad behaviour” – but rather “punishment for weakness.”

The child is not punished because he is “bad” – because bad adults are rewarded – the child is punished because he is weak, while adults are rewarded because they have power.

Adults can sometimes have a hard time remembering this, but children live in a world of vastly different sizes – a five-year-old can be five times smaller than a fifteen-year-old.

If a fifteen-year-old and a five-year-old got into a fight, and an adult broke them apart, crying out, “Pick on someone your own size!” – and then proceeded to punish the five-year-old, this would be incomprehensible, right?

When bigger teenagers bully much smaller children, children clearly understand that the bullying is an expression of power, not morality.

The bully is larger, his victim is smaller – and that is that.

If you punish children for their “bad” behaviours, but reward adults for their bad behaviours, you’re just another bully! You are larger, and stronger, so you “punish” those who are smaller and weaker.

You’re even worse than the obvious bully – at least the bully doesn’t pretend to be inflicting “moral” lessons – he just wants the smaller kid’s subjugation or lunch money!

Children cannot fight back – just as the little girl cannot fight back against the teenage bully – and so children are aggressed against.

The mean uncle *can* fight back, so he is *rewarded* with further invitations, *not* aggressed against!

There is no principle in the world called “punish people for their bad behaviours.”

There is only: “Punish the weak and innocent, while rewarding the strong and guilty.”

“Punish children for their bad behaviours” equals “Aggress against the weak for behaviours beyond their control.”

Reward the guilty, punish the innocent...

Punish those with no control, reward those with great control.

Punish victims for the actions of the bully – reward the bully no matter what.

And we wonder where *power-lust* comes from?

It comes from the desire to escape punishment, and it is modelled by parents who only punish the helpless, while rewarding the powerful.

We’ve all been there, let’s be honest.

Peaceful Parenting is simply the refusal to be a bottomless moral hypocrite.

We all have to teach our children virtue – let’s at least strive to do it in an honest and consistent manner, rather than destroying virtue through bullying and hypocritical manipulations.

The Ethics of Peaceful Parenting

Morality is a funny business – the moment that you say something is *wrong*, everyone immediately asks you what they have to do instead.

Whenever you successfully define immorality – what people must *not* do – they will immediately demand to know what they *must* do.

It’s very strange when you think about it...

If I convince a man that he should not become a thief, because stealing is wrong – is it rational for him then to demand that I tell him exactly what he *should* do with his life instead?

If you convince me that it's a bad idea to travel to a certain neighbourhood in Detroit, is it reasonable for me to then demand that you tell me exactly where I *should* travel and live, in great detail, for the rest of my life?

We all accept that rape is immoral and evil – does that mean that whoever convinces us that rape is evil must then tell us exactly how to woo women, and who to marry?

Was it incumbent upon those opposing the historical practice of slavery to tell everyone *exactly* what they had to do after the end of slavery?

Would that not be an *extension* of slavery?

If I convince you not to assault people, am I then responsible for choosing your circle of friends in exact detail?

It's very strange...

Defining something as immoral means that it's wrong to do that thing – if not doing that thing means you have to do some *other* specific thing, what has happened to your freedom? What has happened to your free will? What has happened to your *choice*?

Saying “don't murder” does not give you a specific blueprint on how to live your life – any more than saying “You can't live in my house” tells you exactly where you have to live for the rest of your life.

It is a strange indication of how much people thirst to be ordered around that when something gets banned, they immediately hunger for another order, another commandment, even *more* constrictions on their freedoms!

“If slavery is immoral, how am I to live?”

This is the ultimate demand of the endless slave: “Order me what to do after the end of being ordered what to do.”

How Should You Parent Your Children?

I don't know!

I don't know exactly how you should parent your children – you are not a robot to be programmed, and no moral choice is worth a damn if it is any kind of order or commandment!

If your doctor tells you to stop smoking, he's saying you can do just about anything *other* than smoke. Interpreting his suggestion to stop smoking as a commandment to become a marathon runner or a heroin addict is taking entirely too much out of the conversation.

He's just telling you what *not* to do – he's not commanding you to do anything positive or specific.

If I tell you: “Don't beat your wife!” – I'm not telling you who to marry, or when to marry – or whether to marry at all.

If I'm telling you: "Don't aggress against your children" – I'm not telling you what to do with them – I'm just telling you what *not* to do with them!

It says a lot about our addiction to aggression against children that we feel utterly lost if we accept that we should never do it.

How long do you have to be a slave before even the *possibility* of freedom fills you with hopelessness, inertia and despair – and a bottomless desire to be endlessly commanded?

How long do you have to be a criminal before even the *idea* of living a lawful life becomes incomprehensible and alien to you?

Come *on*...

I ask this with great love and deep sympathy...

How long have you been bullied?

Long enough that me telling you not to bully others prompts you to demand that I bully you?

When the British Navy largely ended the worldwide practice of slavery, we got the modern world and all its miracles, because labour-saving devices and approaches are only economically valuable when labourers are paid, not owned.

Slavery is deeply evil – both in the violence it requires, and the progress it denies.

Enslavement robs the present – and murders the future.

Opposing slavery means liberating people from basic human ownership – leaving them free to move and pursue whatever careers and lives they choose.

I don't know how you should parent your children.

I don't know how you should earn your living.

I know you shouldn't be a slave.

I know that you should not be aggressive towards your children.

I know that you should not threaten them, hit them, yell at them, terrorize them, confine them, insult them or bully them.

And you know it too, deep down – especially after I have made the case.

When slavery ended, massive creativity and economic progress erupted across the world.

When we reject aggression against our children – love, devotion, happiness and tenderness will erupt across the world – reshaping the world in wonderful ways that even the end of slavery could not achieve.

What does the world look like when children are finally reasoned with, rather than beaten and abused?

The rational among us – and you are now among our number, like it or not – constantly mourn the absence and murder of reason in the world.

We weep over the prevalence of mental illness, exploitation, destruction, violence, and abuse.

We rail against the cold-hearted, the manipulative, the liars and cheaters – the addicts, destroyers and hurt people who hurt others – the broken people who break others – who grow and rage and fester and dominate across the world.

We rage against war, debt and the stealthy theft of inflation. We shudder in the faces of those who mutilate their own bodies and souls in the mad pursuit of being loved for who they are, rather than what they provide.

We hang our heads in sorrow in the face of souls so shattered that they can only find scant comfort in pet ownership, rather than friendship, love, marriage and children.

We shudder in the presence of those who break bloody lips endlessly blowing the trumpets of their own imaginary virtues – virtues that must forever be paid for by the subjugation and enslavement of others, through taxes and debt and money printing.

We recoil from the fantastic array of fantasy flesh paraded by women to extract money from men desperate for sexual contact.

We falter in the face of those who blame others for their own bad decisions, and run to any and all sophists willing to lift the mantle of responsibility from them.

We get teary-eyed at those who follow the Pied Pipers of eternal adolescence off the cliffs of immobility – rejecting natural and healthy adult responsibilities for the sake of self-pity, distraction and blame.

We fear the criminals who steal from us because their own childhoods were stolen from them.

We flee the violent and abusive who were taught the bloody language of exploitation and destruction by the endless aggression of their implacable parents.

We fear those who attack us because we failed to protect them as children.

I don't know how you should be a parent – but I damn well know what you should *never ever* do.

I don't know who you should marry – but I damn well know you should never beat your lover.

I don't know who or what you should get angry at – but I know you shouldn't assault people, or murder them.

I don't know how you should earn your daily bread, but I know you should not steal it.

It is a mark of how much we have been brutalized that when someone says to us: *Stop brutalizing children* – we genuinely have no idea what to do.

To pierce this fog, let us examine a few possibilities.

What If My Children Lie to Me?

Spoiler...

Your children *will* lie to you – just as you will lie to them, to others – and to yourself.

One of the challenges of religious morality is that it contains commandments that you must follow irrespective of your relationships.

In other words, your primary moral relationship is with God, not others, or virtue itself.

This is where the concept of, for instance, Christian forgiveness comes from – forgiveness is often viewed as a commandment from God, not a blessing to be earned by contrition and reparations from those who have wronged you.

I don't subscribe to this point of view. (For more on my approach to ethics, please review my free book *Universally Preferable Behaviour: A Rational Proof of Secular Ethics*, available at www.freedomain.com)

In the extreme pacifist view, violence is morally unacceptable even in an extremity of self-defense.

In the common-law tradition, defensive violence becomes acceptable once you are violently aggressed against.

You are not allowed to shoot someone – unless that someone has pulled a gun on you.

The commitment to nonviolence is not an absolute, but a *relationship*.

If you order a cell phone online, and agree to pay \$500 for it – you are not obligated to pay the money if you never receive the phone.

The obligation to send the \$500 is contingent upon the seller fulfilling his end of the bargain, which is to send you the phone.

Your obligation is not an absolute – *send \$500 no matter what* – but a *relationship*.

If someone steals your bicycle, it is morally acceptable to take it back.

If someone cheats you out of \$100, it is morally acceptable to lie to that person to get your money back.

Many moral scenarios are put forward in defiance of this basic reality.

“If a man demands to know where your wife is, so that he can murder her, are you obligated to tell him the truth about her whereabouts?”

No sane person says ‘yes’ – Immanuel Kant excepted – and so, since you support lying, *telling the truth* cannot be an absolute!

The idea that you owe a moral obligation called “telling the truth” to a man threatening murder is like saying that you owe marriage to a stalker, or compliance to a kidnapper.

Skipping over the immorality of threatening to murder someone – and focusing on whether you should tell the truth about where your wife is – is the same as skipping over the abuse of a parent, and focusing only on the behaviour of the child. (In fact, it comes from the same psychological source.)

Understanding that morality is a *relationship* is essential to parenting.

When your child lies, you can say the following:

“So, you didn’t tell me the truth, which I understand – it’s a natural reaction to try and get out of trouble, or achieve something good. It’s a temptation – and we all give into it from time to time, but it’s not a good thing in general – and I’ll tell you why. Do you remember when I said on the weekend that we were going to go to the playcenter, and you got very excited and happy? Yeah, we had a great time, I’m really glad we went! However, if I told you that we were going to the playcenter, but then I never *took* you to the playcenter, how happy would you be? If I told you that once you brushed your teeth, we could play a video game – how would you feel if I then said we weren’t going to play the video game – and that I never even promised you that we would!

“Well, you’d find it pretty hard to trust anything I said, if I kept lying to you, right? You wouldn’t have any way of planning what was going to happen in the future, or relying on my promises. I’m sure that you feel happier knowing that you *can* rely on my promises – well, it’s the same for me. I like knowing that I can rely on what you say, because then I can trust you, and plan my day, and know that you’re going to do what you say you’re going to do.

“If you lie – which again, I understand, we’re all tempted to – then is it fair to expect me to tell the truth to you? If you go into the candy store with five dollars, is it reasonable to give that five dollars to the man behind the counter, if he doesn’t give you any candy? Is it fair to pay ten dollars to see a movie, and then not be allowed into the movie theatre?

“When we go around to the houses on Halloween, would it be fair for people to charge you for the candy you take? No, of course not, because everyone understands that Halloween candy is free for the children.

“Most good things in society rely on people being trustworthy. Stores don’t keep everything in a big safe – they just assume that most people won’t steal. We don’t have to pay for our dinners at restaurants ahead of time – they just assume that we will pay at the end.

“And of course there will be times when you just can’t keep your word – remember when we had to go to the dentist, and there was that terrible traffic accident, and we just couldn’t get there on time? That happens – we just had to call and tell them what was going on. Those really should be the exceptions – if we showed up half an hour late to *every* dentist appointment, that would be a big problem, right?

“It would be kind of unfair to benefit from everyone *else* telling the truth, while giving yourself permission to lie. Again, it’s tempting, I understand that – but it’s not really fair, right?

“What happens when you lie is that other people don’t have to tell you the truth anymore – if you break *your* promises, other people don’t have to keep *their* promises, right? You do want to be able to trust me, right? That if I say we are going somewhere fun, that we actually *do* go there? Of course you do – that’s a grown up thing to do, it keeps the relationship fun, gives you things to look forward to.

“So, do we have a deal – you tell the truth, and I tell the truth, as well?”

Children can understand this from a very early age. Even toddlers know a good trade when they see it.

Of course, if you keep your word, but your child continues to lie – unlikely, but possible – then as a parent, you *need to stop keeping your word!*

You can promise to take your child to an arcade – and then break your promise.

Your child will be upset, and complain that you broke your word – and then you can respond with all the recent examples of your child breaking his or her word.

“Remember, I said that I didn’t have to keep my word if you don’t keep your word! You buy my honesty with your honesty! I’m happy to start keeping my word, but you have to start keeping your word as well! I mean, if you have an employee, but he doesn’t do any work, you don’t have to pay him, right?”

It’s the same thing with the endless battles that aggressive parents wage against their children about food.

You can say:

“My job as a parent is to deliver you to adulthood with a healthy mind and body. Like it or not – I hope you like it, but you don’t have to – I am responsible for what you eat, how much you exercise, and how healthy you are.

“That comes with some real benefits to you – you don’t have to work, or pay taxes, or pay rent. I am responsible for your education, health and well-being. Now, would you be happy if you got to adulthood, with really bad, painful and rotting teeth?

“Of course not! You’d face a lifetime of very expensive agony if I never told you to brush your teeth, or eat less sugar, or visit the dentist.

“Also, I know it’s not important to you right now, but you will want someone to kiss you at some point in your life, and that’s not going to happen if you have stinky teeth!

“I make decisions based on whether or not you will thank me later, as an adult – not whether you like me in the moment, right now.

“This isn’t just for you – I make decisions for myself like that as well. Sometimes – a lot of the times – I just want to sit on the couch and eat cheesecake. But nooo, I make a salad and then go exercise. I want to live a long and healthy life, so I need to deliver a healthy body to my future self.

“Sometimes, we see really fat people struggling to get out of a car, or get up from a couch. Do they look very happy? Of course not! But you can bet that they were happy, in the past, when they were sitting on the couch and eating cheesecake! Really, they don’t have a lot of love for their future selves if they’re willing to sacrifice their health and well-being for the sake of something that tastes good for about a minute.

“If you weigh 300 pounds at the age of eighteen, and you can’t get a date, and you are short of breath climbing the stairs, and you have trouble getting out of a car – will you thank me? Will you say: *I’m really happy and grateful that you let me eat all of those candies as a kid – I look back on those memories with great fondness, and I think it’s perfectly great that I ended up weighing 300 pounds!*

“Not likely, right?

“So – I have to plan for what you’re going to say to me when I deliver you to adulthood. I understand that right now you want candy all the time – if it’s any consolation, I love candy as well, everyone does! But you and I both know that you will blame me – and be very angry with me – if I let you eat candy all

the time, and you end up weighing 300 pounds. Right now, your life is largely under my control – and I know that gets frustrating – trust me, I had the same feeling at your age – but I am responsible for what you eat, and how much you exercise. And I know that you want to make your own decisions – I admire that, I want to encourage that as much as possible – but I am ultimately responsible for the decisions that you make. When you start making better decisions, I will stop controlling the outcomes. And there's nothing wrong with you making bad decisions – they're not bad really, because you're just a kid – and even adults – even I – sometimes make bad decisions in the moment.

“But, I do have to have good answers for you in the future, when you look back on my parenting, and judge how I did. Of course you won't want to be 300 pounds – you will want to be reasonably fit and healthy and slender. I think of myself in ten years, and I don't want to be 300 pounds either, so I have to have some compassion and responsibility for my own future self – and your future self as well.

“A big part of growing up is learning how to say ‘no’ to what feels good in the moment, but costs you a lot later on. With food, it's kind of a battle between your belly and your tongue. Your tongue wants things that are sweet and fatty and salty – your belly wants things that are healthy and nutritious. If you only please your tongue, you get fat and wreck your health. The food passes right past your tongue – it's your belly that has to do the real work. It's ‘once past the lips, forever on the hips.’

“Every kid has that experience of eating so much candy that they get sick – that's an example of your tongue winning, and your belly losing.

“On the other hand, good-tasting food is a great pleasure in life, so it's important to please your tongue as well, and not just your belly – you have to find a balance, which is a fun and complicated part of adulthood.

“It's the same with exercise. You want to do enough exercise to stay healthy, but not so much that you injure yourself or have no life outside of the gym.

“If I don't encourage you to do any exercise, that's bad for your body – particularly your bones, which get kind of soft and easy to break, which is seriously no fun – and I can't deliver you to adulthood with the body strength of your average tadpole. On the other hand, too much exercise can stress your bones and injure your joints and tendons – and I don't want you to become an adult full of aches and pains, and get mad at me for pushing you too hard.

“It's the same with education – it's important to know things, but not spend your whole childhood reading and studying, which means that you're not doing any exercise or having a social life.

“Having a social life is really important for your happiness and health and well-being – people who live alone go kind of crazy, as you know from your Aunt Ethel – but if you spend your whole time socializing, you never end up learning or doing much.

“Life is kind of like that guy we saw at the fun-fair with all the spinning plates on sticks – you have to keep a lot of things in balance, it can get kind of complicated – and priorities can change over time. Before I met your mother, I was really keen on dating – now, of course, not so much. Education is really important early on in life – in your last few years, not quite so much.

“It also depends what you want to do with your life – if you want to be an athlete, exercise is essential. If you want to be a musician, you have to practice – but you can't exercise while you're practicing, and you

can't practice while you're exercising, so you're going to have to choose to focus more on one or the other.

"Look – the whole point is – you can't just do what feels good in the moment forever. A lot of times, I don't want to go to work, I don't want to exercise, I don't want to eat super healthy, I don't want to sit down and do my taxes – but we have all of these great things in life – you have all these great things as well – because a lot of times, I do what I don't feel like.

"But of course, you can't spend your *whole* life doing things you don't want to. What kind of life would that be? You would be a kind of slave!

"When you were learning your words, you kind of had to trust that I was telling you the truth about what was what. I didn't tell you that the word for 'tree' was 'poop,' did I?

"I guess I'm asking for that same trust now – and for you to really *think* about what you want in the future. You don't want to be one of those people with soft bones, green teeth and a giant belly, right?

"I'm no athlete, but I'm reasonably healthy and fit – you see me saying 'no' to bad food, and exercising regularly. I mean, it wouldn't be much fun for you if I weighed 300 pounds, and couldn't come to playcenters or run in the park or go swimming and rock-climbing.

"So you benefit from me eating well and exercising – and you understand that *you* will also benefit in the future from eating well and exercising, and it's my job to see that you do – but the last thing I want to do is *force* you, which is why I'm telling you about all of these things, so that you can trust me, and start making these good decisions yourself!"

Now, these above speeches can be adapted to a wide variety of situations – but they all carry a common theme, which is:

1. Appeal to the child's self-interest.
2. Refer to the behaviour that you have consistently modelled.
3. Remind the child that good behaviour is a relationship, not an absolute.
4. Assert your authority through responsibility.

With regards to honesty, you appeal to the child's self-interest by reminding her that she benefits when you tell the truth.

You then can refer to your own honesty, which you have consistently modelled.

You can then remind her that if she doesn't tell the truth, you don't have to either.

Finally, you have to remind the child that you are responsible for her behaviour until she becomes an adult.

These four principles are easy to implement once you get used to them.

The toughest for most parents is number two – the consistent modelling of the behaviour you want to reproduce in your child.

If you want your child to keep her word, but you have broken your promises, then you need to fix yourself before lecturing her.

Having higher standards for children than you have for yourself will undermine and destroy your credibility, and lead to endless conflicts, because your child will instinctively grasp your rank hypocrisy.

You also need to model good behaviour in *all* your interactions – with your spouse, your relatives, your siblings – your child's siblings – and even the random strangers we all encounter in our journey through the day.

A child can't learn a language if the words keep changing – and the child can't learn morality without the ethical consistency that only parental integrity can achieve.

Credibility Is the Opposite of Vanity

Many of us have parents who wanted us to achieve in order to serve their own egos.

This is about as demotivating an incentive as can be imagined.

Your parents wanting you to do well so that *they* can brag to others often drives us to near-manic levels of self-sabotage.

If you want your child to obey you so that *you* feel better, your child will resist you.

We've all been in the situation where some salesman is pressuring us to buy something so that *he* can make money – not because *we* will benefit from the sale.

Imagine going to buy a car, and the salesman immediately pressures you to buy the most expensive vehicle on the lot – without even asking you whether you have any kids, or what you're looking for, or what your budget is.

Would you be eager to buy from him?

Of course not – you would completely understand that the transaction would be solely for *his* benefit, and against your own interests.

It's the same with parenting.

If a rug salesman in Morocco plied you with tea and sweet cakes, and then got angry at you for failing to buy an expensive carpet, because he had treated you with such benevolent hospitality – would you apologize and pay thousands of dollars for something you did not need?

I hope not!

If you expect your son to obey you because you are his parent, then you are taking refuge in a *category*, not gaining credibility through your own integrity.

I hope you would not expect your wife to obey you, just because you fell in the category of 'husband.'

You should never try to teach your child 'obedience.'

‘Obedience’ means surrendering your will to the authority of another without the requirement of self-interest or credibility.

We all know how disastrous it is for society when people surrender their own moral conscience and rational self-interest to those in ‘authority.’

This is just self-erasure in the face of bullying.

How likely would you be to work hard for a boss, knowing ahead of time that he will take all the credit and bonuses, and loudly proclaim that you never contributed anything?!?

It wouldn’t happen, right?

You really *don’t* want your children to just obey you – you want them to emulate your good behaviour, you want to inspire them with your examples – and you want to appeal to their self-interest. If you demand that obey you, then you are delivering them bound and gagged into the claws of manipulators, bullies and exploiters.

Teaching obedience is inflicting slavery.

Moral human beings obey virtue, not others.

Obedying *others* is enslavement – obeying *virtue* is liberty.

Your conscience records every action, and compares it to your stated ideals.

Expecting obedience requires inculcating fear and making threats.

Think of the people *you* obey without good reason – there is always danger at the root of these ‘relationships.’

‘Obedience’ is squarely in the predatory realm of *negative economics*.

‘Negative economics’ is when you act to avoid a negative, rather than pursue and achieve a positive.

You hand over your money to a mugger to avoid being shot or stabbed – this is *negative economics*.

You comply with a nagging wife to stop her nagging – this is negative economics.

You obey people to avoid negative consequences – which means obedience comes bundled together with resentment and rebellion.

Obedying people is like holding a balloon underwater – it’s going to pop up eventually.

If you drive your children into the underworld of negative economics, they will rebel as surely as Lucifer did.

If you call your mother due to a shameful sense of guilt and obligation – that is negative economics.

If your children obey you because you will bully, shame or threaten them otherwise – that is negative economics.

If you work a job you hate at a family business, because your father *needs* you, and says he can’t survive without you, that is negative economics.

Negative economics is always unsustainable.

Countries that start out as havens of freedom always turn into empires of enslavement – they turn from the positive economics of seeking liberty to the negative economics of avoiding jail – and inevitably end up collapsing.

Some negative economics are inevitable in life – but we should strive as much as possible for self-interested, positive outcomes and relationships, rather than the grim death march of avoiding unjust criticisms, shaming or abuse.

Those who inflict negative economics on others are openly confessing that they have nothing positive to offer, no value to bring to the table, no chance of bringing happiness to others.

Compliance and Resentment

Those we truly hate, we most comply with.

Complying with bullying traps the bully by giving her what she wants.

It is the ultimate form of passive aggression – destruction through obedience.

We destroy the bully by bribing his worst instincts with our own compliance.

Don't trap your children in that cycle.

Your goal as a parent is to deliver your children *from* evil, not *to* it, bound and gagged.

PART 2: PRACTICE

Parenting and General Integrity

One essential aspect of Peaceful Parenting is: *If you model, you don't have to punish.*

Children want to emulate their parents – this is an essential cultural and practical survival skill that evolved over countless eons.

The central question is: *If children are acting badly, where are they getting it from?*

Such “bad” behaviour is either innate, or it comes from the environment.

It's hard to think of another circumstance in which we punish people for their innate characteristics. Punishing someone for the colour of his skin is racist – punishing a woman for being a woman is sexist – punishing people for their limited brain functions is morally reprehensible!

Punishing children – who by their nature have limited brain functions – for innate characteristics such as being “bad” is wildly anti-rational, hypocritical and immoral.

Innate characteristics by their very definition are not chosen – I did not choose to have blue eyes; you did not choose your natural hair colour. “Badness” that is innate is not chosen, and therefore the child is not responsible for his or her “bad” behaviour.

Babies are unable to walk at birth – they gain the ability to do it at about one year of age. Imagine chatting with a mother at the park, with her baby sitting on her lap, and listening to her tell you how “damn lazy” her newborn was for not getting out of his crib and getting his own toys!

We would view this as monstrous, right?

In the development of infancy, babies strive and struggle to roll over, sit up, crawl and then walk.

It is a natural development – based upon innate desires, and observing their parents walking around.

It happens naturally if you let it – and if you *show* it!

It’s the same with moral development.

Babies are born concerned only with their own preferences and desires. They don’t think about the burden they place on their mothers by crying for breast milk three or more times a night.

It doesn’t take more than a few months for babies to start empathizing with their parents – trying to feed them back during meal-times, for example.²⁰

There is a phase of language development for toddlers that is truly mind-blowing – they seem to learn a dozen words a day, and it’s hard to figure out where they are getting it all from!²¹

Children want to emulate their parents – if their parents are moral and empathetic, those children will follow that path.

If their parents are aggressive and punitive – well, sadly, same.

Since you cannot morally punish a child for his or her innate characteristics – since we don’t do this anywhere else in society – if you believe that children are born “selfish,” you cannot punish them for their “selfishness.”

If bad behaviours are not innate – which they cannot be, since innate behaviours cannot be judged morally – then they must be coming from the environment.

It’s nature/nurture – usually a combination of the two, but those are the only two choices.

If you can’t punish children for innate behaviours – what can you punish them for?

Remember – children get their behaviours either from their nature, or from the environment.

Now – parents to a large degree choose the nature of their children, because they are in control of the most central variable that affects their children.

Do you know what it is?

Do you know what choice you make that has the most effect on the *nature* of your child?

²⁰ <https://parentingscience.com/do-babies-feel-empathy/>
<https://www.washington.edu/news/2018/01/16/a-touching-sight-how-babies-brains-process-touch-builds-foundations-for-learning/>

²¹ [Toddler ‘Word Spurt’](#)

Of *course* you do!

Your choice of who to make a baby with!

There seems to be no aspect of personality that is not affected by genetics – and you choose half of the genetics that builds your babies.

Let's say that you have a predilection for nervous women – well, you are more likely to have a nervous baby.

Let's say that you have a predilection for aggressive men – you are more likely to have an aggressive baby.

80% of IQ is genetic by late teens – if you have chosen an unintelligent mother for your babies, you are more likely to have less intelligent babies.

If a mother is obese during pregnancy, her children are more likely to gain excess weight.²²

Adult obesity is a choice – punishing babies for being overweight, when both the mother and the father chose obesity during pregnancy – the father because he did not work as hard as possible to ensure the mother was not obese, or chose an obese woman – is monstrous.

Imagine a mother who chose a very tall father for her children, and then punishes her sons for being tall.

In other words, *you* and your *partner* have chosen many of your baby's innate characteristics – your baby didn't.

Punishing a baby for the innate characteristics that *you have chosen* is beyond contemptible.

And – if the “bad” behaviours are not innate or genetic, then they must be *environmental*.

I guess I'm just a little bit curious – who do you think controls the environment of your baby and toddler?

Did they choose your household themselves?

Did they choose your family, their mother and father, the neighbourhood, the house you live in?

Did they choose your income, their sex and race, whether they were breast-fed or not, how attentive you are, how empathetic you are, how *moral* you are?

Did they choose whether you put them in daycare or stayed home with them?

Did they choose whether or not you are stressed and distracted?

Did they choose any medical issues?

Did they choose whether they get hit, or yelled at, or neglected?

Did they choose whether you loved them unconditionally?

Come *on*!

²² [Obesity During Pregnancy](#)

All babies would choose the best environment if they could – but all babies have to find a way to survive the environment they happen to land in.

You are entirely responsible for 100% of your children's genetics – and 100% of their environment.

You start with being responsible for 50% of their environment and genetics, because you are half of the parental team – but the other parent is only on your team because *you chose him or her*.

If you get to choose who is on a team, *you are 100% responsible for the composition of that team*.

Both you and your spouse are 100% responsible for your children's environment.

"Ah," you say, "but the father of my child abandoned me when he found out I was pregnant!"

Right.

You are 100% responsible for your child growing up without a father.

The father is also 100% responsible for his child growing up without a father.

Full Responsibility

It is *absolutely essential* that you never fail to take less than 100% responsibility for your choices.

Everyone who says, "Well, it's 50-50" is lying through their teeth.

Everyone claims things are 50-50 – and then throws all the responsibility on the other person's half.

Even people who claim that they are 99% responsible for something always end up blaming the other person more.

Whatever percentage you claw back from 100% responsibility will be where you end up dumping all your responsibility.

Just take 100% – it's the *only way to be responsible!*

Everything else is a cope and a dodge.

Once you accept 100% responsibility for your children's environment, you are ready to accept 100% responsibility for your children's behaviour.

Remember – you are completely responsible for 100% of your child's genetics, and 100% of his environment.

Babies and toddlers are entirely run by genetics and environment.

Therefore you are completely responsible for your children's behaviour when they are young.

I'm sure you've had a situation at work when your boss blames you for something he or she did.

Remember how frustrating and enraging that was?

Welcome to the childhood of parents who blame children for their *own* parental decisions!

I'm sure you've read about cops who plant evidence on innocent people in order to frame them and throw them in jail.

Monstrous, right?

Exactly.

It's not your *children* who are bad – it's *you* who are bad.

Projection 101.

It's a lot easier to punish your children for behaviours you dislike in yourself than it is to improve your own choices.

Single mothers often blame the eldest son for the anger they have against the absent father – is that fair?

Of course not.

Fathers angry with mothers often take it out on daughters – is *that* fair?

Teachers frustrated with bored students will literally drug them with methamphetamines rather than admit their own failures as teachers.

Is *that* fair?

It's monstrous!

You and your spouse control 100% of your children's genetics – fifty plus fifty.

You and your spouse control 100% of your children's environment.

And you *dare* to blame and punish your *children*?

Parenting and Moral Instruction

You cannot teach anyone anything that you do not know yourself.

I can't teach you how to tie a knot if I don't know how to tie it – I can't teach you Japanese if I don't know how to speak or read it – I can't teach you piano if I only know guitar.

You want to teach your children how to be good?

Excellent, that is the essential mission!

So – do you *know* what goodness is?

Is goodness obeying people in authority?

Good heavens, I hope you don't believe *that*!

Is goodness going through life without upsetting or offending anyone?

Absolutely not! That's just setting your kids up for a life of zombie conformity and subjugation to peer pressure.

Is it good to never push back against something you don't agree with?

Is "backtalk" always bad?

Is it good to give "respect" to those who have not earned respect?

If you think it's good for your children to pretend to respect you when they do not in fact respect you, then you are rewarding them for lying, and punishing them for telling the truth!

So – is it good to lie, or good to tell the truth?

You can't order them to tell the truth while also demanding that they lie to you.

I mean, technically you *can* do it, but it's kind of insane.

Is it good to hold those in authority to the same moral standards they inflict on everyone else?

Is it good to have integrity, or better to be hypocritical?

Is it hypocritical to impose strict moral standards on the weak, while constantly excusing the strong?

Is it good or bad to use aggression to get what you want?

Is it good or bad to use violence to get what you want?

Is it possible to love someone that you are afraid of?

Is fear the same as respect?

These are all essential questions, which very few parents even bother to ask – let alone answer.

What We All Agree On

You'd be very surprised at how much everyone agrees on the answers – as long as the questions are clear.

No one believes that it is truly virtuous to just *do what you're told*.

No one believes that powerful people should be excluded from the moral rules they impose on everyone else.

No one believes that it is good to use force or aggression to get what you want.

No one thinks that hypocrisy is good.

No one thinks that lying is good.

Everyone is a peaceful parent in theory – it's only in *practice* that they so often lose control.

If you want to be a personal fitness trainer, the first person you need to train is yourself.

If you want to be a piano teacher, the first person who needs to learn piano is you.

If you want to teach medicine, you have to learn medicine first.

If you want to teach your children to be good, *you must first become good yourself*.

That way, you can model best practices, rather than hypocritically punish “badness.”

Fat Fitness Trainers

If you had a chain-smoking, obese personal fitness trainer, would you take what he had to say very seriously?

If he was desperate to make you fit, but had no credibility with you, what would he do?

Let’s say that someone was going to pay him a million dollars if you lost weight and gained muscle mass – and he had to do it right away – and he also had to keep on smoking and overeating!

How would he approach this task?

Well, he would have to be manipulative and aggressive and bullying – and perhaps even violent – to get you to do what he *needs you to do to get the million dollars*.

Because he is not fit, he has no credibility – and because he has no credibility, you have no respect for him, and don’t want to do what he says.

But – ah, that sweet million dollars, he needs it so badly!

This analogy is imperfect – as all analogies are – because you can openly say to a fat fitness trainer that he has no credibility with you, because he is so unhealthy.

Imagine an abused child saying to his raging parent: “I won’t learn goodness from you, because you are a very bad person!”

Yeah...

That kid probably wouldn’t make it.

It’s certainly not worth taking the chance.

Instead of focusing on how good your children are, you need to look in the mirror and ask yourself: *How good am I?*

If you try to teach your children how to be good, but they don’t believe that you are good, you enter into an endless desperate pitched battle, where they try to escape your hypocritical rules, and you chase after them, pleading, threatening and bullying.

You cannot teach what you do not model.

You cannot model what you do not know.

If you don’t know what goodness is – and you don’t manifest it daily – then expecting your children to obey you or be inspired by you is beyond ridiculous – it’s pathetic, really.

Physician, heal thyself!

Peaceful Parenting and Ego

There is a very strange phenomenon in the modern world – people say that becoming a parent robs them of their identity, and they just end up doing everything for their children, and have nothing left over for themselves!

I find this bizarre on many levels.

I have never sacrificed *anything* by becoming a parent.

It's true that for about ten years, I didn't write any books – before that, I wrote one or two books a year – but so what?

I have been very happily married for over twenty years – it's true that, after I got married, I haven't dated anyone else – but so what?

Have I sacrificed anything by studying philosophy, and striving to live morally?

Sure, of course – on occasion.

The world is not overly friendly to truly moral men and women.

But overall, it has been an enormous positive!

I have also pursued a rigorous exercise regime for forty years – tens of thousands of hours spent sweating and grunting and panting.

Has that been a tragic sacrifice?

Compared to what?

Compared to being overweight, short of breath, low on energy, sleeping poorly, being unattractive to my wife and myself, losing 10 to 20 years of life?

Please!

If you only ever do what you want to do – and view your chosen obligations as unwelcome intrusions on your glorious and infantile narcissism – then you are living lower than an animal.

As parents, birds are constantly flying off to get food for their babies.

Mother whales breast-feed their calves underwater.

Lions bring meat to their children.

Gorillas carry water in their mouth for miles in order to satisfy their baby's thirst.

And – as a person, you are only alive because your parents endlessly deferred their own immediate gratifications in order to serve you and your needs – even if just your physical needs!

Since you only live due to the “sacrifices” of your parents, living only for your own immediate pleasure is a straight-up theft of life.

It is vampiric, predatory, exploitive.

It's like enjoying the success you gained because your parents invested in your education, then turning around and refusing to invest in your *own* children's education, because you want to buy a boat.²³

It's like being truly grateful that your parents left you some money, then burning up all that wealth on useless purchases, and leaving your own offspring with nothing at all!

The great chain of life that stretches back over 4 billion years has led to you, to your life, your capacity for love and thought and excitement and fear and achievement!

It is an incalculable sequence of struggles and survival – all culminating in *your* existence!

When you think of how many countless creatures had to fight and hide and reproduce and die – just to give you the incredible gift of life – then never wanting to sacrifice for anything or anyone else is taking *all* the sacrifices that came before you, and consuming them for your own selfish pleasure!

Your ancestors struggled to bring you life, so that you could continue their continuity.

Parents have children so that those children will also have children – how many parents would bother having children, if they knew in advance that they would never experience the joys of becoming grandparents, and watching the bloodline continue?

You are alive – you possess the great glory of existence – on the grounds that you pay it forward, and bring life to others – just as life was brought to you.

Human life is the greatest gift in existence, because we alone have the power of abstract thought and morality.

Every other life form can only *be* – but we can be *good*!

Every other life form has only *virility* – we also have *virtue*!

We carry within us the divine whispers of conscience – other creatures are merely programmed by lust and hunger and hormones, to eat and sleep and reproduce.

We are angels – other creatures are mere machines of consumption and reproduction.

We can create glories of art, philosophy, humour and inspiration – other animals can only blindly create more of themselves.

You don't *have* to reproduce, of course – 10% of married couples struggle with fertility, and that is a great tragedy.

But...

We only exist as the result of millions of generations of death and struggle, going back billions of years and you can, of course, be the only creature to break the chain, and swallow whole the sacrifices of entire eons of pain and reproduction, but it is petty and ignoble to a degree that would leave your ancestors dumbfounded.

²³ Forgetting the old adage that boat owners are only happy twice – the day they buy the boat, and the day they sell it.

Your ancestors survived plagues, famines, wars, ice ages, endless predation, death in childbirth – death from tiny cuts – to bring *you* – trembling and-bloody handed – the greatest gift of a *life* and a *mind*!

I guarantee you that they would not have bothered to make those sacrifices if they knew that you would selfishly throw it all away, for the sake of a little travel, some useless video games, some naked pixels on a screen – for *nothing*!

If you enjoy your life, but don't give it your all to pay it forward, you are staggeringly selfish!

If you *don't* enjoy your life, that is most likely because you are too selfish to have children.

Your life is not just for *you*, because you did not *create* your life!

Your life exists for the *continuance of life*.

Your life only exists because prior life continued – you are like a runner in a baton race – you take the baton in order to pass it forward, to *pay life forward*!

Your “ego” only exists because your ancestors subsumed *their* egos to a larger purpose – the purpose of having and raising all those brave souls who led to you!

The penultimate selfishness is consuming other people's sacrifices for the sake of your own vanity.

Perhaps you have very pretty eyes – do you know the billions of years of evolution, of survival and brutal natural selection – that it took for you to possess eyes at all?

Perhaps you are very smart – do you understand how many less intelligent people had to perish in order for your brilliant genes to flourish?

Perhaps you have great reflexes, and are good at sports – do you grasp how many slower, less coordinated people got violently dumped out of the gene pool, for your physical excellence to triumph?

If a hundred older people sacrificed their lives so that you could survive some disaster – how would they feel, if they could see you wasting the existence they died to provide you?

What about a thousand people?

A million?

A billion generations?

It is incomprehensible to me that people waste their lives.

And there is no bigger waste than avoiding parenting.

You are not sacrificing your ego by becoming a parent – you are *fulfilling your potential*!

It cannot be possible that – by creating a million egos in the future – your ego somehow loses out.

If I took a dollar from you, and gave you back a million dollars in the future – would you feel ripped off?

Would you rail against my “theft”?

That would be madness!

The joy of creating, nurturing and raising life is beyond compare!

Taking a child from squalling infancy to rational adulthood is like raising a dead city from the desert and filling it with brilliant people.

We can never be truly happy by selfishly exploiting the endless sacrifices of millions of people.

Taking an infinity of hard-won gifts, and then squandering them on our own selfish pleasures – what a shallow, ridiculous, petty and predatory existence!

You don't have sexual desires for the sake of satisfying your ego – such desires are for the sake of bringing brilliant new life into the world!

For women – your youthful beauty has great value so that one man will be happy to fund the creation and survival of an entire family! It is not for you to bounce from one place to another, having sex with strangers in return for a travel budget!

Your beauty is not for you to get free dinners, free money, free tickets, subsidized apartments – the value of your youthful beauty is a down payment on *motherhood*, not a condo!

And please, *please* remember this: *everything you think is free will have to be paid for, one way or another!*

Men – if you give money to women who will never mother your children, you are corrupting both yourself and them.

Women – if you take money from men that you would never consider having children with, you are mere prostitutes of opportunity, greedy exploiters of hormones designed for families – vampires of reproduction, taking money without giving life.

And as you know – your youthful beauty will fade like the blue of the sky at sunset, and at the age of forty, men of means will inevitably turn to younger women, and you will face *half a century* of isolation, bitterness and exclusion. There will be no turning back, there are no *do-overs* for female fertility – you will be abandoned, alone, facing an eternity of regret for choices you cannot fix. The special torture that awaits isolated women in particular will never let up, will never diminish – and will only end when you do.

You see, nature is generally fair – men have lower sexual market value when they are younger – but men have many more decades to choose to have children later.

Men can fix youthful foolishness – and have children even into their seventies – not recommended, but possible.

The door closes for women halfway through their life, and never reopens.

Sex is for making children, for pair-bonding, for families – not for vanity, lazy cash and provoking envy.

Women – you're supposed to gain resources for your *children*, not for another bikini and a trip to Bali.

Hijacking the purpose of nature for the sake of satisfying your vanity will only and forever lead to misery!

Everything you think is free has to be paid for – and the more you take, the more of your soul you lose.

It is not a sacrifice to tame your ego in pursuit of a moral goal – any more than it is a sacrifice to tame your appetite in pursuit of good health.

Gorging yourself on unhealthy food is the *real* sacrifice – and pleasing your ego at the expense of your happiness is the worst sacrifice of all!

You don't give up your pleasures by having children – children are one of the greatest pleasures in life!

Life becomes both simple and pleasurable when you operate by easy, universal principles!

When you get married, you become *one flesh*!

You don't have separate desires or preferences or goals – you are a *team*, like horses pulling a carriage.

Imagine driving a car, and one of the wheels suddenly decides to go off in a different direction.

You just wobble and crash, right?

I understand that a husband and wife are two different people, and preferences don't always coincide – but the idea that one of you can win *at the expense of the other* is madness!

Can you imagine an exercise regime that strengthens your left arm, but destroys your right?

Can you imagine a diet that causes your left leg to lose weight, but your right leg to gain weight?

Of course not!

You don't sacrifice *anything* by merging with the team that serves everyone's common goal!

And – what are the alternatives?

You can live as less than an animal, on the hedonism and pleasure of the moment – but everyone knows about the *hedonic treadmill*, that pleasures diminish over time – and often quite rapidly!²⁴

Think of how exciting it was to get your *first* paycheck – and then think how exciting it was to get your most recent paycheck!

Quite a difference, right?

Physical pleasures diminish over time – swinging to the negative if those passing pleasures have cost you meaning and virtue, slowly lowering you into the infinite hell of eternal regret.

Chasing pleasure alone kills your capacity to defer gratification – necessary for physical health and spiritual love.

If you can't defer gratification, you can't control your own emotions – if you can't control your own emotions, you cannot be loved, because you are too random to bring anyone trust and security.

You chase hedonism, and pleasure slowly diminishes into pain – but by then, you have often lost the capacity for virtue, integrity, love, trust – and meaning.

²⁴ [The Hedonic Treadmill](#)

Those, like me, who try to counsel you out of pursuing hedonism are actually desperately trying to *increase* your happiness – like a dietitian trying to get you to eat better, so you don't get diabetes and lose your eyesight. When you're blind and hobbling about on one foot, you *will* think back on your candy and cheesecakes with rage and bitterness.

All that was pleasurable in the moment has turned to the agony of regret.

And all this happens when you still have *decades* to go in life!

It is not a sacrifice to act sensibly in order to secure your own future happiness.

If you get married, you dedicate yourself to the happiness of your partner – which means being happy yourself, negotiating for the sake of mutual benefit – living with integrity, being moral, staying healthy and attractive – all these *good* things!

When you have children, you dedicate yourself to the happiness of your children – because that ensures your own future happiness as well!

You are not sacrificing happiness by serving your children, any more than you sacrifice health by serving the needs of exercise and a good diet.

If you dump your kids in daycare so you can run off to some job – you might make some money, but that money will diminish to nothing through inflation over time – and it will cost you the love of your children, since they clearly see that you chose money over them.

Later, when you get old and sick and lonely – you will ask your children to choose you over their money, by coming to visit you, and taking care of you, and helping you with the myriad challenges of getting old.

They will choose their money, guaranteed – and you will be left alone.

Maybe you will end up alone at the age of seventy-five, and live to eighty-five...²⁵

That is a long ten years.

A long, lonely decade – and it could be a lot longer than that!

When you are eighty, and ill, and alone, what will you think of the paychecks you abandoned your children for fifty years ago?

You can't buy love, or companionship, or family – you can't purchase people's desire to come and spend time with you.

One day, you will be cleaning out your attic – because you have to do *something*, right? – and you will come across your old paystubs, or some spreadsheet you printed out, or some newsletter you wrote, staying late that night in the office and missing your daughter's first appearance in a school play.

I guarantee you that absolutely *everyone* will have forgotten about that spreadsheet, that newsletter, that diversity report – but your daughter will *never* have forgotten that you missed her school play.

²⁵ Particularly women, who significantly outlive men, because – patriarchy?

You dumped your children in daycare in order to please your boss – when you are eighty, and you find your old paystubs, your boss has been dead for decades – but your *children* are still alive, and still remember...

Your long-dead boss can't give you any praise or company – but your children can still condemn you, and probably do...

The devil of temptation only reveals his price when it is too late to turn back.

The costs of vanity only show up when restitution has become impossible.

The symptoms of the worst illness only occur when death has become inevitable.

Do you think you are getting away with *anything*?

Everything is recorded – if you are religious, that is God – if you are secular, that is your unconscious, your *conscience*.

Live for your children – which means having a life yourself, having independence and integrity – and you will never die.

Live for yourself alone – and you live and die alone.

Peaceful Parenting and the Voluntary Family

If you are born into a crime family, do you have to *stay* a criminal?

In the classic movie “The Godfather,” the main character – who has largely left the family – gets slowly drawn back into a life of crime, based on family ties and loyalties – and ends up as a murderous master criminal.

Our lives are largely defined by our empirical answer to the following question:

*Am I loyal to **virtue**, or to **others**?*

As the old song goes, you have to serve somebody – something, someone, some value or passion has to organize your day, your mind, your *life*.

The days of animals are organized by the constant search for food, shelter and reproduction.

How do you choose what to do with *your* day?

Your week, month – decade – your life?

You and I were both born into families – the members of those families had specific moral or immoral qualities, and gave us consistent – and often ferocious – moral commandments.

The modern pattern of family history generally goes thus:

A baby is born to busy parents. The mother cares for him in a hurried and harried manner, while still fielding calls and emails from work, for a couple of weeks or months, and then leaves him with someone else – sometimes a grandmother, often a daycare worker – and goes back to work.

*The baby exists in a state of low-grade existential panic, since his biological and evolutionary needs – his desperate **emotional** needs – are largely ignored and rejected. He is often raised by people with different accents, different cultures, and no family or blood bond.*

Is it moral to give birth to a baby, and then hand him over for others to raise?

No.

Is it moral to get married, and then have endless affairs?

No.

A husband who has affairs is cheating on his wife.

A mother who goes to work is *cheating on her baby*.

We get upset at the former, but applaud the latter.

This is entirely corrupt.

Cheating on your baby is infinitely worse than cheating on your husband.

The difference is that the husband gets to *choose* his wife – a baby never gets to choose his mother.

A husband can choose to leave his wife – a baby never gets to choose to leave his mother.

A husband is an adult, with a fully-formed personality, and a near-infinity of other options.

The baby's personality is in the process of being formed, and he has absolutely *no other options*.

A husband has full legal rights, and an independent income – babies can exercise no rights, and have no alternatives.

A baby and his mother are one biological unit – very similar to when he was in her womb. The mother's breast milk is deeply attuned to her baby's needs, and by far the healthiest nutrition he can get.²⁶

A mother has a biological monopoly on what is best for her child – *no one and nothing else can substitute for her*.

Cheating on your baby is infinitely worse than cheating on your husband.

And – what lesson does it teach your baby?

That family matters less than money.

That serving economic strangers is infinitely better than deeply parenting your own baby.

That instincts mean nothing, that strangers, ambition and money mean everything – and that the weak must suffer so that the selfish can feel valuable.

Why do new mothers go back to work so quickly?

²⁶ [Mothers Milk](#)

If they stay home even for a year or two – that is just a stronger bond to break, when the toddler is left with strangers.

A child's personality is largely formed by the sixth year of life.

Babies left in daycare for twenty hours a week show the same levels of psychological trauma as babies completely abandoned by their mothers.

In “adult time,” it's only 8 to 10 hours a day – in “baby time,” it is an eternity.

Working mothers with little children experience the highest levels of stress hormones in the world.²⁷

A baby whose needs are denied experiences the environment as extremely dangerous – because, evolutionarily speaking, it has to be war, plague or famine that is keeping his mother from him.

Why do new mothers go back to work so quickly?

Because of peer pressure.

Because of propaganda.

Because they have been told that being a mother is boring and unimportant – but that having a boring and unimportant job is essential!

Because they are told that they are completely replaceable to their baby – but irreplaceable to their boss, to the economy, to their clients and customers!

Because they are bribed with the spare change of their leftover salaries – after childcare expenses, extra transportation and clothing costs, endless taxes and deductions.

Because they do what they are told – not what is right and good.

They have placed the arguments and opinions of others infinitely higher than what is good and right and best for their babies.

That is their choice: they are loyal to others, not their babies – not virtue.

But – a fascinating switch occurs later in life – a highly instructive reversal.

When these mothers are young, and ambitious, and in control, and want money, approval and prestige – then, loyalty to others entirely trumps loyalty to family, to their babies.

However, when these mothers age – and the fathers too, of course – suddenly family becomes *everything*, and their adult children owe them loyalty, love, time, attention, resources – and grandchildren as well!

When their children are young, these parents choose loyalty to others over loyalty to virtue – the virtue of connected and peaceful parenting – but when their children grow up, now suddenly these parents demand loyalty to *family* over loyalty to *others*.

²⁷ https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/308404/jewish/Abandoned-Baby-Syndrome.htm

“While it might be true that when you were a baby, I chose loyalty to others over loyalty to you – now that I am old, you must choose loyalty to me over loyalty to others!”

This is a truly wild reversal – and the amount of propaganda piled up to cover this massive switch is truly astounding!

Of course, this is scarcely an original observation – the famous Harry Chapin song “The Cat’s in the Hat” traces this emotional journey – but he is a songwriter, not a philosopher, and so cannot exhume the moral principles at the root of this betrayal.

Loyalty to Virtue?

So – are we loyal to others, or to virtue?

Is the word “family” a reasonable substitute for virtue?

Is the word “family” a description of a mere genetic relationship, or does it describe a blood loyalty that has manifested in actual reality?

Does the word “parent” refer to a biological relationship, or does it describe the *act* of parenting?

Are you a parent if you do not parent?

Are you a family if no one is loyal to kin?

Does “father” mean “sperm donor,” or does it refer to the multi-decade time, emotional and moral investment required to be a *father* to your children?

Are you a mother if you don’t breast-feed your baby, and leave him for most of the day with strangers?

Are you a parent if daycare workers and teachers mostly raise your children?

Well duh!

Is an open marriage a monogamous marriage?

Of course not.

Women often complain about the double and triple standards they are subjected to – but they would never be enslaved to these contradictory perspectives if they just *put their children first*.

I remember one television sitcom where a mother at work memorably complained that: “When I am home, I want to be at the office – when I am at the office, I want to be with my baby!”

This was portrayed as some tragic existential crisis, because of the “women are wonderful” psychological phenomenon of refusing to criticize the fairer sex.

Can you imagine a philandering husband complaining to his mistress: “When I am with my wife, I want to be with you, here – when I’m here with you, though, I want to be with my wife!”

Can we imagine wringing our hands and nodding along with his tragic life and contradictory expectations?

Blank Slate

I want you to think of something – it's very important.

I want you to imagine that you do not know your mother.

I want you to imagine that you go to a dinner party, and someone has invited the woman you know as your mother, and she ends up sitting next to you.

Over the course of the meal, you engage in conversation, listen to her ideas and thoughts, hear her describe her life, get to know her...

Does she ask you questions in return, or does she mostly talk about herself?

Does she complain about her life, or is she inspiring?

Do you admire her, or inwardly roll your eyes, and wish you were seated somewhere else?

At the end of the evening, would you look forward to seeing her again?

Would you take her contact information, and tell her it would be lovely to meet up again?

Without your shared history, would your mother be a valuable addition to your life?

What about your father?

Pretend, just for a moment, that you have no history with him.

Imagine you were going on a hike with a couple of friends, but one person dropped out, and the man you know as your father was invited along.

You spend a couple of hours on the hike in conversation with him.

What does he talk about?

Is he funny, engaging, curious?

Does he ask about you, or just talk about himself?

Is he warm and authentic, or does he brag and status-signal?

What does he say about his life?

Is he noble, virtuous, inspiring?

After the hike, would you exchange phone numbers, and hope to meet again?

What would you think of your father if you had no history?

Would he be in your life if he did not raise you?

Does he provide active value in the present, or did you just spend unchosen time together in the past?

It's a funny thing that adults think that there is *ever* a time that they can stop providing value, and just - coast on historical momentum.

It seems kind of inevitable that parents who don't actually do much parenting – or who are violent and aggressive – claim that the category called “parent” is deserving of unending love, loyalty and devotion.

If their adult children resist their will, those parents say: “But – I’m your *mother!*”

Fair enough.

Did you *mother*?

“But – I’m your *parent!*”

Okay – did you actually parent?

Or did you wander off to make a few dollars, then hit your children, yell at them, ignore them, call them names?

Did you dump them in terrible schools, and let them be indoctrinated and bullied?

Did you tell them to resist peer pressure, while giving into peer pressure yourself?

When they were teenagers, did you help them find good boyfriends/girlfriends?

Did you monitor their social circles, to ensure that no creeps and criminals got through?

Did you spend thousands of hours teaching them the skills necessary to virtuously succeed as adults?

Did you teach them how to live morally, or just kind of – live with them, under the same roof?

Were you a parent, or a landlord?

Or a roommate?

Where did *your* loyalties lie?

With strangers, with propaganda, with manipulated social expectations?

With money, with ambition, with your *career*?

Did you ensure that your children were surrounded by good, safe, moral people – or did you let dysfunctional relatives surround them and interfere with their moral development?

If your daughter told your son to do something wrong, did you say that being good was more important than obeying blood relatives?

Did you loftily instruct your children to serve virtue, not others – while then avoiding parenting by serving others, not virtue?

You owe your children everything – that is the inevitable contract of reproduction.

You owe your children everything – your children only owe you justice.

Justice is paying what you honourably owe – if you borrow a thousand dollars, it is right and just to pay it back.

If you honourably invested in your children, they will enjoy spending time with you as you age.

You won't have to force them, bully them, manipulate them, gaslight them, abuse them – they will enjoy your company as a plant enjoys sunlight – naturally, easily, inevitably.

Those who never gave always end up bullying others when they want to take.

Those who failed to invest in their children always end up bullying them when they want their adult children to invest in them.

In fact, one of the main reasons that parents don't really parent is because they fully expect time, love and resources from their adult children *no matter what*.

A thief does not bother getting a job, because he knows he is going to steal.

If you and your parents had no history, would they be in your life?

Remember – we serve either virtue, or others.

In moral relationships, serving virtue and serving others is the same thing. Those around us will never counsel us to do evil, and always encourage us to be good!

Those we have corrupt relationships with constantly counsel us to do evil, under the pretense of doing good.

“Yeah, you go, girl – go to work, leave your kids in daycare – it teaches them social skills, and also shows your daughters what a strong independent career woman looks like!”

In life, the best strategy is: *Treat people the best you can the first time you meet them – after that, treat them as they treat you.*

Babies, toddlers and children don't have the first option – but they sure as heck have the second option, when they become adults.

We cannot reasonably complain about the immorality of the world if we constantly reward immoral people.

Once you make a genuine commitment to virtue, your life becomes enormously simplified.

Preferences and Identity

So many people believe that denying their immediate preferences makes them *less themselves*.

How can this be false?

If you are defined by your preferences, then how can denying your preferences *not* equal denying yourself?

Sacrificing yourself means having *less* of yourself, right?

This is all a grisly product of modern secularism.

The religious approach to life defines your essence as a soul, not a body.

Secularism denies the soul, and so reduces us to mere flesh.

Are you your body, your brain – or your *mind*?

If you are your body, there is little point deferring gratification – the body works on a very short time-frame. Work to satisfy your flesh moment to moment, your flesh is content.

If you are your brain – well, that works on a longer timeframe, because the brain can process the long-term effects of choices – but the brain remains mortal, composed of flesh, and will die with the body.

The body wants to satisfy the moment – the brain plans for the mortal lifespan.

What about the mind?

If you are reading this in fifty years, I am long dead.

But the products of my mind live on.

I live in your mind, in your inner voice that reads this.

My brain is dust, my words are very much alive.

Do you see?

Your body is for now – your brain is for your life – but your mind is for *eternity*!

The hunger, pain and lusts of your body demand immediate satisfaction.

Your brain will deny your body – ‘*don’t eat that, go exercise*’ – for the sake of future happiness in your lifetime.

Your mind will deny your body and your brain for the sake of universal, eternal truth and happiness.

So I ask you again: are you your body, your brain, or your mind?

What makes you specifically human?

What makes you human must be something that differentiates you from the animals – something that no other creature or thing can achieve.

All animals live for the body – and many plan for the future, using their brains.

Squirrels hide nuts for the winter; beavers build dams for their young; birds do mating dances for future reproduction.

All this uses the brain to defer the gratification of the body.

We share all this with the animals – but we have one defining characteristic they do not possess.

The capacity for abstract, universal thought.

The equation that two and two make four is as true now as it was a thousand years ago – or five thousand years ago.

Universal concepts unite us in eternity.

The definition of a lizard remains true for all time.

Extracting universal concepts from immediate sense data is the fundamental machinery of the human mind.

A dog can catch a ball you throw, but the dog can never mathematically calculate its path.

Equations, scientific principles, universal moral truths – these are the essence of us all, what makes us most specifically human.

If you are secular, you can understand that the concept of “God” is the abstraction for the immaterial mind that makes us most human.

“God” is immortal – truth lives forever.

“God” is all-knowing – the truth defines reality with absolute and eternal accuracy.

“God” is all-ethical – universal moral truths define perfect virtue.

What is called the soul is an abstraction for the definition of what makes us human.

What makes us all-knowing, immortal – and virtuous.

What makes us different from the animals.

If you remove from us our capacity for eternity, for infinity, for omniscience – then we can only live for ourselves, for our bodies and brains.

We cannot outlive ourselves, so we only live for ourselves.

Our self is all we are, so sacrificing ourselves is always a net loss.

We have nothing to live for other than the pleasures of our own lifespan.

We do not partake of eternity.

We are never larger than our own short lives.

There is an old story about a primitive chieftain responding to Christian missionaries, when they first told him about the immortal soul. He said, “We only think of life like a bird flying through a room, in one window, and out the other. We never think of where it came from, we never think about where it goes – but you have told us what lies outside the windows...”

This is the evolution from cunning ape to divine human.

If *who you are* is only mortal, sacrificing yourself for something beyond yourself makes no sense at all.

It’s like denying yourself cheesecake on the day of your execution, because you want to watch your weight.

There are three ways that human beings can work with universals.

The first is to *create* them – to identify new ideas, truths, and concepts.

The second is to *manifest* them – to embody virtue and truth by living morally and honestly.

The third is to *reproduce* them – to re-create concepts in others.

Very few of us are granted the privilege of *creating* universals – just as very few of us make movies or songs.

We can all *manifest* universals, by accepting and living the truth, both material and moral.

A few of us can *reproduce* universals, by explaining them to others and inspiring the pursuit of truth and virtue.

But the vast majority of us can only participate in universals by *having and raising children*.

Think of nutrition.

Very few of us can make radical advances in the science of nutrition.

Very few of us have the skill and charisma to inspire others to eat well.

But every parent feeds their children, and can teach them about nutrition.

Think of exercise.

How many people can truly advance the science of exercise?

How many people can be effective personal trainers?

How many parents can play a sport with their children?

If you take away children, you take away the essence of humanity for most of humanity.

By encouraging the having and raising of children, you are encouraging what is greatest and deepest in the human mind.

Most people will never write poems or stories or songs that will last the test of time.

Everyone can write – there is only one Shakespeare.

Shakespeare is immortal – most other writers are forgotten.

Our bodies die – and when our bodies die, our brain dies.

The contents of our minds – what we teach others and our children – make us immortal.

This is one reason why it is such a betrayal to fail to have children, if you can.

You are destroying the ultimate art of your ancestors – yourself, and your eternal offspring.

You are shattering the great chain of life and the mind that stretches back to foggy prehistory – for as long as there have been people.

Here is another brutal fact.

Can you have a relationship without any communication?

Of course not.

How do we communicate?

Through language.

What is language?

Codified concepts.

Universal, eternal concepts that we use to communicate facts, truth and reality to each other...

Can you have a relationship with someone if you disagree on the definition of every word you speak?

Of course not.

Most conflicts occur *because* of such disagreements on definitions.

If you ask me, "How was your day?" – and I respond as if you have stated: "Your liver is blue!" can we have a conversation?

Nope.

Concepts make us human – and humans are the only animals with conceptual language – and we cannot have relationships without language – therefore if we deny concepts, we cannot relate to anyone.

Can we develop a complex and universal language over the span of a few decades?

Of course not.

You only have the words you use to interact with others – to have relationships – because language has evolved over tens of thousands of years.

If no one had any children, you would not be able to talk to anyone.

You are strip-mining the sacrifices of others in order to have relationships in the present.

You are a vampire of eternal history.

Taking and taking – and giving *nothing* in return.

Are you reading this on an electronic device?

Do you think that human beings can go through the entire development of reason, epistemology, metaphysics, science and technology in just a few decades?

Of course not.

You only get to read this – my words, on a tablet – or even a book – because people have had enough children that knowledge can be passed down for tens of thousands of years.

Again, with no kids, you are a vampire.

You are taking all the benefits of everyone else having children, without contributing any children of your own.

Monstrous.

Absolutely monstrous.

How dare you?

How *dare* you take the sacrifices of everyone else, and use them for your own petty selfish pleasures?

If you were having a potluck dinner, where everyone was expected to bring a dish, and half the people showed up empty-handed and hungry, what would you think?

Tell me something else – when you get old, do you want healthcare?

How are there going to be any doctors to take care of you, if no one has any children?

Do you want running water, heat in the winter and cooling in the summer?

How is any of that infrastructure going to be maintained if no one has any children?

Here's another one – do you expect to get your old age pension?

You know there is no money to pay you, right – it's all been spent, decades ago.

How are you going to get your pension?

If no one has any children, there's no one for you to steal from to get your pension.

Do you see how contemptible your behaviour is?

How greedy, how selfish – how monstrous?

You are relying on *everyone else's sacrifice* to get everything you want and need.

If everyone lived as you do, your life would turn into hell itself.

You want to consume the pleasures that other people's sacrifices have built and maintained.

I'm not saying that it's evil or immoral to avoid having children – it's a well-known fact that many of our greatest conceptual thinkers avoided having kids – but that is because they are partaking of eternity and universals through their mental labours, not their physical child-raising.

I could forgive Shakespeare for not having any children – he lives on in other ways.

But you?

Come on.

Everything you value – everything that makes your life pleasant – everything that makes your existence possible – has come into being because other people had – and have - children.

If you don't want to have children – fine.

Just don't make a virtue of it.

Don't scorn and attack the mothers and fathers whose offspring give you life, health and comfort as you age.

Don't refer to mothers as "broodmares," and claim that you are so deep and virtuous and enlightened by not having children.

Don't ramble on about how you are *saving the environment*, and making sure that the atmosphere is not overburdened with plant food.

Be selfish.

Own it.

Don't excuse it.

If you show up to a potluck dinner empty-handed and eat everyone else's food – don't sneer at them for cooking what you eat.

Don't talk through your full, chewing mouth about how *virtuous* you are for not bringing any food.

Don't lecture the people who feed you that preparing food is dull, stupid, worthless work that only idiots would pretend to enjoy.

It's beyond vile.

If you don't want to contribute to the great and universal human story – but only stay alive because others make sacrifices – just be honest about it.

Just say: "I'm too petty and selfish to make any sacrifices myself – but I really appreciate *you* guys having kids, because someone has to take care of me as I age!"

I suppose it is asking entirely too much for such selfish people to show any gratitude at all – but a man can dream, right?

That is the stick – here is the carrot.

Benefits of Having Children

Most misery in the world is both petty and self-inflicted.

When you have children, niggling, self-destructive thoughts mostly evaporate in your mind.

You have so much fun with your children – and take such pleasure in their development – that paltry, vain thoughts about idiotic deficiencies – vanish.

Try worrying about some conflict at work when you are playing a hilarious boardgame with your children.

Try taking life too seriously when you are hunting your kids with a water gun.

Try being stressed when your toddler falls asleep in the crook of your arm as you are reading a story.

Parenting is an endless series of little joys that erase pettiness with true perspective.

Without children – without any sacrifice for universals – death is also far more frightening.

Which do you fear more – death, or being put under for an operation?

Death, of course.

Death is forever.

You do not wake from death.

As a parent, your body will die – your brain will die – but your body and mind will live on in your children.

Your genes and thoughts will be passed on forever.

Of course, they will be diluted over time – but nothing in the future will ever be the same, because you had and raised children.

We live on in our communicated thoughts, our ideas, our arguments, our universal exhortations to virtue – and in our *children*, who manifest our thoughts on a daily basis.

You are not yourself alone – you are a vehicle for eternity.

You exist because your parents had children.

Your genes and cells exist and function because life has existed and functioned for billions of years.

Physical matter has existed for tens of billions of years – perhaps even longer, the physics is always extending.

The complexity of your atoms only exists because stars have burned, compressed and exploded for tens of billions of years.

You are literally composed of the far-flung flesh of dying stars.

Your heart only pumps because it was once a flame in the nuclear reactor of a distant sun.

You *are* universal.

Every atom you are made of has existed for all time – it is universal, eternal.

All the physical forces you are subjected to have existed for all time – they are universal, eternal.

Life is fleeting – human thoughts are eternal.

Our brain is mortal – our minds are gods.

God created life – as can we.

It is no accident that, as the birth rate has declined, depression, anxiety and mental illness have all skyrocketed.

We think that we can find happiness by avoiding responsibility – but our capacity for happiness only exists because our ancestors *did not avoid responsibility!*

Frauds, thieves and pickpockets are not happy.

Those who pillage from the general good are miserable.

Those who scorn more responsible souls for the very responsibility that keeps everyone alive can never be happy.

Those who scorn the fertile for the children they rely on for their own survival are soulless, miserable creatures.

It doesn't have to be this way.

Just be honest.

You are not really contemptuous of parents.

You are just – scared that no good soul wants to have a baby with you.

Scorn is a mask for insecurity.

You scorn families because no one wants to make a family with you.

You scorn parenthood because you fear a child will never love you.

You scorn eternity because the devil in your heart has tricked you into living only for the moment – into abandoning the very definition of your humanity.

Change – turn back.

Rejoin us.

You can be loved.

But you must first stop hating.

Discipline without Violence

There is a near-infinite difference between Peaceful Parenting and *Unparenting*.

Unparenting is based on the lazy assumption that children do not need to be raised, trained, or guided in any way.

Unparents let children stay up as late as they want, eat whatever they want, watch whatever they want – do whatever they please, without any guidance at all.

In other words, Unparents treat their children as if they were brain-damaged adults.

If children generally make reasonable decisions, and don't need any authority – then they are already functioning adults!

For Unparents, children are tiny adults with mysteriously undeveloped brains, living in someone else's house, with few responsibilities, no jobs, tax obligations, nutrition or exercise requirements – they exist in a kind of lazy socialist paradise, where everything is paid for by their parents, without any requirement for ethics, growth or responsibility!

The goal of parenting is to prepare children for successful adulthood – successful *morally*, which often translates into material success – but not always, of course.

It is better for your soul to be good and poor, rather than wealthy and corrupt.

Wealth is fine, but it is morally neutral.

Wealth is like sex – it's fine, as long as you get it voluntarily, and not through force, fraud or corruption.

Morality helps with success. Moral people are excellent to do business with, because they're not constantly looking for ways to cheat you, or find loopholes in contracts – work with them long enough, you don't need any contracts – because they are innately trustworthy – and all the lawyers can go home.

A moral person is inexpensive to do business with – and when you do business with a good man, you also gain access to his entire business circle, stuffed to the gills with equally trustworthy people.

Why is Unparenting so bad?

Adult life is full of obligations and restrictions and laws and rules and regulations – and temptations!

As an adult, no one forces you to do anything specifically, but there are enormous consequences for failure as a whole.

The government doesn't force you to be a doctor, or lawyer – or a panhandler. As an adult, what you do with your life is largely up to you – but the consequences of your choices are immeasurable.

Raising children without rules or feedback or consequences is not at *all* preparing them for adulthood.

As an adult, people don't just pay your bills and let you do whatever you want. You don't have a live-in maid and cook – your laundry is not done and folded for you, the fridge doesn't magically fill up by itself – you actually have to be concerned about income and expenses.

The number of young adults lacking basic life skills is truly alarming these days. Cooking is a largely forgotten art – cleaning is sporadic and inefficient – no one seems to do household budgets anymore, and impulse buying seems to be a constant compulsion.

If you do everything for your children, without expecting anything in return, you are just raising bottomlessly selfish and entitled narcissists. You are in fact *crippling* them as adults.

Of course, we do everything for babies and toddlers – they don't have to provide value in return, because they are busy learning how to crawl, walk and talk, not engaging in complex negotiations of value transfer.

However, as children sail past the ages of two or so, it's time to start setting expectations.

If they take out their toys, they should put them away.

Why?

Well, because that's what happens when you are an adult.

When I was a bachelor, and I made a mess in my apartment, no magical elves tidied up my room as I slept.

The purpose of parenting is to transfer adult skills to children, so the children can become skilled adults.

Parents who did not teach their children language would not be transferring their own language skills to their children, and would end up crippling them as adults.

A parent who teaches her child how to read is transferring her own skills to her child, so that the child will not be crippled as an adult.

Transferring cultural and moral values is the essence of human parenting – philosophical values, really.

Your ancestors suffered and bled and fought and died for tens of thousands of years to deliver unto you particular cultural and moral values – in particular, in the West, the values of the free market, free speech, political liberties, the value of debate and critical thinking.

You probably wouldn't be overly thrilled if you gave birth to a child with the brain of a monkey.

Failing to transfer your cultural and moral values to your children is not only a spit in the face of your ancestors, but it leaves your children without the higher values and callings that differentiate us from the apes.

Every living thing other than human beings is programmed by nature, and lacks the capacity to compare proposed actions to ideal standards.

A monkey may cuff her baby for being annoying, but she does not lecture him about his failure to achieve her lofty moral standards.

Moral *standards* are what make us human – they are what differentiate us from mere animals.

Animals don't possess any abstract concept called "honesty" – and could not conceive of punishing a fellow animal for the moral crime of lying.

In fact, "falsehood" is an essential survival strategy for countless species, which continually lie and cheat and steal.

Denying children abstract standards is denying them their humanity – their soul, if you like.

Also, if you don't tell your children about right and wrong, good and evil, actions and consequences – other – infinitely more malevolent – people will.

Either you teach your children about the truth, or strangers will train them to lie.

You need to teach your children to love virtue.

If you punish your children for their moral failings, you are teaching them to fear virtue.

You are forcing them – programming them – to associate moral judgements with physical and emotional agony.

Virtue thus equals torture – not a great recipe for encouraging children to be good.

Now, the relationship between morality and consequences can be quite complex.

We cannot judge the morality of a proposition by its consequences, because that would be like trying to prove that two and two do not equal four by pulling out a Ouija board or a horoscope.

If you prove to someone that the world is a sphere, and they reply that it is not, because they had a dream that it was banana-shaped, you would not consider that a valid rebuttal to your logical and empirical argument, right?

The reason that we cannot judge morality by its *consequences* is that consequences lie in the foggy realm of mysticism and imagination, while moral arguments lie in the solid realm of reason and evidence.

Judging a moral argument by its consequences is like judging an argument against a religious commandment as “evil heresy!”

Imagining that we can know the future is a form of fantastical, tyrannical mysticism. It is the modern version of screaming “blasphemy,” and gathering outraged mouth-breathing villagers to chase and burn independent thinkers.

The more important and central the moral argument, the less we can predict its consequences.

Many of the people who opposed the end of slavery did so because they said that without slaves, it would be impossible to produce enough food and clothing. They had zero ability to peer deep into the future and predict the massive proliferation of labour-saving devices that would emerge from humanity’s brilliance after the end of slavery.

People always oppose moral arguments by summoning the demonic voodoo-specters of imaginary consequences.

They take their own anxieties, project them into a fantastical ether, and then try to manifest them back into the minds of others as woeful tales of infinite suffering.

“Oh, if you want to privatize government-run healthcare, then I guess you’re totally *fine* with sick people *dying in the streets!*”

It’s all very predictable, very boring – and rigidly anti-human.

Animals make decisions on predicted consequences – the lion says: “I guess I will chase this zebra, because otherwise I’ll get too hungry!”

Humans make decisions on moral principles – imagining that we have the power to predict consequences is picturing ourselves as omniscient gods – it is a stomach-turning vanity that even the most bottomless narcissist would flinch from.

Of course, if someone rejects a moral argument because he knows exactly how it will play out, across the world, for the next few years or decades – then he is claiming an incredible ability to divine the future that by its definition will be entirely different from the present!

If you advocate for ending slavery, then clearly the future will be entirely different from the past and the present, since everything in the present is founded on the institution of slavery.

If you advocate for “no-fault divorce,” then you have zero ability to know exactly how this will play out in society, because one of the central pillars of family law will have fundamentally changed.

Of course, someone can say: “I have the ability to know *exactly* how the world plays out in the future, based upon incomplete information in the present!”

While I think that is epistemologically impossible – the future is unknowable, because of the infinite creativity of free will – as an empiricist myself, I would be very happy to test out that hypothesis.

“Oh wow, you have the ability to know the future – that is incredible! Let’s start off small – can you tell me how much your stock portfolio is worth?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, if you have the ability to know the future, then you know which stocks will go up and down – so you must have used your predictive ability to make an absolute *fortune* in the stock market!”

Of course, he will claim that it doesn’t work that way, or that he doesn’t want to use his powers for mere material gain, or other such arrant nonsense.

Naturally, people who claim to reject moral arguments because they *know society-wide outcomes* will never ever prove their claimed ability to predict the future, even in the most inconsequential or localized ways.

They will never be able to tell you what you are about to say next, or whether the price of gold will be higher or lower over the next five minutes, or what the unemployment rate will be next month – they will never be able to show you their incredible ability to predict the future in any empirical or testable fashion whatsoever.

That which is asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence.

Since you are all very clever readers, you will be replying to me in your mind something along the lines of this: “Ah, you say, Mr. Philosopher, that no one can accurately predict the future, but you also state that hitting children has negative outcomes!”

That is certainly true – both that I make that claim, and that hitting children does have generally negative outcomes.

However, we do not judge the morality of hitting children based upon positive or negative outcomes.

For instance, we know that state control of the economy leads to massive inefficiencies – but we don’t judge the *morality* of state control of the economy by its outcomes. Clearly *some* people prefer to have state control over the economy – otherwise it wouldn’t happen at all. The people who gain control over the economy benefit in terms of power and prestige – so the outcome is beneficial to them – it is just negative for many other people, over the long run.

No, the question of state control of the economy is a *moral* question, not a *consequentialist* question.

If every human being possesses the right to property, then using force to control the property of others is immoral.

The consequences of forcefully controlling the property of others is negative for many, positive for some – and destructive in the long run for all.

As I said, it's a complex question.

The question of hitting children cannot be resolved by appealing to consequences – because hitting children is massively beneficial to most people in society!

If no one benefited from hitting children, then children would never be hit.

Billions of parents across the world massively prefer to hit their children – they *benefit* from hitting their children, they *want* to hit their children – and the consequences of *not* hitting their children would be extraordinarily negative for those parents!

Saying that “hitting children leads to bad outcomes” is empirically testable, and can be clearly shown – as we will do in subsequent sections of this book.²⁸

However, “bad outcomes” is not some magical other-worldly phrase that answers deep moral questions with empirical certainty.

Some people benefited from the end of slavery – other people were greatly harmed, emotionally, morally and economically.

It certainly is true that children and society will benefit both now and in the future – respectively – if children are raised peacefully – but that doesn't answer the central question of: *If it is beneficial to not hit your children, then why do people hit their children?*

Because they want to, and because they can.

Addiction has negative consequences – but not for everyone, not all the time – otherwise there would be no such thing as addiction in the first place.

The consequences of not hitting children will be extraordinarily *negative* for billions of people around the world.

When people say that the consequence of a moral argument will be negative – they are lying.

If you prefer hitting your children – as most parents do – then stopping that because it is immoral will be very negative for you.

If you haven't taken care of your health, and you need thousands of dollars of medical interventions every month just to stay alive, then privatizing government-run healthcare will be negative for you.

When people say: *The outcome of this moral argument will be disastrous!* – they are lying, because what they are really saying – the *truth* of the matter is – *The outcome of this moral argument will be disastrous for me!*

You see how this goes?

When people argued that the end of slavery would be disastrous for society, they were trying to cover-up the degree to which they themselves benefited from slavery. Maybe they had invested in slaves, maybe they profited from slavery – maybe they just liked beating helpless victims – who knows? It

²⁸ [The Detrimental Effects of Physical Abuse](#)

doesn't really matter – what matters is that when people claim that the effect of a moral argument will be negative – they are just saying that they oppose a moral argument *that defines them as evil*.

Well, of course they do!

No one who does evil wants to be revealed!

People who tell themselves that they are *good* for hitting their children don't want to be convinced that it's *evil* to hit children!

Expecting otherwise would be madness!

Do you really think that the Coca-Cola Company would pour all of its resources into making sure that Coca-Cola was banned worldwide?

Would you expect an ambitious politician to donate all of his time, resources and energy to his opponent?

People respond to incentives – and the incentive they most respond to is *morality*.

Moral arguments shape the world more than any other force.

Changing moral definitions changes the world more than anything else.

Most people like the world just as it is, thank you very much.

Most parents prefer to hit their children, and will strenuously oppose any thought, idea, argument or law that will stop them doing what they so obviously really like to do.

In other news, apparently drug addicts get quite unhappy when their drug is unavailable.

Shocking!

Evildoers will always try to distort morality to justify their immorality – to turn vice into virtue!

This is nothing new.

Evildoers will always tell you that the consequences of moral clarity and ethical advancements will be disastrous for the world as a whole!

They will try to get you to fear consequences, so that you do not respect morality.

Evildoers will ally with those who profit from evil to castigate those illuminating the world with moral clarity.

It doesn't matter what happens to the world when we do good.

We cannot judge the morality of hitting children by imaginary consequences – because then those imaginary consequences will be inflated and turned demonic in order to *scare us away from judging the morality of hitting children*.

If evildoers can scare you away from virtue by waving the imaginary bogeyman of “consequences,” then you have merely joined their ranks, surrendered your soul, and will turn the world into hell over time.

Primarily, I'm not asking you to be good.

I'm just asking you to be *honest*.

If you don't want to stop hitting your children, stop making up fantasy tales of universal disaster – just admit to yourself that you don't want to stop hitting your children – that you prefer hitting your children, because you can, and you can get away with it, and it gives you pleasure, or relieves some negative emotion.

A soldier once admitted that he just liked killing people – “I can't believe I get paid to do this – if I wasn't wearing this uniform, I'd be put to death!”

You can't be moral without first being honest.

I'm just asking you to be honest – I hope that leads to moral clarity, but I'm certainly not going to ask you to be moral first, without going through the stage of honesty.

Honesty is necessary – but not sufficient – for morality.

Asking someone to be moral without first being honest is like asking him to have big muscles without lifting weights. Lifting weights might not give him big muscles – but he will never get big muscles without lifting weights.

If you don't want to teach your children any moral rules, reasonable standards – or let them experience any negative consequences for their choices – then don't hide behind some abstract nonsense called “Unparenting.”

Just *say* that you don't want to confront your children, you don't want any conflict that might come from imposing or inspiring standards – that you don't really care how their lives turn out, you just want to indulge the hedonism of the present by avoiding any semblance of conflict or discontent with regards to your children.

Perhaps you don't know how to productively inspire and negotiate with your children – perhaps you were over-controlled as a child, and you are swinging to the opposite extreme – perhaps you find other activities more interesting or stimulating than spending time with your children – all these problems can be solved, but they first have to be admitted.

It is very cruel to your children to shield them from standards and consequences when they are young – because when they grow into adulthood, standards and consequences will be imposed by other people, and reality itself.

If your child needs to pass an essential test, surely you will help your child study for it?

You wouldn't just let your child do whatever she wanted, let her fail, and never achieve what she wanted in life?

That would be indifference to the point of absolute cruelty.

Life, health, employment, finances – mortality itself – all impose absolute external standards, requirements and consequences on our lives, every day, as adults, forever.

Failing to prepare your children for absolute external standards is only preparing them to fail as adults.

But – how do you impose such standards without being aggressive?

Imposing Standards

If you lie, honest people don't want to spend time with you.

If you lie, you can't reasonably expect everyone else to be bound by honesty.

Aggressive parents punish children for lying.

Peaceful parenting *re-creates adult situations in a peaceful and manageable way.*

If your son lies to you, tell him that you don't like that behaviour.

If your son repeatedly cheats at a board game, stop playing that game with him.

That's what happens in the real world.

If you cheat at tennis, people don't want to play with you.

Remind your son that, if he keeps lying to you, you won't want to have conversations with him, and you will feel no requirement to tell the truth to him in the future.

That's what happens in the real world.

If good people think you're a liar, they won't have conversations with you.

If bad people see that you are a liar, they will surround you with falsehoods that benefit them.

You see the pattern?

Childhood is a dress rehearsal for adulthood.

In a dress rehearsal for a play, you can mess up the lines or be in the wrong place, and it's not a disaster – it's just preparation.

As a peaceful parent, you are preparing your child for adulthood.

In adulthood, bad behaviour drives good people away, and draws bad people closer.

If your child lies, cheats, steals – and all children will always experiment with all of these habits and behaviours, it's guaranteed, don't get too upset, it's perfectly natural, it's perfectly healthy – then your job as a parent is to reproduce in a microcosm how these behaviours will affect your child as an adult.

If your daughter promises not to eat candy, then sneaks candy – that's natural, inevitable – healthy even – aggressive parents will punish her.

Peaceful parents will ask her if they are now able to steal her candy or belongings.

“That candy was ours – we paid for it – and you stole it. You took something that we owned without our permission, and against our wishes – and against what you promised. This doesn’t make you a bad person – we’ve all seen those videos where monkeys steal something from a tourist – you’re just experimenting with how to get what you want, and I respect that, I have no problem with that. But – if I take something of yours, is that wrong? If I take your candy, or your toys, or your favourite T-shirt – should I do that?”

“No!”

“I agree – I totally agree. I shouldn’t take your stuff without your permission, right? I mean, you wouldn’t be happy if you came home from playing at a friend’s house and found that we were selling all of your stuff on the front lawn, right? I’m not saying we would ever do that in a million years, but you wouldn’t like it at all, right?”

“No, I would hate it!”

“Right – you need to know that no one’s gonna take your stuff without your permission. Well, we are the same that way – I need to know that no one’s gonna take my stuff without permission. You don’t want to have one rule for yourself, and the total opposite rule for everyone else – no one is that special, right? I mean, you wouldn’t like playing a board game where one kid had the opposite rules from everyone else?”

“No, I wouldn’t.”

“So you tried something, which is stealing – and I get it, every kid does it, I did it too – but you know that it’s upsetting to me – just as me stealing from you would be upsetting to you – and I know that you care about me, that you love me – and you wouldn’t want to upset me for the sake of a few pieces of candy – and you wouldn’t want me to stop trusting you for the sake of a few pieces of candy – just as I wouldn’t want you to stop trusting me by stealing your stuff. Plus, you’ll feel pretty good following the rules that you want other people to follow, because it just makes everyone the same, it connects us with people. Does that make sense?”

Of course it does!

Moral rules are universal rules, which is why we get to impose them on others.

If you come down “too heavy” on your child for stealing, then you are saying that she has no self-interest in virtue, she has to be “good” only because other people will make her feel terrible if she is “bad.”

If you try to train your child into being virtuous by making her feel awful for being bad, you are saying that there is no positive benefit to virtue.

We should pursue goodness because reason leads to virtue, which leads to happiness.

Fearing negative consequences never leads to sustainable behaviour.

We should exercise not out of a fear of obesity or unattractiveness – but because we enjoy being strong, we enjoy the endorphins, and we accept the fact that the mind and the body are one, and we cannot have a strong mind in a weak body.

We should exercise so that we don't live in fear, and can think for ourselves. Very few people actually know what their political opinions are – they merely “have beliefs” as an effect of physical strength or weakness. People who exercise tend to be more pro-free market – people who don't tend to be more pro-socialist.

We exercise so that we can think clearly, and not be mentally dominated by physical weakness and vulnerability.

Trying to change people's behaviour by inflicting negative consequences clearly communicates the message that the preferred behaviour has no positive consequences.

If you stop eating junk food, you end up enjoying healthy food even more than you loved the junk food.

If you start exercising, you will end up enjoying exercise more than being a couch potato.

If you are virtuous, you end up enjoying virtue far more than you enjoyed vice.

Punishing people for non-virtuous actions compels them to avoid badness, rather than pursue virtue.

A poor person can get your money by appealing to your charity, or robbing you with a gun.

If he robs you with a gun, he is explicitly stating that he is undeserving of charity – that you would never choose to give him your money, based upon his virtuous need.

If you hit and punish children for being “bad,” then you are expressly telling them that they have no good reasons to choose virtue.

Also, they will never internalize rules that are painfully inflicted by you, from the outside.

We cannot be loved without being virtuous – and love is the greatest thing in life.

Love is our involuntary response to virtue, if we are virtuous.

Not only can we never be loved without being virtuous – we can never fall in love either!

Falling in love, and being in love – are these not the greatest things in the universe?

And they're only achievable through virtue.

Of course, you can disapprove of your children if they act badly – the important thing is to be honest with your children, and not fake positive emotions that you don't feel – but loving them – and being loved by them – is the greatest glory in life.

Who would trade all that for a few pieces of candy?

Peaceful Parenting and Timeouts

It certainly was an improvement when people got thrown in jail, rather than families and clans taking endless, multigenerational violent retribution on each other for assaults and murders.

Defamation laws are an improvement over duels – wrangling in court beats pistols at dawn.

We should, however, never imagine that we are at the end of our improvements.

Think about this in your life.

Are you ever perfectly and permanently satisfied?

Do you ever think that you have enough money?

Time?

Love?

Prestige?

What about technology – did you ever upgrade your very first cell phone or computer?

Do you like having a car with newer features?

We are never done in terms of improvements.

Horses are better than walking – cars are better than horses – airplanes are better than cars – and whatever comes next will be better than airplanes.

In a hot climate, a breeze is better than still air – fanning yourself is even better – being fanned by someone else even better – an electric fan is even better – and air conditioning is even better still.

It's better to have a dishwasher than wash dishes by hand – I'm sure it will be even better to have a robot who cleans all your dishes without you having to lift a finger.

It is a sad fact of humanity that moral improvements are unsteady, bitterly fought – and very hard won – but the moment the achievement is entrenched, hardly anyone thinks of further moral improvements.

Serfdom was better than slavery – income tax is better than both – but then we just kind of stop, and imagine that no further moral improvements can be made, and we have reached the ultimate apex of our ethical glories.

So, I grant you – timeouts are better than beatings – but so what?

The iPhone 6 was better than the iPhone 5 – does that mean that no one ever upgrades beyond the iPhone 6?

Continuous improvement, baby – that's the name of the game called humanity!

What is a timeout?

A timeout is a form of parental discipline that generally involves giving one or two warnings to a child, then picking up the child, and sitting him in a corner, or on some stairs, generally for one minute for each of his years of age.

How does it work in practice?

Well, if a child disobeys you, or does something harmful or dangerous, you give the child a warning or two – if the child continues his behaviour, you pick up the child, and place him on a naughty chair, or naughty stair.

The child then has to stay on that stair for each year of his age – a three-year-old stays for three minutes, a six-year-old for six minutes, and so on.

If the child tries to leave before his time is up, the parent picks him up, and returns him to the stair – without looking at or interacting with the child – until his time is up.

After the time is up, the parent gives the child a hug, explains the timeout, asks for an apology, and then the day continues as before – as long as the child apologizes.

This technique avoids striking the child – or insulting the child – and so it is certainly a step forward – but so what?

We keep going until we achieve perfect consistency with principles – and then, we keep aiming *at* perfect consistency with principles, since the goal is impossible.

The fundamental moral axiom of peaceful parenting is the nonaggression principle – you must never initiate the use of force against others.

Property rights are embedded in the nonaggression principle – we own ourselves, and should not be violently aggressed against – which means that property should never be aggressed against, whether it is our own bodies, or our external property.

It is pretty hard for parents to claim a self-defense principle with regards to their children – especially when they are very young – but of course theoretically, if a parent is being attacked by an angry teenager, violence in self-defense is morally acceptable – with the caveat that the violent teenager was raised by the parent being attacked, and therefore the parent holds infinitely more responsibility for the crisis than a stranger would.

When it comes to parenting, morality requires that we compare our proposed actions to the ideal standard of the nonaggression principle and a respect for property rights.

Striking a child *is* a violation of the nonaggression principle – we can understand this without much explanation.

Exercising coercive will over another human being is a violation of the nonaggression principle.

If you get into a taxicab, and the cab driver somehow locks the doors so you cannot get out, and drives off in some unknown direction, that is called kidnapping.

He is exercising coercive control over your body, in that he is driving you someplace you do not want to go, and to which you have not agreed.

If you are on a date, and the girl wants to leave your apartment, and you bar her from exiting, you are unlawfully confining her, and that is immoral. You are exercising coercive control over her mind and body, in that you are keeping her in a place that she does not want to stay.

This is all pretty elementary, right?

Verbal abusers are invading and taking over parts of their child's brain against the child's will – when they cannot leave or escape – by inflicting negative language that harms the child's self-interest.

We have laws against defamation – false negative language that harms someone else’s self-interest – because it is a form of theft.

If you falsely claim that a restaurant served you a live rat, and that restaurant then loses a million dollars, then you have stolen a million dollars from the restaurant owners.

If a brilliant graduate student asks a professor to write a letter of recommendation, and the professor falsely claims that the student is stupid and lazy, and the student then loses out on a career opportunity, the student can sue the professor for lost income.

Do you see the connection?

It is not verbal abuse to tell your child she is a bad singer, if your child is in fact a bad singer.

Truth is the ultimate defense against defamation.

However, if you tell your child that she is mean, selfish, vicious, greedy, ungrateful and so on – then you are harming your child, when your child has no choice but to submit to your defamation of her character.

Also, if I hire a chef, give that chef ingredients, and tell that chef what to cook – and she cooks well – can I then sue my chef if my restaurant fails?

Of course not – I am in control, so I am responsible for what my chef does.

Does verbal abuse harm your child’s future economic interests?

Of course it does!

Children who are verbally abused often end up on average earning far less – for the simple reason that they are too frightened and broken to stand up for themselves, and negotiate for what they are actually worth.

Even adult workplace bullying costs its victims money – abusive employers are regularly sued to recoup these costs.²⁹

The defamation inflicted by verbally abusive parents costs their children hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars over the lifetimes of the children.

Children who are verbally abused also have a much tougher time falling in love – or receiving love – which means that they lose out on the social, emotional, health and economic benefits of a stable pair-bond with another quality person.

This loneliness or lack of connection has worse health effects than smoking.

Again – measurable harm based on defamation.

Verbally abusive parents steal their children’s self-respect, crippling them socially, emotionally and economically – often for life.

It is a violation of the nonaggression principle.

²⁹ <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0712/financial-impacts-of-workplace-bullying.aspx>

Okay.

So.

Timeouts.

When you put your child in a timeout, are you exercising coercive control over that child's body?

Of course you are.

You are physically picking up the child, placing the child in a place he does not want to be, and then returning him to that place when he tries to escape.

You are overriding your child's self-ownership with coercive control.

One central test of whether an action conforms to peaceful parenting is: *Would this be acceptable or legal to do to adults?*

If you are a boss, and an employee is not listening to you, or is doing something against your wishes, can you physically pick up that employee and sit her in a corner of the cafeteria, in a naughty chair?

If she gets up, can you then manhandle her back down into a sitting position?

Of course not.

That would be physical aggression punishable by prison time.

I mean – in the modern workplace, even off-colour jokes and harsh words can create what is legally called a “toxic work environment,” and people can sue bosses who say inappropriate things for millions of dollars.

Does verbally abusing children also create a “toxic environment”?

Of course it does!

Except the children cannot quit and sue.

Not convinced?

All right – imagine trying this with your wife!

Imagine that you are telling your wife what to do, but she disagrees with you, argues back and keeps on doing whatever she is doing.

Can you pick her up and force her down into a chair in her naughty corner?

Don't even *try*!

If you tell your wife to be careful driving, but she dings the car, can you force her to sit in the backseat and think about what she has done for, say, forty-five minutes, if she is forty-five years old?

If she tries to get out of the car, can you force her back in?

What if you only let her back into the house after she apologizes – not only for dinging the car, but for being disobedient, and not agreeing with everything you said?

You've got to be kidding!

You would *never* do this to a spouse, or a boss, or a policeman, or a teacher or a priest or an employee or a retail worker or a parking attendant – or any other adult for that matter!

Why not?

Why *wouldn't* you manhandle someone and force her into a seated position for half an hour, if she did something you thought was wrong?

We all know why.

Not only because it is illegal – but because it would be weird and wrong and aggressive and coercive!

You do realize that if you are in public, and try to wrestle someone down into some kind of sitting position, she could be justified in using significant force to defend herself?

She could punch you, pepper spray you, taser you perhaps – I'm no lawyer, of course, but I'm pretty sure that if you grab someone by the shoulders and try to force her down into a submissive position, that she could get pretty aggressive pushing back against you!

So – why do we allow this aggression against children, while forbidding it against adults?

It can't be because children don't respond to reason – because then we would change the laws to say that you could physically manhandle *anyone* who wasn't responding to reason, right?

No – we are not allowed to manhandle others whether or not they “listen to reason.”

Also, if someone is incapable of listening to reason, does that mean that we can use physical aggression against him?

If someone is having an anxiety attack, do we get to wrestle her to the ground, and confine her?

Nope!

It is impossible to reason with someone who does not speak our language – can we then force *him* into a sitting position, if he doesn't do what we want?

If your child is old enough to listen to instructions, he is old enough to reason with.

What *are* you allowed to do to adults, if they disagree with you?

Well, you are allowed to disapprove of them.

If someone makes an argument that is offensive to you, you can't just go and beat him up – at least technically, or legally – but what *are* you allowed to do?

You are allowed to walk away.

You are allowed to express your upset and disapproval.

You are allowed to be angry at him.

You are allowed to tell others that you are angry – and you are also allowed to make counter arguments.

You see?

It's pretty universal.

You are allowed to use your words, but not your fists!

Sibling Aggression

If your daughter is building something with blocks, and your son knocks it over – does he deserve a timeout?

Nope.

It is profoundly anti-rational to create an imaginary answer to a very real question.

We look at primitive tribes who say that a volcano erupts because the Fire God is angry with some bemusement, and possibly contempt, at their superstitious approach to natural events.

Your son knocks over your daughter's blocks.

The essential question is: *why?*

Why does he knock over what she has built?

Peaceful parents ask that question – because they are honest, and don't make up pretend answers when they don't know something.

That's not what aggressive parents do.

Aggressive parents create an imaginary devil called "badness" in the heart and mind of the child, and then try to drive out that devil with physical or emotional violence.

This is the same as believing that others act badly because they are demonically possessed – so we need a witch doctor to come in, shake some juju magic, and *drive out the demon!*

It's utter madness, really!

Pretending that children who act negatively are possessed by an invisible entity called "badness" – and that entity has to be driven out by a superstitious ritual called "punishment" – that is primitive savagery of the lowest kind!

The worst tragedy – the tragedy that kept our species in a primitive state for hundreds of thousands of years – is that when you imagine that you have an answer, you immediately stop asking questions!

In fact – it's even worse than that!

If you believe that a volcano erupts because the Fire God is angry – well, not only do you never develop the science of geology – but you end up with an entire priestly class and social structure *dedicated to worshiping and placating the Fire God!*

False answers lead to violent cults – anyone who questions the existence of the Fire God, or the reasons to obey him – well, that person is a heretic, who threatens the entire sociopolitical structure of the tribe, and generally comes to a very short, bloody and brutish end!

False answers stagnate the mind, heart and soul – and not only kill moral progress, but make *any movements towards moral progress virtually suicidal!*

So – why does your son knock over what your daughter built?

What happens if you don't have access to this magical demon called "badness"?

Well, the moment you *stop* believing in the non-existent Fire God, you can actually start to figure out *why* the volcano erupts!

If you continue to believe in the Fire God, you perform all kinds of ridiculous rituals to appease this imaginary entity – which means that you can't actually move your tribe away and be safe, because your rituals give the illusion that you can control the uncontrollable.

If you believe that weird dances can produce rains, you don't invest in tangible irrigation – and so half the population regularly starves to death.

If you openly state that you don't think that the weird face-painted witchdoctor can actually produce rain by dancing, then you are interfering with his cushy life of jumping around and pretending to provide value.

What happens to you then?

Well – we all know this one, right?

What happens is that the next time that the rains do not come, the witch doctor points at you, and says that the entire tribe is being punished because you are an unbeliever, a sceptic, a blasphemer, a heretic!

You get tortured, ostracized or killed – and then everyone goes happily back to giving resources to the witch doctor, and pretending that he can control the rain.

You understand that expressing any skepticism towards the imaginary devils of the tribe is an *extremely* dangerous business, right?

You understand that if you doubt the existence of this mythical "badness" that was used to justify endless violent punishments against you as a child, that you are trying to overthrow an aggressive, antirational mysticism – a cult that feeds on violence against children – and you will be called a heretic, an unbeliever, an evildoer – and those who do genuine evil against children will summon up the mob – and this could just be your own local family structure – to attack you, right?

As always, the only *tangible* demon is the belief in the demon.

The actual badness is punishing children for their imaginary "badness."

If you take away the devils, the pretend exorcists are simply revealed as evil abusers.

They invented the devils in order to mortify the flesh – to attack and punish the children.

They are the real devils – revealed by questions, by skepticism.

So – with this knowledge in hand – why does your son knock over what your daughter has built?

The answer is simple.

I mean – you value honesty, right?

You know the answer.

It has nothing to do with his mythical “badness.”

Why did he knock something over?

Be honest.

Tell the truth.

Tell me!

Why did he do it?

The simple answer is: *you don't know*.

That's the truth, right?

You don't know why he knocked over his sister's blocks!

He may not know either.

The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their proper names.

Why did the volcano erupt?

“Arrr, the Fire God is angry!” is not an answer – it is fantasy, a lie, a manipulation.

Why did the volcano erupt?

The only honest answer is: *we don't know*.

That is the beginning of knowledge, the beginning of wisdom – the humility of accepting ignorance as the foundation for building knowledge.

You don't *know* why your son knocked over what your daughter had built.

And if you punish him – you will never know.

Do you understand?

Do you see it now?

You are sealing both of you up – everyone in the family – in an underground tomb of made-up answers.

By pretending to know what you do not know, you are preventing everyone from ever knowing the truth.

It is common knowledge that governments punish citizens for the effects of government crimes.

Julian Assange for instance.

You punish your son because you don't want to know the truth – because the truth is unflattering to you.

Why did your son knock over what your daughter had built?

The honest answer is that it is really *your* fault.

You get angry at him, so you punish him by hurting him – verbally or physically.

Your son is angry at your daughter, so he punishes her by knocking over her blocks.

That is why you don't want to know the truth about why your son did what he did.

Your son is just like you.

You punish him to avoid knowing that.

There could be any number of other reasons why your son knocked over his sister's blocks.

Perhaps she is a relatively new addition to the family, and he is upset because he gets so little attention.

Should he be punished for that?

If you get upset at a waiter who brings your food late, and never checks on you, should you be punished for that?

Perhaps your son has seen other children acting aggressively, and he is repeating that behaviour.

That is still entirely your responsibility – your fault.

You are in *complete control* over who your children spend time with.

If you have repeatedly put your son in situations where aggression is modelled, that is entirely on you – and your spouse.

Perhaps your son knocked over your daughter's tower because earlier, she tore a page out of his favourite book.

Perhaps *she* is the aggressor, and he is just responding.

Perhaps he is in some kind of chronic discomfort – a headache, or a gassy stomach – and is in a bad mood because he doesn't know how to verbalize that?

Perhaps he misses his mother, or his father, who have been less available for some reason.

Perhaps he has just learned about death, or that the sun will burn out after a few billion years – and he is going through an existential crisis of some kind.

Perhaps he spent time with a family member – an uncle or grandfather perhaps – who is secretly aggressive with him, and he is trying to communicate that in his own way.

Perhaps his teacher is aggressive – to him or other children – and he is learning it there.

Do you see the problem?

If you conjure up a devil, pretend it lives within him – and then further pretend that you can drive it out through punishment – you will *never* learn the truth about what is happening!

And – the reason you don't *want* to learn the truth about what is happening, is because *you are responsible for everything that is happening*.

You don't want to take responsibility for having complete control over your children's environment.

You don't want to take responsibility for any negative behaviours you might have modelled over the months or years.

You don't want to have to confront other aggressive people – either adults or children – in your son's environment.

You don't want to homeschool him, or find a different church, or confront your own father, if you find out that he has been aggressive with your son, either directly or indirectly.

You don't want to take responsibility.

You don't want to risk unpleasant confrontations.

You don't want to look in the mirror.

You just want to blame and attack him.

And – I understand.

I sympathize.

We all have these impulses – I know I certainly do.

Because – it's way easier, right?

It's way easier to bury the bodies of your own bad behaviour by creating and punishing an imaginary demon called "badness" in your children.

Because it's one or the other.

You understand?

Either he is bad, or you are bad.

But hey, you're bigger, right?

You can manhandle him – he can't manhandle you!

You can force him to sit in a chair – he can't force *you* to sit in the chair, am I right?

If you punish him, what then?

Well, then you don't have to take him out of daycare, or find better childcare providers, or stay home from work, or homeschool him, or confront aggressive family members, right?

And here is the most terrible, awful, horrible and ironic thing.

*You punish him for failing virtue – but your very punishment is **you** failing virtue!*

You punish him for being irresponsible – but you punish him to avoid your own irresponsibility.

You claim that *he* is the source of the wrongdoing – but *you* are the real wrongdoer!

And you know this.

Everybody knows this.

Everybody knows what organized crime does to witnesses.

You know that you are punishing him, rather than asking questions, because you already know the answers to those questions – and they don't look at all good on you.

You know this.

And – let's be honest, right?

Your son knows this, too.

If you take a spiral jump deep, down into your history – your prehistory – you will exactly remember your own anger, rage and frustration, because you were constantly being punished by people who never asked you questions, never wanted to know, never listened, never gave you a chance.

You were forever told to use your words, not force – but you were never given a chance to explain yourself, you were just forcefully punished, and never allowed to speak!

We punish our children so that they will not speak.

Our children know exactly how messed up our societies are – our schools are – our families are – and how messed up their own parents are.

A man who criticizes a dictator is punished because the dictator cannot handle criticism.

The man is precisely punished for his own strength – and the dictator's weakness.

Your son pushes over some blocks – he is desperately trying to tell you something, to communicate something, to reveal something – to save himself, you, your spouse, your family – and, in the long run, your entire society!

Out of the mouth of babes, right?

Your son opens up an incredible communication – a potentially life-changing and world changing conversation – but you hate and fear what he has to say – what it reveals about you and those around you – but you can't punish him without justification, because that would make you a very bad person, right?

You need to punish him for revealing dysfunction – but you can't be honest about that – so you have to pretend that he is just bad – and that badness has to be punished – and you are just – helping him – and saving him – and improving him!

And so the cycle continues, and so the world continues its path into hell itself.

Compliance and the Teenage Years

Most modern parents go through four distinct phases with their children.

The first is infancy, where parents submit to the needs of their newborns, not expecting compliance, and surrendering their wills to what the baby needs.

Then, there is toddlerhood – the “terrible twos” – where a grim battle of egos ensues between the parents and the child.

The parents begin imposing “discipline,” having “expectations,” and working ferociously to begin the process of controlling the child’s rebellious spirit. The toddler has learned the word “no,” and regularly defies his parents wishes, his lower lip thrust out, his tiny fists clenched in anger.

Babies are never “bad” – toddlers often are.

Babies are needy, not defiant – toddlers are defiant, disobedient, rebellious – and their budding wills need to be bent and broken, to conform to rigid parental expectations.

Babies don’t embarrass their parents – but toddlers often do.

Babies are not expected to share – toddlers are shamed and disciplined for refusing to share.

Toddlers are often perceived to be the devilish enemies of parental, moral and social standards.

The general idea is that babies are born selfish – but you can’t blame them – and then turn into toddlers who are wild and oppositional, and have to be tamed like wild animals into faltering approximations of civilized human beings.

This process of “domestication” often goes on for 2 to 3 years, with much wailing and crying and yelling and fighting and spanking and punishing – until the *latency period*, from the ages of 5 to 11 or 12 – from the end of toddlerhood to the onset of puberty.

During this phase, whatever muscles that remain in the child’s willpower are atrophied and destroyed by raise-your-hand-to-go-to-the-bathroom-and-confine-yourself-to-your-desk modern school systems.

The will of the child goes underground during this period, like Gollum – waiting and biding its time for reinforcements – the inevitable hormonal armies of puberty.

Parents believe that they have won the battle against the sinful, savage nature of their toddlers, and “civilized” them into fairly reasonable and polite little girls and boys.

This is false, but seductive.

When puberty hits, the subterranean rage and rebellion of the toddler years comes roaring back with a vengeance!

Sarcasm, skepticism, anger, disobedience, acting out, drinking, drugs, sexual activity – these all come barreling into the formally-placid household like charging Cossacks.

Save for killing them outright, you can’t break the will of other people. You can compel compliance through overwhelming force – but for parents, that force always diminishes, while compliance always erodes as the children grow stronger.

In the teenage years, the requirements for reproduction cause the child's focus to shift from adult authority – teachers, priests, parents – to peers. The teenager knows that she will find her future mate among her peers, not among her elders.

Successful reproduction requires that you please another teenager, not those in authority.

This is of course why teenagers want to endlessly hang out with each other, and not with their parents.

There is nothing wrong with this – this is exactly *why* we are all here in the first place!

However, because most parents resolutely avoided reasoning with their children – or used “reasoning” with the constant threat of punishment behind it, which is just another way of avoiding reasoning – children have never learned what virtue is, they have only learned to comply with threats, aggression, abuse, violence and bullying.

When you conform to an external threat, you do *not* internalize moral standards.

If you give your money to a mugger, you have not learned the virtue of charity.

Internalizing moral standards is in the realm of *positive* economics – threats and punishment are in the realm of *negative* economics.

Children do their homework because they will be punished if they do not – this only teaches them to take the path of least resistance, it does not instill in them a deep joy of learning.

It's truly bizarre to understand that parents put massive pressure on their children for years – as do teachers and priests – and then complain that their teenagers are weirdly susceptible to “peer pressure.”

Society screams at its children: “Conform to me – or else!” – and then rails against those very same children when they conform to peer pressure.

“You need to stand up against outside threats, and truly think for yourself, and not bow down to social pressures!” sneer parents at the exact same children that they have threatened and pressured and bullied into abandoning their own reason and complying with the aggressive whims of others.

Children are mirrors of ourselves.

Parents who scorn their children are scorning themselves.

If you break a horse through violence and starvation, you can give that broken horse to someone else, who can ride it easily.

If you break your children through threats and aggression, you have no reason to complain when they succumb to peer pressure.

The peers are fitting a key into a lock that *you* built.

Blindly, parents of teenagers try applying the same levels of aggression and punishment that they used when their children were toddlers – but it doesn't work, of course, for the simple fact that the children are no longer toddlers.

Parents who send their children to school – even a terrible school – because “well, that’s what everyone does” – are displaying the basest form of conformity to “peer pressure” that can be imagined!

Parents who hit their children because, “Well, that’s just how you raise kids!” are blindly complying to social norms at the expense of their children – how can they then complain when their children blindly comply to social norms at the expense of their parents?

Did you circumcise your son?

Why? It’s not medically necessary, produces massive trauma in the baby, and robs both him and his partner of an entire lifetime of enhanced sexual pleasure.

“Well, we did it because – that’s just what you do!”

Peer pressure.

Imprinted on your son in the form of direct bodily mutilation of his most sensitive organ.

And you dare to complain that *he* succumbs to peer pressure?

Please!

When you bully your children, you are saying very explicitly: “You must surrender to and obey those who have the most power over you.”

Well, when your children become teenagers, it is their *peers* who have the most power over them.

We as a species evolved to mate in our teenage years, which required peer acceptance.

Our genes care about the future, not the past.

Evolutionarily speaking, teenagers don’t mate with their parents, they mate with each other.

Since prehistory, teenagers have pair-bonded with each other, being taken off the dating market with great rapidity.

You had to pick quickly, or you wouldn’t get to pick at all.

Your entire genetic future relies upon peer acceptance and approval.

If you please your parents, but not your peers, you have no genetic future.

Or, to put it another way, those teenagers who resisted peer pressure did not reproduce, and those genes vanished.

Aggressive parents teach their children one thing, and one thing only: “Obey whoever has the most power over you.”

Parents when they are little, peers when they are teenagers.

Aggression against toddlers drives teenagers into the arms of their peers.

Peaceful parents teach their children to submit to reason, and to empathy.

Power is superstition; reason is science.

Superstition is when you give blind external forces power over your own beliefs – *reason* is when you study those forces, learn their nature and properties, and then command nature with your knowledge.

Nature to be commanded, must be obeyed.

Commanding the self requires obeying reason.

Inflicting punishment replaces reason and empathy with rebellion to authority and conformity to peers.

Children don't want to be yelled at, hit, punished, confined – parents say "I know morality" – but it turns out that morality is just what makes you feel bad, what gets you punished.

Children don't learn justice, just fear.

They don't learn empathy or reciprocity, just pain and obedience.

They associate morality with punishment – and then we somehow expect them to love morality, without becoming masochists!

Can you love someone or something that hurts you?

It's unhealthy to love pain – we try to teach morality through pain, and then somehow expect our children to love morality.

It's completely insane – and you don't even have to think about it for more than a few moments to realize that!

If you punish your children, their peers will punish you right back!

If you use fear to teach your children morality, they will grow up to fear morality.

If you teach them to bow down to bullies, they will end up perpetually enslaved by the aggressive – or becoming bullies themselves.

Why do we do this to our children?

It's blindingly obvious, right?

I mean, it's not just me, right?

When I explain everything that we all know so deeply so clearly, isn't it embarrassing that this never been said before?

What on earth have philosophers been doing for the past 3,000 years, if not talking about this?

Society is stuffed to the gills with moralists, lecturing us all about tolerance and empathy and diversity and racism and sensitivity and openness – why haven't these millions of moralists ever talked about childhood in this clear and obvious manner?

Why do we have endless moral philosophers whining about the trolley problem, rather than unpacking the basics in order to protect the children?

Well, because our current society only survives on the abuse of children.

Change childhood, and you change everything.

And the people currently in charge of everything really don't want that.

Well.

Too bad.

The people who ran the slave trade didn't like that ending either.

The people who subjugated women didn't like their liberation either.

The bastards who ran concentration camps hated seeing their prisoners freed.

Progress means pissing off evil people.

Our only alternative is to stay evil.

Peaceful Parenting: Clean Your Room!

One of the most common questions asked by parents who wish to take the peaceful approach is – how do I get my kids to clean their room?

It's a fine question, and I for one am not a fan of big messes, so – what is the answer?

Peaceful parenting takes the following approach to all parent/child conflicts:

Why Is It Important?

Kind of an important question, don't you think?

Why do you want your child's room to be clean?

A lot of times, parents set up a rule, and then demand that their children obey it – and the stage is set for grueling, multi-year grinding battles – and for what?

Of course, I understand that parents need to teach their children responsibility and self-care and tidiness and all other sorts of nice and wonderful things – that is exactly why it is so important to ask how essential is the rule?

Let's take a typical example.

Mom wants her son's room to be clean.

Initially, mom goes in and cleans up her son's room.

As her son gets older, he wants privacy, so he begins to make demands that his mother not enter his room.

His mother agrees in principle – but says that he needs to keep his room clean, otherwise she will have to go in and tidy everything up.

Her son does not keep his room very tidy, his mother marches in, tidies and cleans, and then he can't find anything, and he feels violated, and then his mother again reiterates her demand that he keep his room clean, otherwise she'll be forced to come in and tidy again, because he lives in a shared space, and she doesn't want to think that there is food or other items that might attract bugs and mice somewhere in his room – and it smells, and she can't find anything if she needs something, and how on earth can someone live like that – and so on.

Neither person is getting what they want – both people are escalating and hardening their positions – and the stage is set for endless useless pointless conflict.

The mother feels that she is going to lose her position, good sense and any authority if she gives up her demand for a clean room – her son fights back against what he perceives as maternal bullying, and both parties very quickly find themselves utterly unable to give up their positions or demands.

Sound familiar?

It is a common pattern in a wide variety of scenarios.

What is the solution?

The mother wants a clean room – the son doesn't want to be ordered around – and also wants his privacy.

Here is the most essential message: *Don't lie to your children!*

In most of these cases, the mother is lying to her son about why she wants a clean room.

She wants him to clean his room because she feels anxious and unhappy if his room is messy.

She wants him to clean his room because she likes exercising power over him, under the pretense of keeping things in good order.

She has unresolved conflicts or hostilities with her son, and uses the "clean room" pretext as an excuse to act aggressively against him.

She is afraid of others coming into the house and judging her by the messiness of her son's room.

She is frustrated at her life in general, feels powerless and out of control, and so seeks to wield control over her son in order to counteract her feelings of chaos and submission.

This list can go on and on, but in general it is not about the room, or the tidiness, or the privacy, or the intrusion – or anything like that!

What is really going on?

If the mother feels anxious, helpless, frustrated and angry if her son's room is messy – then what does it mean to tell her son the truth?

Well, it means that she has to tell her son that his messy room makes her feel anxious, helpless, frustrated and angry!

But – she doesn't do that, right?

Why not?

Well, for two main reasons.

The first reason is that she prefers to be aggressive towards him, rather than ask for a favour from a state of vulnerability.

Asking someone for a favour does not allow you to bully him – and that person can always say no, which might reveal how little they care about your negative emotional states.

The second reason is that it is an utterly indefensible position to ask your son to clean up his room because you feel bad when he doesn't.

Why?

Because we are untrained in philosophy, that's why!

Let us extract the simple principle from the mother's demand that the son clean his room to make her feel better – what do we get?

Well, we get the principle that we should change our behaviour to make other people feel better.

It's a universal principle, remember.

Since it is a universal principle, it doesn't just apply from the mother to the son – it also applies in reverse!

If the mother says: "I really need you to keep your room clean, because I feel really bad when you don't!" – well, the son can equally reply: "I really need you to stop asking me to keep my room clean, because I feel really bad when you do that!"

Do you see?

You see how hard it is to ask someone to change his behaviour in order to help you feel better?

No, it's far easier – at least in the short run – to make up some moral nonsense about respecting the shared environment, having some respect for yourself, some sense of self-care, honouring your mother, doing the right thing – it's far easier to bring out the moral club and in a sense beat your child's will into groveling submission, rather than ask for a favour that can easily be reversed.

Children are incredibly good at sensing hypocrisy – particularly in their parents.

If the mother inflicts a moral narrative on her son about keeping his room tidy – rather than be honest about her own emotional anxieties – then her son will fight very hard to avoid submitting to her.

She doesn't have any credibility, because she is not being honest about her demand.

If she demands that her son manage her emotions by obeying her commands, then he will lose all respect for her – in particular, because he is a male, and that's not how males work at all!

It will also be difficult when she commands her daughter, but her daughter will more likely mirror her mother's habits in her own relationships with others, thus reproducing the demand that everyone else change their behaviours in order to manage the daughter's – and then the mother's – emotions.

If the son has to change his behaviour to manage his mother's emotions – but she lies about that, and claims some sort of moral high ground – then he is setting himself up for a life of enslavement to women if he submits to his mother.

In general, women aren't very attracted to doormats, enablers and submissive males – so his mother's demand that he subjugate himself to her emotional immaturity inflicts potentially irreversible harm to his future romantic prospects.

Would you rather your son tidy his room, or get married and have children?

I'm not kidding about this – I'm sure there are countless mothers out there reading this and shaking their heads, but I promise you this is all true – and if you ask your sons honestly, they will agree with me, I am sure.

A boy who submits to his mother's emotional manipulations is no fit husband or father to be.

A woman who absorbs and reproduces her mother's emotional manipulations is no fit wife or mother to be.

If, say, a teenage boy submits to his mother for no good reason – or because she is lying, which is to say the same thing – then he substantially lowers the quality of women he can attract in the future. He becomes ground down, submissive – an appeaser and groveller – which is a real turnoff to strong confident women later on.

A mother who demands that her son submit to her emotional and moral bullying is undermining and destroying his chances of attracting and keeping a quality mate down the road.

By fighting his mother, the son is fighting for his own future happiness and genetic survival.

To put it another way, sons who gave up the ghost and submitted to their mothers either didn't reproduce, or reproduced with very dominant, low-quality women – either of which is a disaster.

So – that's why the son fights so hard.

What about the mother?

Why does *she* fight so hard to control her son?

Well, that one should be obvious I'm sure!

A woman who gets to middle age – or later – who still retains the habit of bullying others to appease her own negative emotions – well, that woman doesn't just confine that habit to her own son, now does she?

Oh no!

If she is still married, then for sure she has a husband who has bowed down before her emotional manipulations and bullying.

What happens to her relationship with her husband if her son mounts a successful resistance and defense against her bullying?

I would assume that by the time a woman hits forty or fifty, her retained emotional habits are the foundation of all of her relationships – with the possible exception of her own parents.

In other words, *all* her relationships are based on the premise that other people are responsible for managing her own negative emotions – and thus if she gets upset, other people have failed her, and can be aggressed against, for their betrayal of love and loyalty and responsibility and morality and so on.

If she feels bad, other people must be bad!

If she feels bad, and asks for another person to make her feel better, and that other person refuses – gasp – then that other person is mean and thoughtless and callous and just doesn't care about her – and is a very bad and selfish person – and she has to punish that person, in order to lead him away from the darkness, and back towards the soft light of eternal compliance to her emotional demands.

If a mother is like this, and her son successfully resists her bullying – well, that successful resistance might very well spread to her other children, her husband – who knows?

(Probably her friends are just like she is, but what if her son's successful rebellion spreads to her friends husbands and children as well?)

Well!

It ain't so much fun when the rabbit gets a gun, is it?

The son is desperate to avoid submitting – especially to a woman – for fear of ending up alone, or in a terrible marriage – at the same time, the mother is desperate for him to submit, for fear that any successful rebellion against her dominance could spread to other people in her life, which would reveal her weakness and aggression.

Furthermore – imagine if the son successfully resists the will of his mother – what happens then?

Well, over time, he ends up dating and marrying a very healthy, assertive and moral woman – and how will she react to his hypocritical and manipulative mother?

Ouch!

How does peaceful parenting resolve this?

As Socrates said, know thyself.

As a mother, it is your job to know – deeply, authentically – why you want your son to keep his room clean.

Is it even fair or just or right for you to make this demand?

Far too often, we as parents assume that our demands are automatically legitimate, and any resistance or rebellion by our children is illegitimate.

Well – how do you know?

How do you know that your demand that your son keep his room clean is legitimate – while his resistance to your demand is illegitimate?

How do you know that you are in the right?

The question of what is good and noble and just and moral and right is very deep, very complicated, and has been struggled with by philosophers for thousands of years!

We all treasure the idea that people accused of wrongdoing are innocent until proven guilty – this is a foundational principle of justice.

If your child disagrees with you, assume that he or she is right and moral and just and good to do so!

In this way, you can ask him why he disagrees with you, and really, genuinely and deeply listen to his answer.

Maybe he has a really good point.

If you listen without prejudice, without tension, without anger or frustration – well, what a gift that is to your child – to anyone, for that matter!

Children should be listened to – we all should be!

Don't assume that you are in the right – have the humility to accept that you might be wrong – for two reasons – the first is that you might actually be wrong – and the second is that you want to model humility to your children, so that they can also question if they are in the right.

Don't expect your children to be humble if all you do is model arrogance!

Which brings me to...

[Have I Modelled the Behaviour I Want in My Children?](#)

This can be a very tough one!

Decades ago, a friend of mine lived with a woman who constantly nagged him to keep the place spotless.

After they broke up, he had to drop by to get some paperwork he had left behind, and he was truly stunned – such was his naïveté – to see that she had let the place decay into a complete pigsty!

He was stunned because he realized that she never had any goal or value in keeping the place tidy, but she liked to boss him around with that value as a pretext or excuse.

If you want your children's environment to be organized, is *your* environment organized?

If you want your son's room to be tidy, is your car tidy?

If you want your son to listen to you, do you listen to your son?

If you want your son to manage your own emotions, do you also manage your son's emotions, and change your behaviour to suit his preferences?

If you say that your son has to obey you because you are his mother, then has your son ever seen you disobeying or disrespecting your own mother?

Has he ever seen you rolling your eyes when she calls, or lying to her in order to avoid a social engagement, or getting short and snippy with her?

Do you model the behaviour you want in your children?

It's not enough to just be okay at it – you have to be very near perfect.

I mean, you wouldn't take diet and fitness advice from a guy who was only, say, 40 pounds overweight, and only smoked half a pack of cigarettes every day, right?

No – you want diet and fitness advice from a super healthy fellow, right?

Of course you do!

If you say that it is more efficient for your son to keep his room tidy, can you easily find things in your own environment?

Can you answer the inevitable objection that your son will have that he would rather spend fifteen minutes looking for something, then spend two hours a week tidying up his room?

If your son has rational objections to your commandments – are you flexible, do you listen, do you accept that he might have a very good point?

If not, then your son will very clearly and deeply understand that all of your supposed "reasons" for your commandments are hypocritical nonsense.

If you say that he will be happier in a tidy room – and he says that he likes it untidy – what are you going to say?

If you brush past his objection, then he knows with absolute teenage certainty that you are just making up reasons why he has to obey you – and not telling him the real reason for your commandment at all.

He knows for sure that you are lying to him.

Why should he obey someone who lies to him?

If you have a well-organized environment that is neat and tidy – and he appreciates that – and you remind him over the years how easy it is to find things – and you involve him in keeping the environment neat and tidy – and you accept that he may have different feelings about it from time to time – and you tell him the truth about how important it is for you – and you ask for his participation as a favour, rather than yelling hypocritical moral commandments at him – then you have satisfied the criteria as a peaceful parent.

If you demand that your son obey you without reason, you are only training him to be a slave.

You want your children to follow good reasoning, good morals, their own conscience – not hypocritical harpies who bully them because they feel bad about something.

Don't break your children – nothing is worth that!

Don't force your son to submit to your will over anything – you are breaking his spirit, crippling his free will, destroying his capacity for integrity and virtue – and undermining his future attractiveness to quality women.

You should thank him for fighting you!

Remember when your baby fought you because you tried to put him down for a nap when his diaper was wet – weren't you relieved, and silently thanked him, when you helped him avoid a painful rash?

Perhaps you were annoyed at your baby, and exhausted, and really wanted him to go to sleep, but then you realized that he was in the right, and good to fight you, because getting a rash is far worse than having a comfortable and safe nap ten minutes later.

So often, your children are fighting to help you, rather than blindly oppose you.

I mean – as a mother, surely you want your son to attract a high quality woman, and have a happy and well-balanced marriage, right?

Of course you do!

And – you understand that if you break his will, and force him to submit to you as a woman, then you are shattering his ability to be a strong man in his future relationships, right?

Be honest – you are not particularly attracted to weaker, broken men, right?

Don't you find them kind of – gross, contemptible?

Of course you do.

I'm sure you prefer a man who can stand with his own integrity, even against the subtle erosion of female manipulation.

I mean, it might be annoying in the moment, but it's much better in the long run – can we agree on that?

I'm sure we can!

So – don't make your son unappealing by doing everything in your power to break his will in two!

Keep him strong, so he can have a happy marriage with an equally strong woman – and give you a good daughter-in-law, and wonderful grandchildren, and deep and right support into your old age.

Surely all that is worth infinitely more than a slightly tidy room when he is thirteen.

Am I right?

[Peaceful Parenting and Peer Pressure](#)

Now that you are getting the hang of Peaceful Parenting, I'm sure that you can easily answer the following question:

How do you ensure that your children will not be bullied?

That's right – first of all, you don't bully them – and second of all, you don't allow yourself to be bullied, particularly in front of them.

The antidote to bullying is open communication – bullies pick on children who are psychologically and emotionally separated from their parents. Children without parental protection are always weak and vulnerable, easy pickings for the predators who roam the outskirts of human society.

Bullies fear humiliation above all else, which is why they inflict it so much on others. A bully will not pick on a protected child – and the only protection that children have is open communication with resolute and courageous parents.

If your children aren't comfortable coming to you with problems, their problems will inevitably escalate.

There are generally two ways that parents communicate to their children *not* to come to them with any problems – the first is anger, the second is panic.

Dysfunctional fathers tend to get angry if their children “bother” them with problems – weak mothers tend to feel “overwhelmed” and dissolve into mild hysteria or shallow self-pity.

Larger children pick on smaller children – the only counterweight to this size disparity is resolute parents willing to protect their own smaller children.

Unfortunately, society has so configured itself that bullies have a pretty easy time of it these days. Schoolteachers don't really want to deal with bullying, because that means confronting unruly teenagers, and their aggressive parents. If Bobby is being bullied by Joe, and complains to his teacher, the teacher will almost always tell Bobby to just try and avoid Joe, and keep his head down.

Confronting Joe is a difficult and volatile situation, and Joe could easily complain to his parents, who could then launch attacks and complaints against the teacher.

No, I'm afraid that Bobby is pretty much on his own, if he is not protected by his parents.

This bitter lesson – that “authority” is only for *punishing* children, never actually *protecting* them – has been deeply corrosive to the civic ethics of our societies. The only credibility that authority has is its ability to serve and protect the needs of children. If teachers and principals – and parents – are helpless in the face of bullying, then they have no moral strength, no backbone, no capacity to protect. They can only punish and shame, and so have no credibility whatsoever – either with the bullies or their victims.

Government schools, in particular, are set up to facilitate bullying, because no one wants to confront the bullies or their parents, and it has become practically impossible to get bullies expelled.

Since parents are taxed to pay for government schools, they rarely have the funds to pay for private options – but private schools are subject to many of the same moral weaknesses and vulnerabilities with regards to tackling bullying.

Homeschooling is the most viable option, if it is legal.

However, homeschooling requires that one parent – usually the mother – stays home.

Mothers who have worked since their children are very young don't have as strong a bond with their offspring, and so somewhat recoil at the idea of staying home to teach them.

That's fine, in a way – as long as parents are willing to accept the inevitable consequences.

If a child is lonely, under-stimulated, bored, bullied and/or alienated by school, and mommy would rather work than stay home and teach him – than that boy knows that mommy's work is more important to her than his own safety, security and happiness.

Women who drop their kids in daycare usually end up making only a couple of dollars an hour after childcare expenses and other employment costs – when children grow up and get some basic math skills, they can very easily figure out that mommy preferred to make about three dollars an hour rather than spend time with them.³⁰

Again, that is fine, in a way – as long as parents are willing to accept the inevitable consequences.

The inevitable consequences of putting your children in daycare are the following:

1. Your children are empirically less important to you than a boring commute, an often-difficult job, and a few dollars an hour.
2. You are happy to have under-qualified strangers raise and train your children.
3. You chose to have children, but you don't really want to raise them yourself.
4. Endless stress-waves crash into the family, as parents struggle through traffic to pick up their children on time, drive home, unpack the car, prepare dinner, clean up, wrestle children through bath time and teeth-brushing, and then try to settle their children into sleep.
5. Weekends are often equally stressful, since household chores, groceries, bill-paying, taxes and a wide variety of social events all need to be completed by working parents.
6. Mornings are rushed and stressful as well, since children need to be woken up, quickly fed and rushed out the door by exhausted parents, in order to get to daycare – and then to work – on time.
7. The children's feelings and preferences are irrelevant, because no child wants to go to daycare instead of staying home with a fun and happy mother.
8. The children do what the parents impose on them – and the parents do what *they* do for no particular economic benefit or pleasure.
9. Children have no particular need to bond, or trust their caregivers, since daycare workers come and go all the time.
10. If children complain, or want something different, they are ignored, lectured, scolded and sent back to daycare anyway.

It's a very bizarre thing to imagine that a stranger – usually from a foreign country, often with an uncertain grasp of English – is equal to a flesh-and-blood birthmother in raising a child.

You can grasp this very easily – imagine that it is your tenth wedding anniversary, and you have promised your wife a beautiful meal at a five-star restaurant, followed by a night out of dancing.

³⁰ <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/understanding-true-cost-child-care-infants-toddlers/>

Your wife spends all day getting ready, then shows up at the restaurant, expecting you to meet her after work.

Instead, you call her and say: “Hey honey, great news – I have to work late, but no worries, I called a temp agency, and they’re sending over a guy named Manuel, who speaks some English I guess – I know he’s hungry for sure – and he’s going to spend the evening with you instead. I think he might be lactose intolerant, but I’m not sure – please check with him. I don’t think he can dance, but it’s fine if you teach him! He has a gardening job during the day, and I don’t think he’s had a chance to shower and change, but I’m sure that’s fine!”

What do you think your wife would say?

She would be outraged, right?

“What do you mean, you’re sending some stranger over to have our wedding anniversary dinner and dance night with me? I want my *husband*, not some stranger named Manuel!”

“What? You’re kidding! You sent our kids off to daycare, saying that strangers were just as good as family – I’m busy, don’t be selfish, have a great evening with Manuel!”

Your wife would never submit to substituting a marginally-literate stranger for your company on your wedding anniversary.

But – why not?

She substituted a stranger for herself, by dropping her kids off at daycare.

Oh, or is it only bad for *her*, but just *fine* for her children?

So – strangers are just as good as family, unless and until it interferes with *her* preferences!

It’s utterly incomprehensible really.³¹

Children with working mothers also see their moms endlessly submitting to (usually male) bosses, but often fighting with their husbands.

The mother can be yelling and snarling at her husband – then her phone rings, and the boss requests something, and the mother sighs, agrees, hangs up, and slinks off to do her work.

Even if she finds a way out of it, she still speaks to her boss with far greater respect, submission and deference than she does to her own husband.

She is pleasant and agreeable to the stranger, but difficult and obstructive to her own husband.

If her husband asks her to submit to male authority, she will be outraged and rebellious – until her (usually male) boss tells her to do something, at which point she submits without fighting him.

³¹ [Benefits of Mothers Staying Home](#)

*Ah, think the children, those **outside** the family have all the power – the man **in** the family has no power at all!*

Good luck getting your sons to look forward to marriage after seeing *that* for a couple of years!

Good luck getting your daughters to respect their boyfriends and husbands in the future!

If you sacrifice your children's health, needs and happiness when they are young – on the altar of your own selfish habits and ego – again, that's fine, in a way – as long as you are prepared to live with the consequences of your choices.

It has been my experience in life that good people respond to sacrifices with reciprocity. If you lend money to a good friend when you are wealthy and he is poor, he will absolutely lend you money, should the situation reverse.

If you do favours for others, they will do favours for you in return.

If your children know that they come first in all of your calculations, they will respect you, love you – and admire your integrity, since almost all parents tell their children that their children come first.

*"We would do **anything** for our children!"* cry parents, barely slowing down at the daycare to drop their sobbing kids off into the indifferent arms of total strangers.

*"We would do **anything** for our children!"* cry parents, resolutely rejecting or ignoring what their children actually say they want and need.

"We would do anything for our children!" cry parents, sacrificing the bond with and happiness of their children for the sake of chasing a few dollars and social conformity, ego gratification and pathetic material greed.

"Don't you dare succumb to peer pressure!" cry mothers – who dumped their children with strangers because other people might think that being a stay-at-home mom was kind of lame and – well, just icky!

Fathers will tell their children to make sacrifices for the family, and respect parental authority – when they supported ignoring their children's emotional and psychological needs, because they wanted to brag to their friends that their wife worked as a professional, don't you know...

If you want your children not to be bullied, don't be bullied yourself – particularly at their expense.

[Family and Bullying](#)

Parents desperately want to be respected by their children, because respect is efficiency, and the most essential foundation for productive negotiations.

It is impossible to negotiate productively with someone you just don't respect.

What's the point of negotiating a payback schedule for your deadbeat brother-in-law when you know for a fact that he will never pay you back?

If you know that your doctor is just a drug dealer, paid by pharmaceutical companies to push their wares, does he have any credibility with you?

Would you bother negotiating a payment schedule for a doctor you never want to visit?

What's the point of negotiating an exchange of value, if the other person doesn't have anything you value?

You don't bother, as a matter of fact.

If you let yourself be bullied – particularly in front of your children – it is a virtual certainty that they will either end up as victims, or bullies themselves.

If, as a father, your mother-in-law snaps at you, telling you what to do, putting you down and laughing at you – and your children see that, you will lose all credibility with them.

How are you going to tell them to have any integrity or pride in themselves, if you allow yourself to be pushed around and bullied?

Children are so sensitive to the moods of their parents – an essential survival strategy – that even if you take a draining phone call with a difficult parent in another room, they *know* the difference when you come back.

You are drained, peevish, irritable, sad – all your old childhood aches and pains have been reactivated, and it can take you quite some time to settle back into yourself, so to speak.

If you let difficult people into your life, your life becomes difficult.

If you defer to difficult people, your children will lose respect for you.

One of the main reasons parents hit their children is that the parents have acted in such a ridiculously hypocritical manner, that the children do not respect them, because the parents have lost all credibility.

It's bad and boring comedy to imagine a fat man promoting his own diet book, or a chain-smoker running a seminar on how to quit smoking.

Of course, logically, we could say that the fat man *might* have the best diet book in the world – but we know for certain that he either has a bad diet book, or a good diet that he himself has no interest in following.

If the chain smoker says that it is super-important to stop smoking – and he knows *exactly* how to do it – this would be laughable, right?

Would he have even the slightest bit of credibility with you?

Would you pay \$1,000 to take his seminar?

How much would you pay for the fat man's diet book?

This isn't complicated, folks.

If you want to *sell* something, you have to manifest it first.

If you want to sell exercise, you have to be fit.

If you want to sell financial success, you can't be broke.

Parenting is the *only* place where people completely ignore the basic fact that you have to manifest the values you preach, if you want to have any credibility whatsoever.

That's because children aren't there by choice, and cannot leave.

Socialist leaders own and control the economy, and trap their citizens within the country, so they can be as hypocritical as they want, and no one can do a damn thing about it.

In fact, one definition of power is the ability to be openly hypocritical without repercussions.

Political power – and most parenting, in a nutshell.

Monopoly government agencies have endless mission statements about satisfying customers and providing the best possible service – but that's all nonsense!

They don't have to be efficient, because you don't have a choice.

As a parent, you don't have to have integrity – you can basically be as hypocritical as you want – and your kids can't go anywhere, they don't have a choice.

Ah, but they *will*!

Society pours an enormous amount of indoctrination into children, telling them that, when they grow into adulthood, they owe endless obligations to their parents, no matter how their parents treated them.

Why does society need all of this indoctrination?

Why, because so many parents are hypocritical bullies.

People don't need endless propaganda about how they should love sugar, or a million dollars, or attractive sexual partners, or resting when they are tired!

Society says to wives – mothers of children even – that they can – and even should – leave the relationship with the husband they voluntarily chose, if they just become somewhat bored and dissatisfied.

However – lie to, ignore and abuse your children for twenty years, apparently those kids just owe you everything, no matter what, for the rest of your natural life.

Why?

Hey, I'm fine if society wants to be *consistent*. If you have to love and support people you never chose to have power over you – and who abused you – okay, then let's make divorce illegal, and forbid anyone from quitting a job they chose.

Oh no, we can't do that – what if the husband is an abuser, or the company is corrupt?

Oh, so people can un-choose what they chose – but can never un-choose what they never chose?

It's kind of funny, because the world is very positive towards immigration.

People don't choose the countries they are born in – but it's fine and good to leave the country you never chose, and move to the country of your choice.

Oh, but it's really wrong and bad to escape an abusive family you were born into, and choose to create your own peaceful family.

It is all such repellent nonsense!

It's just another example of how we don't have virtue in society – we never had, really – we only have power.

We don't have consistency, we only have exploitation.

We don't have moral rules, we only have shifting justifications that we use to defend the powerful, and abuse the weak.

We defend parents, and attack children.

No more.

No more.

If you want to have credibility with your children, you have to have integrity as an adult.

If you don't want your children to succumb to peer pressure, don't succumb to peer pressure yourself.

If you want your children to make good choices in life, you have to make good choices in life.

If you want your children to take care of you when you age, you need to take care of them when they are young.

If you want your children to respect your wishes, you have to respect their emotional and psychological requirements.

If you want your children to look up to you, don't rent them out to strangers for a few dollars an hour.

If you want your children to reason and negotiate instead of using manipulation, threats and force – then you need to reason and negotiate with them, instead of using manipulation, threats and force.

It's really not that complicated.

I'm not trying to teach you any new values at all!

This is not some radical new philosophy that tells you up is down, black is white, subjectivity is objectivity, war is peace, freedom is slavery...

I'm telling you just to live your values *consistently* – the values you loudly proclaim, the values you inflict on your children, the values you want written in stone above your grave.

Because, sure as sunrise, your children will absorb your hypocrisy – no matter what you do.

They will learn – and very deeply too – that words never have to match actions – that integrity is a manipulative lie – that the purpose of morality is to punish others while excusing yourself – and that parents only live to hear the sounds of their own words, never see the empiricism of their actions.

“Virtue is what you proclaim in order to punish – evil is any demand for integrity.”

“You should never allow yourself to be bullied – excuse me, my boss/mother/father-in-law is angry, I have drop everything and submit!”

Life is infinitely simpler when we just live our values consistently.

Einstein’s simple equation that $E=MC^2$ gave us virtually unlimited power over the universe.

When we understood that gravity is a constant, and everything in the universe “falls,” we finally understood the true physical structure of our universal environment.

Consistency is not just virtue – it is *safety*.

Imagine if we had to learn that fire was dangerously hot every time we encountered a new flame.

Imagine if we were open to the possibility that every lion we encountered in the wild was a friendly vegetarian.

Imagine if we truly believed that our next tattooed, pink-haired communist girlfriend would be a sane and wonderful addition to our lives!

Imagine if we believed that our hunger would just resolve on its own, like a headache.

We would never survive.

Just live your values consistently – I’m not asking you to change them, just stop randomly reversing them for the sake of convenience and appeasement in the moment.

As a moral philosopher, I *do* have some truly radical arguments.

Peaceful Parenting is not one of them.

We all know that reasoning with children is better than hitting them.

We all know that you can’t teach a child a language that you do not speak.

We all know that children learn empirically, not just verbally.

We all know that we have to model the virtues we want our children to embody.

We all know that leaving abusive relationships is a good idea.

We all know that we reap what we sow.

We all know that peace is superior to force.

We all know that hitting weak and defenseless little people is cowardly and pathetic.

We all say that we want the best for our children, that we will sacrifice anything for our children, that our children are our world – *and then we live the exact opposite way.*

I'm just saying that – maybe, maybe not.

Not anymore.

What if you got up in the morning tomorrow, apologized to your children for treating them badly, made restitution where possible, and committed to never hurt them again?

I mean, it would be great to do that in *all* of your relationships – but your children are the only people in your life who have no choice but to be there.

Surely you should apologize first to the people you have hurt the most, and who have the least choice.

Siblings

Siblings are each other's greatest allies, or greatest enemies – there is very little in between.

Evolutionarily speaking, siblings compete for parental time, attention and resources. In situations of scarcity, they must view each other as rivals – enemies even – since there is not enough to go around for everyone.

On the other hand, siblings who ally with each other are virtually unbeatable in the adult arena.

A hunting or war party composed of loyal brothers can scarcely lose.

Affectionate sisters raising children in close proximity create great safety and security for their offspring.

Unfortunately, since the powers that rule us always want us to be loyal to them, rather than to each other, siblings are usually turned against each other from day one.

Brothers

The way that modern society turns brothers against each other is to rigidly age-segregate children in schools, which promotes peer-bonding, rather than family bonding.

The older brother thus gains his status from hanging out with his peers, rather than his younger brother.

This leads to the dismal spectacle of the “tagalong.” The younger brother desperately wants to spend time with his older brother – and gain the status of having older friends – while the older brother's peer group asserts their dominance by constantly calling the younger brother a “tagalong.” (This also happens with sisters of course.)

In this way, the older brother is compelled to reject his own flesh and blood – the sibling, with whom he shares 50% of his genes – in return for the social approval of his unrelated peers.

Tragically, the older brother ends up losing both the bond of his younger brother – and the approval of his peers. His younger brother resents having been rejected for the sake of transitory classmates – while the classmates who shredded the bond grow up and move on to other lives.

The older brother ends up feeling lonely, and tries to reconnect with his younger brother – but because of the prior power dynamics, the older brother refuses to submit to the “humiliation” of an honest apology. The resentment of the younger brother triggers a status blowback – since the younger brother has learned that having higher status means rejecting a brother, when his older brother reveals a need for *him* – thus giving *him* higher status – he rejects his older brother, just as his older brother rejected him, when *he* had higher status.

“Bound together in discontent” is the tagline for most modern relationships – brothers included.

[Sisters](#)

Sisterhood works in a similar manner. Parents who claim authority based on being *older* create massive power imbalances among siblings – the older sibling, identifying with the parents, asserts authority based on age, just like they do.

This creates an artificial sense of superiority among the older siblings – and an equally artificial sense of inferiority among the younger siblings.

The older siblings become addicted to feeling superior, which creates unstable egos dependent on the imaginary “inferiority” of those around them.

The younger siblings eventually realize that, if they want to have any power at all in life, they have to detach from the older siblings, who constantly need to cast them in an inferior role.

You either reject your older siblings, or you end up with very little in life – other than propping up their vainglorious and imaginary “superiority.”

When the younger sibling detaches – out of a need for survival – the older sibling often explodes in hostility, either directly or indirectly.

Placing your entire “value” on the accidental – that you are superior for something you never earned – is the root of most violence and tyranny, the world over.

The older sibling is addicted to his accidental “superiority” – the subjugation of the younger sibling is the drug; the deference of the younger sibling is how the drug is delivered.

And we all know what happens to addicts when their drug is withdrawn against their will.

Unstable escalation, tyranny – and eventually, we hope, healing, as the withdrawal slowly dissipates, and new and more authentic sources of happiness are generated in the personality.

These dynamics are only exacerbated if the older sibling happens to be taller, or more physically attractive, or more intelligent – the accidental “superiority” of the birth order is then supplemented by other preferred physical or mental characteristics, and the chance to break out of the addiction becomes virtually zero.

Among sisters, the well-known verbal viciousness of female conflict often manifests in the older sister implanting cruel insults into the mind of the younger sister, which ends up with her feeling inferior and unlovable.

The high of verbal abuse often implants a kind of dangerous charisma into the personality of the older sister, which can make her more attractive to men. She has a swaggering kind of confidence – that is vampirically leeched from the younger sister – which makes her seem very appealing.

The constant rejection and humiliation of her younger sister hollows out the older sister's personality, leaving her prone to ideology. Ideology is the attempt to substitute the drug of pretend virtue after the withdrawal of the drug of pretend superiority through accidental characteristics.

The older sister thus often gains a lot of romantic attention, but can never settle down with any one man, because of the hollowness at the center of her personality. She failed to develop genuine value, because she was provided artificial value in the form of birth order.

She gets a lot of dates, but never experiences love, and so is never able to settle down.

Those who exploit others are often charming, but can never be loved.

The frustration of constantly drawing male attention, while never winning male commitment, causes escalating aggression in the older sister.

She cannot blame herself for her hollowness – she cannot take responsibility for her exploitation – and so she turns her anger and frustration outward, to society, blaming “the patriarchy” or “the system” or “capitalism” or other such nonsense.

Empathy – the ability to put herself in another's shoes – has been sacrificed on the altar of vanity, as it so often is.

All that is required for older siblings to save themselves is to *imagine what it would be like to be a younger sibling*.

The humility of recognizing that so much of your “value” is accidental is essential to the development of empathy, and thus the capacity to love and be loved.

You cannot pair-bond without trust, and you cannot trust without consistently positive behaviour – and you cannot achieve consistently positive behaviour if you are addicted to subjugating others – because you both need and despise your victims, and so will eternally swing between emotional extremes.

A man who inherits his fortune is not an entrepreneur, and did not earn it himself.

A woman who is born beautiful, or with a great figure, did not create her own value.

A sibling who happens to be born earlier is not made more valuable through the accidents of time.

Intelligence is largely genetic – it is an accidental gift of nature – and thus should never be used to feed the vanity of the ego.

Of course, we generally prefer to gain rewards without effort – there’s nothing wrong with that, it is the root of our industrial efficiency. It’s why we don’t have to get up off the couch to change the channel on the television.

However, it is *essential* for us to recognize that we can never take as valuable, that which we did not earn.

Let’s say you are a guy with a great head of hair – it’s very tempting to look in the mirror, toss your locks, and feel superior to balding or mangy-headed men.

It’s just an accident, though.

If you’re a tall man, it’s easy to feel superior to shorter men – that’s just an accident, too – we all understand that, but we so often get addicted anyway.

Some men get really big muscles when they lift weights – most men don’t.

Some women are naturally lean, and have a tough time gaining weight, even if they want to.

Some people who garden have what is called a “green thumb” – they just have a natural instinct for growing things, and out-produce other gardeners 10 or 20 to 1.

Some people are naturally gifted at singing – others sound terrible, even if they take lessons.

Some people have perfect pitch, others can’t tell the difference between two similar notes.

Some people can get by on only a few hours of sleep a night – other people are tired if they get less than nine hours.

This is all genetic variance – and a delightful variety in the species – but the recipients of unearned gifts must strive to avoid feeling superior for being in accidental possession of great value.

The devil, so to speak, tempts older brothers and sisters with the offer of existential value for an accidental characteristic – being *older*.

The only value we can possess is the virtue that we earn.

It is a whole lot easier to imagine that we have value for something we never earned than it is to manifest and spread virtue in a dangerously immoral world.

Evildoers silently applaud you for pretending to have value for that which you did not earn – that is the surest path to joining their ranks!

To actually manifest and spread virtue in the world, though – well, that is the most extreme sport known to man and God.

If you’re not facing resistance, you’re not building muscle.

If you’re not being opposed, you’re not doing good.

Sibling Potential

Siblings who overcome vanity and become allies are the most powerful force for good in the world.

Siblings are the only people in your life who can go through the entire journey with you.

When your parents die, only your siblings really remember your life as a child.

Your siblings remain the only witnesses to the forces that shaped you.

Your siblings have enormous, detailed, exquisite and deep knowledge about you – how they use it often determines your future.

True bonding – true love – is when you trust someone enough to reveal your deepest thoughts and fears, knowing that you are placing great power over you in their hands.

As an adult, you can choose whether or not to reveal yourself to people – as a child, to your siblings, you are exposed no matter what.

Imagine, as an adult, if you found out that your most secret thoughts and actions were actually recorded and published.

Siblings see everything, like it or not.

As an adult, you have expectations of privacy.

As a sibling, you have little to no privacy.

Siblings hold enormous power over each other – this power is not earned, it is innate to witnessing childhood.

Do parents train siblings to use their power over each other for good, or ill?

Well, it all depends on how the parents use their *own* power over their children – for good, or ill?

The opinions of anonymous strangers about you probably don't hold much weight in your world – the opinions of your spouse and best friends hopefully do.

If you have complicated finances, a highly skilled accountant can either help you stay solvent, or rob you blind.

People who know everything about you hold great power over you – siblings don't earn this power, and rarely seem to use it wisely.

If parents model the principle that "larger and older equals dominant and aggressive," then older siblings will inflict that model on younger siblings.

In other words, siblings always end up speaking the same language – the language that is taught to them by their parents.

Aggressive parenting destroys sibling bonds.

For abusive parents, having more than one child is basically worse than useless. All the abuse does is turn the siblings against each other, shattering the family unit over time.

Abusive parents don't just create distant siblings – they often produce mortal enemies.

I have seen this play out countless times over the course of my life – and I've seen a few exceptions to this trend, as well – and I have given this speech to a large number of battling siblings:

You have to treat each other well, for so many reasons. First of all, your parents are going to get old and die, and then the only witnesses to your childhood will be each other. Your sibling is the only person who can go through the whole journey of life with you, from start to end, with every stop along the way. They saw you learn how to walk, watched you grow, go through puberty, learn how to date, get educated, get a job, get married, have children – deal with aging... You all have so much knowledge about each other, you can do incredible things to help each other – things that no one else can do! You are like expert mechanics – you can fix anything – and break everything, too! Siblings are bound together so closely that it is like living with someone who's lips are right up against your ear – but who screams instead of whispering! Of course you want to get away from someone who knows so much about you, but doesn't want the best for you – because they can do so much damage, because of everything they know! It's like a doctor who knows everything about the human body – he can either heal you like crazy, or torture you half to death.

You will never meet anyone else in the future who knows you as well as your sibling does – I don't care if you're married for fifty years, and tell your spouse everything – he or she just wasn't there for your entire childhood, and hasn't seen you grow all the way up. As siblings, you are all are so close – that's not an option, that's just a historical fact – and you can use that closeness – that knowledge of each other – to raise each other to the very skies – or cast each other to the very bottom, into hell really.

If you turn on each other – if you use your deep unearned knowledge to harm and undermine each other – you will never stop paying the price for that choice. You will never be able to trust anyone else – not fully – because you can't trust yourself, because you handled your power over another human soul so badly. You will in fact be reproducing all the things your parents did that you hate so much.

If you harm each other, you will be falling into the ultimate trap – those who suffered alongside you, when you were children – they should be your natural allies. If you allow yourself to be turned against them, you are unnecessarily following an entirely evil plan. Divide and conquer, divide and conquer – that's all the bad people need to achieve to continue to conquer us all, whether in the family, in society, our country, or the world as a whole.

*You, the older sibling – you are not better because you happened to be born first – that's a really pathetic thing to base your value on – you didn't earn it, right? And all those "best friends" that you threw your sibling aside for – where are they now, pray tell? Are they here? Will they follow you from start to end? Will **they** help you watch your kids, nurse you when you are sick, talk you out of bad decisions? Will these "best buddies" that you kicked your siblings to the curb for help you out when your parents get sick, and need years of care and attention? Will you be able to call **them** up and ask them to help with the costs of aging parents?*

*Of course not – you probably don't even know where they ended up – and if you **did** call them, wouldn't they just kind of laugh at you?*

This is who you gave your blood kin up for. Strangers with their own lives who live for their own needs.

Isn't that pathetic?

*How can you ever trust your judgement when you made such a stupid decision, for many years, against nature, against history, against your family – against your **own blood**?*

*And now, you want to go to your younger siblings as if you have any kind of authority, and tell them how to live, and ask them for favours, and **still** try to be in charge! 'Go talk to your precious friends,' they want to say, 'you know – your besties that you spent years kicking me to the curb for!'*

You know that you're going to end up alone, if you don't apologize and make this right!

And you – yes you, the younger siblings addicted to playing the victim – do you honestly believe that, if you have been the older sibling, that you wouldn't have done pretty much the same thing?

You are angry with your older siblings because they did not empathize with you – they did not put themselves in your shoes, and realize how sad and alone you were – but have you ever tried putting yourself in your older siblings shoes? Taking the full brunt of parental misdeeds, programmed by society to prefer peers over kin – and with a whole gaggle of younger siblings to wield power over.

If you've not held that kind of power, it's very easy to judge those who misuse it.

You are tempted to be angry at your older sibling – that is an essential part of the plan of abusive parents. 'You all fight amongst each other, while we skate free of all judgement!'

*You claim that the negativity of your older siblings has had a great effect on you – how much more effect did your parents have on **them**?*

You attack each other – and thereby excuse your parents.

*That is **exactly** what they want!*

They are still running the show – that is the saddest thing!

You squabble with each other and blame each other and curse each other – and your parents laugh, because they are let off the hook for now and all time.

You are all victims, all forced to play your part in a play orchestrated by your parents.

You all made mistakes – forgive each other as children, and put the blame where it squarely belongs – on the adults!

*Your parents are part of your past – they no longer parent you – but your siblings are not only your present, but your **future** as well!*

*Sacrificing the functional future for the sake of the dysfunctional past is a **terrible** idea – one that will cost you all for the rest of your lives if you do not change!*

Extended Family and Peaceful Parenting

If we accept – as every moral person does – that rape is evil, would it make any sense to punish women for defending themselves against rape?

Would we argue that murder is evil – but that defending yourself against being murdered is *more* evil?

Would we argue that theft is morally wrong – but it is also evil to take any steps to prevent theft, or punish thieves?

Of course not.

If we define an action as evil, we cannot also define as evil any steps taken to prevent or punish that action.

In fact, one of the inevitable consequences of defining an action as evil is to *praise and defend those who oppose that action*.

Is it evil to hit children?

It is one of the *greatest* evils – for two main reasons.

The first is that the children are helpless, defenseless – and bound to their abusers, and trapped in their homes, for many years to come.

The second is that hitting children is the source of many adult evils. Hitting children legitimizes the use of violence, teaches them that it is good for the strong to terrorize the weak – and destroys their capacity for empathy and pair-bonding.

Hitting children is breeding criminals.³²

Is it evil to verbally abuse children?

It can be an even greater evil than hitting them.

The personality and self-image of the child is formed by the language of his or her parents and instructors.

We start as soft concrete, moldable by those around us – we harden over time, and it takes great effort to change our shape in adulthood.

Is it evil to neglect children?

It can be an even greater evil than verbally abusing or hitting them.

Children experience neglect as an existential death threat.

Neglect produces adults with significant social anxiety, and few if any relationship skills.

³² [Reference 2](#)

But that is not the worst aspect.

There is more.

There is the criminal – and there is the *accessory* to the crime.

There is the bank robber – and there is the getaway driver.

Robbing a bank is illegal – driving is not, *unless helping the robber drive away is the only reason the bank was robbed in the first place.*

If your facilitation of a crime is the only reason the crime occurs – then you are equally a criminal.

If you allow child abusers to harm your children, you are equal to a child abuser.

There is no fundamental moral difference.

If you are a parent, and someone abuses your child, you are fully responsible for that abuse.

There is no escape from your culpability.

In the law, family relationships have little to no standing.

If you rob a bank, and your father is the getaway driver – he is charged regardless.

If your brother murders a woman, and you help cover up the crime – you are not excused because of your blood relationship.

This is for two reasons – the first is that morality is more important than family – and the second is that, if blood relations were excused from criminal activity, then criminals would just work with family members, and most people could never be charged!

Do you see where I am going with this?

Of course you do, brilliant reader!

Pickpockets often work in pairs – Bob bumps into you, and Sally takes your wallet.

Bumping into people is not illegal – stealing their wallet is.

Both Bob and Sally are charged with the crime, since the crime only occurs because both participate.

It doesn't matter if they are husband and wife, brother and sister, father and daughter.

The moral law serves morality, not family.

If you were abused as a child, how much responsibility does your extended family have?

I'm talking aunts, uncles, grandparents – perhaps cousins and nieces, if they are older.

There were probably dozens of extended family members around when you were a child.

Were they responsible for your abuse?

Let us ask this question another way.

If your extended family had acted strongly against your abuse – if they had confronted your parents, demanded that your family get the help it needed in order to stop the abuse, would your parents have been able to continue to abuse you?

Of course not.

If your grandparents had demanded that your parents stop abusing you, either the abuse would have stopped, or your grandparents would have taken you out of harm's way.

In other words, people are 100% responsible for on-going abuse if their actions could have prevented the abuse from continuing.

Of course, extended family members inevitably claim that they had no knowledge of any abuse that was occurring.

Very well.

Although we will never have any proof, let us take them at their word.

What are they really saying?

They are saying that they had no idea that a family member they had known for decades – that they saw growing up from a child to adult – had any capacity for cruelty or viciousness whatsoever.

Grandparents in particular raised abusive parents - are they really going to claim that they had not even the slightest suspicion that the children they raised might have any capacity for cruelty whatsoever?

This is utterly unbelievable.

Imagine if they had given a violent dog to their children – a dog that they had raised for a full decade. When the dog inevitably bit one of the children, would anyone believe the grandparents when they said that they had absolutely no idea that the dog was capable of any aggression whatsoever?

A child who is experiencing abuse displays particular characteristics – depression, anxiety, introversion, avoidance – the symptoms are virtually endless.

Is the entirety of the extended family going to claim that they had absolutely no idea that the child – or children – being abused was undergoing any personality effects whatsoever.

Imagine you had a girlfriend, and she went to some party, and was brutally raped – do you not think that you would detect some of the effects of this hideous violence on her personality the next day?

If that example is too harsh, what if she had just been beaten up, or robbed?

Do you think that she would be exactly the same the next day, and would show no difference in her personality or interactions whatsoever?

Can you imagine the boyfriend of some woman who had experienced a violent crime claiming that he had no idea that she had been attacked at all – how could he possibly know?

If you were abused, and your extended family claims to have no idea that anything negative had ever occurred, then they cannot also claim to be close to you, or love you, or care about you – because they

are claiming to have no clue about your personality, your history, your experiences – or how you were parented.

What is even worse is that every single adult on this planet knows that child abuse is a significant risk in the world – and thus needs to inquire of every child in their vicinity – especially within their own families – whether or not abuse is occurring.

People who claim not to know things that every moral person has an obligation to know do not get excused – they are even further condemned.

Even in the legal system, ignorance of the law is no excuse – even when the laws are staggeringly complicated and sometimes contradictory.

Also, as a child, were you forgiven if you forgot that there was a test on some particular day, and ended up failing that test?

Of course not.

It was your job to know when there was a test, and to prepare for it.

Well, it is the job of your extended family to keep you safe, and make sure that you are not being harmed in any way.

In fact, extended family members who fail to intervene in situations of child abuse are doing so because they fully expect that their claims of ignorance will be accepted down the road, in the years and decades to come.

Every extended family member who refused to ask you if you were harmed as a child is explicitly avoiding knowledge – and thus cannot claim a lack of knowledge as an excuse.

If you know you have an exam coming up, and you fail to study for it, you are responsible for your failing grade because you specifically and explicitly avoided gaining the knowledge you needed to pass the exam.

It is a sick and twisted aspect of society that we punish children for avoiding required knowledge – but we hand out endless forgiveness to adults who avoided infinitely more important knowledge – whether the children in their family were being harmed or abused in any way.

Grandparents who raised abusive parents do not want to look in the mirror and see the harm that they have done, and how that harm is continuing – so of course they mindlessly chatter on about unimportant topics, avoiding the reality of child abuse in the family they created.

They may even enjoy watching the abuse get re-inflicted on the next generation – sometimes immoral people are not just avoidant, but actively sadistic.

As a parent, you are entirely responsible for ensuring that your children are not abused.

If a stranger verbally attacks them in public, you must charge to the rescue.

If a crazy person pushes them to the ground, you must defend them.

If they are bullied by another child, you must get them to safety, and ensure their continued security.

If a man on a bus grabs your daughter, and tells her that she is going to die soon – that everyone is going to die soon – you have to protect her – not from just being grabbed, but from the verbal threat of imminent and universal death.

If your children are told at school that they are evil on the grounds of sex, race or socioeconomic status – you must protect them from this verbal abuse.

If their teachers tell them that the world is going to end soon, because plants might conceivably have a bit too much food, then you need to reason with that teacher – and if the teacher does not listen to reason, you need to get your children out of this teacher's classroom.

It's not optional.

You simply cannot allow people to verbally and physically abuse your children.

As I said before, life becomes a whole lot simpler if you accept and act on universal, simple principles.

What is more universal than: Protect your children!?

If your child is bored at school, you need to protect her enthusiasm for learning by fixing or changing her environment.

If your child is threatened with being drugged because he is bored or restless, you need to protect your child.

If your child is born into mind-crushing economic slavery due to national debts and unfunded liabilities, you need to protect your child by relentlessly advocating for a more sane and sustainable political and economic system.

If your children will be harmed by a divorce – as almost all children are – then you need to find a way to work it out with your spouse, and stay together, to keep them safe.

Imagine a world that honestly operated on the simple, universal principle it claims to live by: *Protect our children!*

We wouldn't force our children into terrible schools.

We wouldn't sell their future to bribe voters in the present.

We wouldn't fill their precious heads with doomsday scenarios of the world ending by weather.

We wouldn't let sophists, propagandists and ideologues loose on their innocent minds, to program them to bow before political power.

The world could be paradise, but we need to be good.

[Extended Family](#)

If your father is harsh with your children, you are abusing your children.

Your father is only in your children's lives because you allow him to be.

If you keep an aggressive dog in the household, and that dog bites your children, you are *fully responsible* for their injuries.

But it goes even deeper than that.

If you keep an aggressive dog around, and that dog bites you, and you end up in hospital – *you are fully responsible for the trauma that causes your children*.

If your father verbally humiliates *you* in front of your children, you are complicit in harming your children.

Even if your father does it out of sight, or on the phone – that still has an effect on your children, because you become tense and nervous and angry and upset.

But let's take the first instance – your father humiliates you in front of your children.

What do they see?

They see your father – Bob, say – exercising aggressive power over you, and you bowing down before him.

They see who has real authority – not just in the household, but in the world.

They see that you have no integrity, because you allow yourself to be treated in such a degrading manner.

They will have no respect for your moral authority, since they see you easily surrendering to a bully.

They view you as weak, and the bully as strong.

Naturally, children are drawn to strength, and repelled by weakness.

By watching you submit to a bully, they learn that virtue loses to aggression.

They learn that morality is powerless, and that bad people run the world.

It's the kind of belief that, once accepted, becomes true, all across the world.

Once they see who is strong, and who is weak, they will obey your father, and disobey you.

In other words, your father ends up bullying your children, through the example of bullying you.

As teenagers, will they listen to you when you tell them to put virtue above peer pressure?

Will they accept your arguments that you need to do the right thing, even when that upsets other people?

Will they end up surrendering their will to the most aggressive person in the environment?

Almost certainly so.

If you submit to bullying, you are crippling your children's capacity for moral integrity.

If your deeds don't match your words, your words are worse than useless.

If you claim to know virtue, but do not act on virtue, then your claims utterly damn you.

You cannot then claim ignorance of virtue, because you endlessly proselytized about it.

Your children will clearly learn that "virtue" is just a bunch of words you use to distract people from your own cowardly corruption and surrender to aggression.

"Virtue" is like a fat man painted to look thin in photographs, rather than actually losing weight.

It's all for show, not for facts and reality.

Good people just talk about integrity, then do whatever bad people tell them to do.

It's just about the most destructive lesson you can inflict on your children.

Again – life becomes simple when you follow universal principles.

Do what is best for your children!

Is it good for your children to watch you being bullied and humiliated?

Will they love your courage, and respect your moral authority?

Or will they be fundamentally ashamed to be ruled over by such a weakling?

What will you see in their eyes, when they see you stammering and bowing before a bully?

It will be the fires of respect, going out under the drowning drizzle of your cowardly surrender.

Don't do it.

Or – if you're going to surrender to bullies, don't have children.

[Dealing with Family Bullies](#)

What do you do?

Well, that is simple!

And – you already know the answer!

How do you deal with bullies that you don't actually have to have in your life?

It's really a two-step process.

1. Have reasonable standards
2. Enforce them

If you have a mother who calls you names, tell her that she is no longer allowed to call you names.

If she continues to call you names, stop seeing her.

I mean – people get into this crazy fog-wrangling nonsense about trying to control aggressive people – “How dare you say this to me!” “I don’t appreciate that tone!” “It really hurts me when you talk like that!”

This is all a kind of charade, a silly game of pretend-boundaries.

You say to your mother: “Mom, you call me names, and I don’t like it. It was one thing when it was just me, but I’m going to have children – I don’t want to get stressed while I’m pregnant, and I certainly don’t want my children to see me being humiliated by you. This is not a negotiation. If you want to spend time around me and your grandchildren, I’m going to need an apology, some restitution – and a visible commitment to prove that it’s not going to happen again. I suggest anger management, or talk therapy – those are pretty good for sure – but it’s really up to you.”

Your mother may reply: “What are you talking about? I don’t call you names – I just tell you how it is – if you can’t handle a little bit of criticism...”

“Sorry, mom – as I said, this is not a negotiation. I will not accept you calling me names, and you need to find a way to achieve that.”

“This is outrageous! How dare you...”

“Again – not a negotiation. Find a way to fix it, or you will not be invited over.”

This can go on for a while – I suggest having this conversation in a place you can easily leave – i.e. not your own home – because boundaries are never enforced through negotiation.

Negotiations occur when there is a possibility of meeting in the middle – you want to pay a low price, the seller wants a high price, and you meet in the middle.

There is no negotiation for abuse – there is no “meeting in the middle.”

Is it reasonable and good to give only half your money to the mugger, because he wants all of it, but you think it’s better to meet in the middle?

If a man wants to murder you, is it good to negotiate that down to just cutting your hands off?

Nope.

Morality does not negotiate.

Morality defines and enforces.

There is no “middle ground” between good and evil – just as there is no “middle ground” between rape and lovemaking.

If a wife wants to poison her husband, does he negotiate her down to just half-poisoning him?

Immoral people will always try to negotiate ethics with you, so that they can pretend that good and evil is just a matter of opinion, or subjective value.

Don’t do it!

As a peaceful parent, you are responsible for absolutely ensuring that *everyone in your children's lives deals with them peacefully as well!*

Abuse is a kind of mind-poison – I'm sure you would agree that a good parent ensures that no one serves poisoned food to their children.

There is no negotiation about this – and there's no person who would ever be reasonably excluded from this absolute requirement!

You wouldn't allow half-kidnappers around your children, right?

So it's really quite simple – no one aggresses against my children – period!

Oh, then how are they going to learn how to deal with aggression?

Why should they?

Trust me – there are enough reasonable people in this world that your children don't have to figure out how to deal with aggressive bullies.

Also, bullying children weakens them – even if you assume they will have a big fight coming up in their adult life – weakening them will just make that fight worse, and they will be more likely to lose.

Also, aggressing against your children in order to prepare them for theoretical bullying later in life is letting the *bullies of the world dictate your parenting!*

If you bully your children because there are bullies out there in the world somewhere – then those bullies are actually parenting your children, not you.

You are still letting bullies into your children's lives.

Family Loyalties

I understand that family loyalties are deeply programmed into our DNA, our culture, our hearts and minds – but so what?

Morality often goes against our instincts – that's why we *need* virtue!

Saying that you are tempted by family loyalties is obvious – it's like complaining to your nutritionist that you are tempted by sugary and fatty foods.

Of course you are – that's why you need a nutritionist in the first place!

Adult children want to conform to their parents. They don't want to stand up against their parents – because that would've felt suicidal as children – but so what?

It's not that I don't sympathize with the emotions – I certainly do – but every moral advancement in human history involved opposing our instincts.

Slavery was a universal practice across the world – humanity has a deep instinct for enslaving others – until it wasn't.

Torturing and sacrificing children to the gods was very common – until it wasn't.

I get that it is difficult – but so what?

You are constantly telling your children to go against *their* instincts, right?

You have to find a way to do the right thing.

Saying that something is difficult is so often put forward as an excuse for not doing it.

“Oh, it's so difficult to exercise and lose weight!”

So what?

Do it anyway.

Saying that something is difficult should be the spur that drives you to do it more – not the excuse to abandon the goal.

Do what is best for your children!

Having abusive people around your family is destructive for everyone involved.

Have reasonable standards, and you enforce them.

If your abusive parents claim that family is everything – then they are lying through their yellowing teeth!

If your parents say that you should never make family members feel bad – then why did they make you feel bad as a child? Were you not a helpless family member?

If your parents say that your words are cruel – then why did they say cruel words to you as a child?

If your parents say that having reasonable standards is wrong – then why did they aggressively inflict unreasonable standards on you as a child?

If your mother gasps in self-pity, saying that you are making her feel terrible – then why did she yell at you and hit you as a child, making you feel far worse?

If it is bad to enforce rules, then why did your parents violently enforce rules against you, as a child?

Every argument they make against you enforcing rules as an adult is proven an utter lie by the rules they enforced on you as a child, when they were in charge!

If your mother demands that you change because she is crying – then why did your mother never change when she made you cry, as a child?

If your father demands that you consider *his* feelings – then why did he not consider *your* feelings, as a child?

If your parents cry out that the category “parent” is deserving of eternal love and respect, then why is that not also true of the category called “child”?

If you have to treat your *parents* well, why did your parents not have to treat *you* well?

Every argument they bring against you condemns them infinitely more.

If it’s cruel and heartless to make your parents feel bad, why was it good for them to make you feel bad, when you were a child?

If your parents say that they don’t remember abusing you, why did they never forgive you for “forgetting things” as a child?

Why is their fake “forgetfulness” as adults infinitely forgivable – but your genuine forgetfulness as a child was utterly unforgivable, and had to be violently punished!

Why do they claim excuses as adults that they never would’ve accepted from you as a child?

Why do they claim that they acted badly because they were stressed, but you were never allowed to act badly as a child, because you were stressed?

Why do they claim that they were aggressive to you because you acted badly as a child – but you were never allowed to be aggressive as a child, because your parents were acting badly?

When your abusive parents were in charge, they were often eager and happy to make you feel bad.

Now that you have some authority, and reasonable standards, it is the worst thing in the known universe to make anyone else ever feel bad!

It’s really quite stomach-turning.

When your parents had power, it was *good* to make you feel bad.

Now that *you* have power, it is evil to make *them* feel bad!

It was good for them to initiate aggression against you in the past.

It is bad for you to defend against aggression in the present.

It was good for them to yell at you and hit you.

It is bad for you to enforce reasonable standards.

Sometimes, in life, moral clarity is all you need.

[Blowback from Boundaries](#)

Abusive parents will usually badmouth you to the entire family, if you enforce reasonable boundaries.

They will often try to turn everyone against you, to punish you with potential ostracism, in order to cover up their own moral crimes.

Fair enough.

They are actually doing you a great favour.

If they successfully bully others into rejecting you, they have clearly identified the moral weaklings around you.

They have shown you *exactly who will betray you in a crisis*.

If you have to cross a minefield, don't you want to know exactly where the mines are?

How could you make it otherwise?

It's called – *cleaning house*.

It's painful – I get that.

But so what?

Rather than having to go through everyone one by one, to try and figure out who has integrity, who has moral courage, who is reliable in a pinch – your parents reveal everyone who will betray you, saving you months and years of time and effort.

You owe your parents justice – nothing more, nothing less.

Justice means holding people to objective moral standards.

Ideally, these are truly objective, not just claimed to be objective.

But you don't have to get anyone to agree with your definition of morality in order to hold them to objective moral standards.

You only have to hold them to the standards they have empirically claimed to be objective.

If your parents punished you for forgetting things as a child, then they cannot complain if they are punished for forgetting things as adults.

If your parents punished you for lying as a child, they cannot complain if they are punished for lying as adults.

If your parents enforced their standards by making you feel bad, they cannot complain if they end up feeling bad because you are enforcing *your* standards.

When I was a kid, the saying was everywhere: *Don't dish it out if you can't take it!*

Or: *How do you like the taste of your own medicine?*

If your parents refuse to own up to their moral hypocrisy – if they endlessly inflicted infinitely higher standards on children than they ever accept as adults – then they will continue to abuse you and your children.

This is an absolute – there are no exceptions.

If they continue to believe that it was good for them to harm innocent children – but it is bad for those grown-up children to harm guilty adults – then they fully plan to continue abusing everyone else by pretending to be moral.

They have taken the greatest glory of mankind – universal moral standards – and twisted it into a degenerate power-play, in order to control and bully their helpless and dependent children.

Kidnappers don't love their victims – but they know *other* people love them, which is why they expect to get paid.

They use the value of love – which they themselves cannot feel – in order to bully and control others.

To use morality to do evil is the greatest possible corruption.

To tell children that you are doing good by punishing them for being bad is the greatest moral evil.

There is no recovery from that.

You might get a fake apology – and some movements towards restitution – but that's it.

Once you have harmed children for years, using the weapons of fake morality, there is no possible restitution.

Protect your children – your abusive parents are beyond salvation.

[How to Apologize](#)

When I was a little boy, growing up in England, I found massive stacks of Readers Digest magazines about to be thrown out. I brought them to my room, and read them voraciously. They actually had quite a big impact on my life – “Laughter, the Best Medicine” taught me good humour; “Drama in Real Life” taught me physical courage – and I vividly remember a brutal series of articles about the “Scared Straight” program.

In this program, young urban at-risk youths received horrifying lectures from hardened criminals languishing in prison. I remember one older bald black man telling the young men that they maybe thought they were tough, but they wouldn't be so tough when they were forced to become someone's “girlfriend” in prison.

The older man also expressed the fervent desire that someone had told him when he was younger how terrible a life of crime was.

Does this book aim to reform aggressive parents, or prevent parents-to-be from becoming aggressive?

Is it punishment, or reward?

All parents who have aggressed against their children will feel punished by this book – all future parents inspired by this book to become peaceful will gain the enormous rewards of virtue.

In particular, abusive parents punish *morally* – the blows, yelling and other punishments are designed to drive the nails of corrupted virtue deep into the flesh and minds of their children. In the same way that a needle breaks skin as a delivery mechanism for the medicine, aggression against children breaks them as a delivery mechanism for corrupted morality.

Physical injuries are not traumatic. Even child abuse is not eternally traumatic – it passes like all pleasure and suffering.

The real trauma is the corrupted morality that infects the soul of the child, and programs it for the remainder of life.

When I was a child, a friend of mine and I were hiking in the woods, and we were captured by two boys in their late teens. They forced us to stay with them, build a fire, and subjected us to various threats.

I was a fairly small boy, and my friend was even smaller – and also had asthma to boot. The taller young man called him a “sucky fag,” and my helpless friend burst into tears.

I cried out: “Why don’t you pick on someone your own size?” and got punched in the stomach as a result.

Eventually, they let us go – reminding us that if we told anyone, or went to the police, they would find us and kill us.

I clearly remember the feeling of helplessness as we slowly shuffled our way home. I had a deeply dismal sense that society was in fact utterly unable to protect us.

It wasn’t just about that endless afternoon – it was about how these teens had made their way through society, and ended up as violent bullies preying on little children – and no one and nothing had done anything to stop them, or punish them – or remove them from society.

These bullies were taking a fairly significant risk, beating up little children – but they – being years older than me – had correctly assessed the society they lived in, and had come to the conclusion that they could in fact get away with whatever they wanted.

These two brutal young men were actually giving us an essential education about the true nature of the social world we lived in.

“Children are helpless, teachers are helpless, priests are helpless, the police are helpless – the worst we will get is a lecture, maybe expelled from school for a couple of days – or perhaps, at the extreme, a week in prison, which we will use to plot our revenge.”

Obviously, I was unable to effectively defend myself, or do anything against these two young men – but they were also teaching me that society could not defend me either, or do anything to restrain them.

The fact that they were willing to offer death threats against us was also very instructive. These were two young men with nothing to lose – no fear of prison, no concern for consequences.

I didn’t actually think they would murder us, but I was apprehensive about the very real possibility of being repeatedly stalked and beaten up.

These two bullies had existed in society for eighteen or nineteen years – I knew their ages because they graduated that school year. (They were at my school, and on the Monday morning after their violence in the woods, one of them sneeringly asked me: ‘How was your weekend, kiddo?’)

For eighteen years, these violent boys had operated in society without fear, without consequences, without containment. The school was perfectly happy to have them continue to attend – giving them access to countless victims over the years. The police were either utterly unaware of their existence and immorality, or knew about it, but chose to do nothing.

Let me tell you what was so utterly strange about all of this.

Here it is, plain and simple.

My school – like all schools – claimed to be a moral and educational institution.

My teachers constantly lectured me about morals, virtue, responsibility, altruism – you name it!

However, significant evil was in their midst.

Isn’t this a strange thing?

I remember feeling how strange it was, even at the time, at the age of eleven.

It was like having an uncle who was a famous doctor – world-regarded for his ability to spot incredibly subtle signs of illness – whose wife had a giant tumour growing out of her neck.

This doctor would give endless lectures to medical students about the need to identify the first incredibly subtle hints of illness – how a slight droop of the lip could indicate a hidden tumour in the neck – and, during his lectures, he would show a picture of himself and his wife – and the whole class could see her enormous tumour, but would say nothing about it.

Nothing at all.

Wouldn’t this be a very strange kind of surreal pantomime?

All these students, nodding along with this doctor, taking copious notes about microscopic signs of sudden illness – and completely ignoring the giant tumour on his wife’s neck!

Either the doctor did not see the tumour, which means he has no capacity to detect even the most obvious illness – or he *did* see the tumour, but had no interest in fixing it.

You see the parallels?

Significant evil roamed the halls of my high school, preying upon helpless children in the wilderness.

My teachers and elders constantly lectured me about morals and virtue, and warned me against little habits like laziness and tardiness – that could potentially grow into really bad behaviour!

You see – I had to do my homework, but they did not have to protect me.

Our elders were constantly giving us endless sermons about the tiny subtle signs of future immorality. I vividly remember the vice principal in my junior high school lecturing us for an *hour* on the need to Improve our vocabulary, grandly gifting us each a thesaurus at the end of his speech.

I also remember our gym teacher giving us grueling lectures when some of the boys made fun of the wrist flip shown on a video on how to throw a basketball.

Boy, did we ever receive a lot of lectures about tiny negative habits, and how they could lead to endless moral disasters over time!

These elders were *experts* in all the tiny signs of potential evil!

However – still – great evil walked the halls of their institutions, and no one – not one elder – did anything about it, or said anything about it, or protected the children – or seemed to recognize this evil at all!

They were like bloodhounds that claimed to be able to follow a tiny scent from miles away, but proved unable to sniff out rotting bodies right at their feet.

It was then that I began to realize that society was in fact a kind of madhouse, where elders lectured and bullied morally sensitive children about virtue – while letting true evildoers roam the halls at will, and prey on children whenever they felt like it.

Another time – when I was about the same age – a boy unplugged a videogame I was playing at a bowling alley, and I called him a jerk.

His cold-eyed older brother then chased me around the school for a week or two, saying that he was going to kill me for hitting his brother. He punched me on the shoulder one morning, as I was climbing the stairs, and he was descending them.

I told him that I did not hit his brother, but it didn't matter.

I remember sitting on a green velour armchair in my apartment, playing Taps on the harmonica, remembering the eighteen-year-old man jabbing his finger at me and saying, "You're *dead*!"

I never dreamt of going to a teacher, or other adult, for help.

Even then, I was an empiricist.

All the adults – hundreds of them – who knew about these brutal young men – either did not know that they were immoral, or chose not to do anything about that immorality.

Or – perhaps even worse – they knew about this evil, wanted to do something about it, but for some reason felt or knew that it could not be fixed.

Either they didn't know, or they knew but didn't care, or they knew and cared, but also knew that it was impossible to fix.

Morally sensitive children were lectured, threatened, punished – immoral children were enabled, ignored.

Punishments were only for those already good – evil was allowed to grow without repercussions.

In other words, diet books were only given to slender people – the obese got endless buffets of their favourite foods.

I stopped believing in the virtue of society after that.

I didn't mind particularly that society was not virtuous – I *did* mind that society was hypocritical.

I viewed a mugger as more honest than my teachers.

A mugger doesn't give you moral lectures – he just threatens you, and takes your money.

There is violence, but at least no hypocrisy.

It's actually almost refreshing.

Teachers, though – and parents, obviously, and priests – endlessly lecture you about virtue and good habits and morality – but only if you are morally sensitive to begin with.

If you are a brutal, aggressive young person, they just – kind of ignore you, veer away, avoid you – let you prey on the morally sensitive smaller children – and then go back to lecturing your victims about the need to be strong in the face of immorality!

I initially thought that this was perhaps a smaller, more localized problem – but as I got older, I realized that no one could ever talk about this in society, anywhere, at any time.

If no one ever talks about a problem – then that problem must be either nonexistent, or all-pervasive.

People at dinner parties rarely discuss the dangers of alien abduction – it's not really a big issue in society.

However, people would not tense up and get weird if the topic came up – they would probably laugh about it, make a few jokes and move on.

But the topic of moral hypocrisy is very different.

No one talks about it, and everyone gets deeply and eerily tense whenever the subject comes up.

It's the biggest secret we have – as people, and as a society, the whole world over.

Of course, I don't know for certain what would have happened if I had gone to my mother, a teacher, a priest –or some other adult – and told them about the danger I was in.

It certainly is possible that these violent young men would have been efficiently and effectively dealt with – removed from school or society, imprisoned or educated, or fixed in some way, so that they would not repeat their evils in the future – but it is extremely unlikely.

In their own way, evildoers educate the innocent on the true nature of society.

The young men who brutalized me did so because they had spent years learning – to their great relief and joy no doubt – that they faced zero repercussions for their actions.

I imagine the eighteen-year-olds who aggressed against me had been bullies for at least a decade – probably more.

In other words, they had ten years of experience regarding the unwillingness or inability of society to deal with bullies.

I was being bullied for the first time – at least outside of my home – but they had ten years of experience!

They bullied because they knew society was impotent to deal with them.

If you had to place a bet on who would win a tennis match, would you bet on the person who was picking up a tennis racket for the first time, or someone who had been training hard for ten years straight?

We work the odds, right?

I had no experience with bullies in the woods – the bullies in the woods had ten years of experience in bullying.

Who knew more about how society dealt with bullies?

Who had explored – tentatively at first, then with increasing confidence – how easy it was to prey on the little children that society so loudly proclaims that it lives to protect.

Funny story – turns out, society is lying, and the children are not only unprotected – they and their bullies are forced into the same buildings, year after year, like an innocent man tossed into prison!

This exact same society praises brave soldiers and courageous superheroes for standing tall and fighting evil – but then cowers before teenage bullies, feeding them their endless victims in bottomless cowardice and appeasement.

Society lectures the good, and cowers before – and colludes with – the bullies.

The bullies and society are the same.

My teachers bullied me with moral lectures – my bullies attacked me with their fists.

My bullies were infinitely more honest than my teachers.

The moral lectures last a lifetime – being punched hurts only for a day or two, then disappears.

My teachers – my elders – my parents and priests – did me infinitely more damage than those who merely punched me in the woods.

I thought that my teachers were failing to protect me from the bullies – I then began to understand that my bullies were trying to protect me from my teachers.

I'm not saying that this was conscious or willed in any way – but this was the effect.

Do you see?

That which hurts in the moment is trying to protect you from what will hurt you more in the future.

If you put your hand in a fire as a child, you pull it back, because it hurts like crazy!

The pain in the moment is trying to protect you from greater pain in the future.

Bullies are trying to teach us that society is the real bully.

Bullies reveal to us the moral hypocrisy of our moralizing elders.

By physically attacking us, the bullies inoculate us against the moral attacks of our hypocritical elders.

“All these people who loudly proclaim that they exist to serve and protect you – well, they actually serve and protect me, your bully! I’m trying to wake you up to the truth of reality, unplug you from the matrix – and I know it hurts like crazy, but it would hurt a whole lot more if you continued to swallow the moral lies of your so-called ‘superiors’!”

Physical bullies are the inevitable antidote, provoked by the hypocritical moral bullying of our social elders.

In their own way, they are desperately trying to help us.

They certainly helped me.

I knew another boy in my early teens who bullied his single mother.

He would throw her against the wall and hold her there, threatening her with his fists.

He had a wildly self-destructive streak, and was capable of great cruelty.

He got into wild fistfights with boys much bigger than him.

He ended up dying in a fiery motorcycle crash at the age of nineteen.

He also sailed through school and church and society without anyone noticing or doing anything about his obvious self-destruction, corruption and immorality.

Either nobody noticed, nobody cared – or nobody believed it could be fixed.

But if his immorality could not be fixed, then why was society pretending that it could fix immorality?

This would be like society morally shaming you for aging – society cannot stop you from aging, it cannot stop or fix the passage of time.

There are books on how to lose weight, because weight can be controlled.

There aren’t any books on how to reverse time, because time cannot be controlled.

If, when confronted with evil, society recoils because evil cannot be fixed – then why does society lecture everyone about how to fix evil?

I suppose it’s because everyone just likes talking about virtue, to feel good – because actually *being* good often doesn’t feel that good at all!

It’s kind of like the famous “champagne socialists” who claim to love and care about the poor, but never actually spend any time around poor people. They say that they want to feed the hungry, but if you ever signed them up to spoon gruel at a local food kitchen, they would roll their eyes, and jet off to Monaco.

Society is a giant conspiracy of pretend virtue.

Society is addicted to *feelings* of virtue – but determinedly avoids *actual* virtue.

Feeling virtuous feels good – *being* virtuous often feels bad, at least in the short run.

Preferring to feel good – rather than be good – gives free reign to evildoers, because all they have to do is threaten you in order to get you to back off.

Since you are driven by hedonism, rather than virtue, you will always give up virtue in the face of discomfort.

Virtue is required because it often feels bad – just as dieting is required because bad food tastes good, and exercise is required because inertia often feels better than strenuous movement.

We require discipline to do the things we don't want to do – which feels bad in the moment, and perhaps for quite a while.

I was constantly lectured about discipline and homework and hard work and being on time and doing the right thing – things I didn't want to do as a child.

I was constantly lectured about the virtues of doing things that are difficult or unpleasant – practicing my violin, memorizing the times tables, getting up early – by a society that enables bullies because dealing with them is difficult or unpleasant.

It's the darkest comedy known to man or God.

Once you realize that society is largely a rundown neighbourhood populated by junkies addicted to the dopamine of self-righteousness – everything becomes bitterly clear, eye-wateringly illuminated.

You finally see, but it burns.

You can accurately predict outcomes that you desperately don't want to come true.

You're right – and you're depressed.

You're accurate, and hate it.

Well, as the good book says – he who increases in wisdom, also increases in sorrow.

Drug addicts constantly lie, and are emotional terrorists.

If you don't do what they want, they increase their aggression until you comply.

Drug addicts often deny their addiction, reserving their rage for anyone who points out the basic facts.

And drug addicts are defined by their terror of withdrawal.

They continue taking destructive drugs out of fear of the consequences of getting clean.

We all know that we are surrounded by bottomless moral hypocrites, dopamine drug addicts who get their "fix" by loudly proclaiming their dedication to virtue, while betraying every value they claim to hold.

It's a scam and a con and a deadly betrayal of the young.

Apologizing to Children

A fork in the road exists for every soul that encounters a credible new moral argument:

Improve my life, or attack the messenger?

If I somehow found out tomorrow that cows were highly intelligent beings, I would be appalled at the idea of eating them.

I wouldn't attack myself for eating them in the past, though, because there was no evidence that cows were highly intelligent – in fact, there was every evidence to the contrary.

I would be very surprised, and I would change my ways – but I wouldn't condemn myself for my prior actions, because otherwise I would end up paranoid that every reasonable assumption of mine was wildly false, and every morally neutral act was in fact stone evil – and I would become paralyzed, unable to trust any of my judgements or reasoning, which is no way to live.

Philosophy is designed to give you certainty through reason and evidence. Philosophy cannot grant you omniscience, because an omniscient mind would have no need for a methodology to distinguish truth from falsehood – no need for epistemology.

However, if for decades I had publicly proclaimed that cows were brilliant, noble and deserving of full human rights – but I secretly ate them in private – and my secret was revealed – then I would want to shoot the messenger with every metaphorical bullet I had.

A lack of knowledge is forgivable. Rank hypocrisy is another matter.

An eighteenth century doctor who failed to prescribe antibiotics for a simple infection would not be a bad doctor, because antibiotics had not been invented yet.

A doctor in the twenty first century who claims to follow the Hippocratic oath, and loudly and publicly proclaims his unending dedication to do all that is best for his patients, but fails to prescribe antibiotics for a simple infection – well, that is another matter.

Those dedicated to virtue who merely lack knowledge improve with new knowledge.

Those dedicated to hypocrisy attack new knowledge with everything they have.

Those dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge receive new knowledge with great thanks.

Those dedicated to the cover-up of evil rail against clearer definitions of immorality.

If you want to visit a friend, you are happy when he is home.

If you want to rob his house, you are unhappy when he is home.

What will the world do with the moral knowledge contained in this book?

Many of you will hold onto it with great gratitude, since it encourages – perhaps even allows – you to avoid the great evil of terrorizing your own children.

Not all of you though...

Many out there will rage against this book – for reasons too obvious to mention.

Some of you will hang in the balance – wanting to change, ashamed of what you have done – and there is no shame in that, I’m ashamed of some of the things I have done as well – you want to improve, but you don’t know how to start.

If you are convinced that you have wronged someone, the first thing you need to do is apologize.

If you publicly accuse an employee of stealing from you, but then video evidence proves him innocent – what do you do?

Apologize, of course.

But what does that really mean?

What is the purpose of an apology?

The purpose of an apology is to restore trust.

The purpose of a doctor is to restore health.

If you break your arm, the purpose of the doctor is to restore the functionality of your arm.

If you break trust, the purpose of an apology is to restore that trust.

Trust is *empirical*, not merely verbal.

There is a funny meme on the Internet, where someone is challenged about his outlandish claim, and he replies: *Source? Trust me, bro!*

Well, you have no reason to trust some random person on the Internet, so why would you?

Sophists and manipulators have always wanted virtues to be verbal, not empirical – because language can be manipulated – facts, not so much.

Credibility is *empirical*, not verbal.

It’s not complicated.

If you want people to lose weight, don’t be fat.

If you want others to grow a sixpack, have a sixpack.

If you want people to have better skin, don’t have a face full of pimples.

If you want to tell everyone how to be happier, don’t be miserable.

One certain marker of a sophist is someone who tries to instruct you in the absence of empirical evidence of their own success.

It’s infinitely easier to say, “Trust me, bro,” than it is to earn someone’s trust through years of consistently positive behaviour, and measurable achievement.

In the long-running show “America’s Got Talent,” mediocre singers would sometimes get angry at Simon Cowell, a judge, because they claimed that they sang better than *he* does.

However, Simon Cowell never claimed to be a singer – but rather a good judge of musical talent, which is well-established by his mentoring of wildly successful acts over many decades.

It's really tragic how many successful people are lectured on success by unsuccessful people.

Vanity, one of the greatest sins...

If you publicly accuse an employee of a crime, and it turns out that she is innocent, you have done her great harm – how do you fix that?

Apologies – actions designed to restore trust – require three components:

1. The apology itself, which is an admission of fault – in the same scope and context as the accusation of wrongdoing. If you accuse someone or wrong them publicly, then the apology must also be public.
2. Restitution for the wrongdoing. If your employee spends two weeks in agony because you accuse her of stealing, then give her at least a month's salary as a bonus, as restitution. Restitution needs to be empirical, not merely verbal – because the results of the accusation or wrongdoing were empirical, not merely verbal. Your employee lost sleep, peace of mind – her fight or flight amygdala response was activated, she experienced great upset – if she was wearing a smartwatch, all this would be empirically recorded.
3. A measurable commitment showing how the accusation or wrongdoing will not recur. If you wrong someone through excessive anger, then going to therapy or anger management is a measurable commitment towards reducing your anger. If you steal from someone because you have a gambling addiction, then working with a professional program to overcome your addiction would be a good step forward.

These actions are all necessary – but not sufficient – for the restoration of trust.

Your employee might choose to quit after your false accusation – even if you perform all these steps.

That's entirely her right, of course.

If you have wronged someone, and go through the above three steps, and she chooses to continue the relationship, trust is only restored after you have behaved honourably for a significant period of time.

In general, there is a 7 to 1 ratio of good to bad in relationships. If you have one bad day, you need seven good days to make up for it. (This is because we are generally hardwired to be more attentive to negative stimuli, for obvious evolutionary reasons.)

When you understand this, you will not let many bad days accumulate in your relationship, because the debt quickly becomes unpayable, and the relationship is doomed.

A bad week in a relationship is only repaired after almost 2 months of great behaviour – a bad year takes seven years to recover from, and a bad decade – well, recovery is impossible, because you'll both be in the grave.

A bad hour can be fixed the same day – a bad decade can never be fixed at all.

Imagine how attentive you would be to following directions in the woods if you knew that every step you took in the wrong direction would take seven steps to correct.

The 7 to 1 ratio is just a rule of thumb – an average between extremes. Mild grumpiness is different from vicious betrayal; distracted inattentiveness is different from a verbal assault.

The worse the accusation or wrongdoing, the more time is needed to restore trust.

How long does it take a wife to trust her husband after he has an affair?

If it was a brief emotional affair, that is one thing.

If he had another family for a decade, that is quite another.

This is why people tell you not to go to bed angry. You're just accumulating more deficits.

People tend to end relationships when they instinctively recognize that restitution has become impossible, either due to the severity or the longevity of the wrongdoing.

If you have wronged your children, what does an apology look like?

Well, first of all, you have to apologize – and without excuses, which is very hard.

It's a well-known trope that if an apology contains the word "but," then everything before that word can be discarded. "I'm sorry, but you provoked me!" just means: "You provoked me!"

Excuses are promises of repetition – if you apologize for being angry, but say that you were provoked, that you are just giving yourself permission to be angry again, the next time you perceive provocation.

Parental excuses repeat not just for the parents, but inter-generationally, for the children as well.

If you regret hitting your children, and you say: "I'm sorry I hit you, but I was hit myself as a child" – then what have you told them?

That being hit as a child is a valid excuse for hitting your own children.

And thus the cycle repeats – because they were hit as children, now they have an excuse for hitting their own children, and it all starts up again – because of your pride, and your thirst for an excuse.

Also, you can never claim an excuse that you have denied to your child.

If your boy hits another girl, and says: "I hit her because I've been hit as a child" – would you accept that as an excuse?

Of course not.

As an adult, you can't claim an excuse that you would deny to your own child.

If your boy hits the girl, and then claims: "But she made me really angry!" – would you accept *that* as an excuse?

Of course not.

Therefore, you cannot claim any excuses when you apologize to your children – or anyone else, for that matter.

Apologies need to come without footnotes or asterisks.

Excuses are abdications of responsibility – “I was angry because I was provoked” – well, provocation is a constant factor in life, so you’re just promising to do it again, when the right circumstances inevitably present themselves.

If there are no excuses for your children, there are none for you.

You can’t give more moral responsibility to your children than you take for yourself as an adult.

You also cannot inflict sudden moral condemnations for behaviours that you have modelled for years.

If you apologize for hitting your son when he is eight years old – and you are forty – then it’s irrational and abusive to tell him that he must never hit anyone else ever again – and if he does, he is totally morally responsible for that bad action.

If you grew up speaking English, how long will it take for you to forget English?

If you hit children at the age of forty, how can you condemn them for hitting others when they are thirty-two years younger than you?

In other words, how can you blame them for their youthful mistakes when you continued to make those mistakes for thirty-two extra years?

No – if you hit your children for eight years, then they are going to continue their aggression for months or years after you reform and apologize – and the blame for that lies on you, not them.

The captain of a supertanker ship needs to start cutting his engines six hours before he wants to stop – the momentum is enormous.

It takes even longer to turn the ship around.

The captain can change his mind in an instant – but it takes hours or days for the supertanker to follow his thoughts.

Parenting is momentum – for good or ill.

When you apologize for hitting your children, you also have to apologize for *lying* to them.

It’s a pretty horrible situation actually.

If you hit your children for eight years, you constantly lied to them about *why* you were hitting them – you told them that you were hitting them because they were bad, and deserved it, and you were being a good parent by punishing them.

However, it turns out that *you* were bad for hitting them, and they did *not* deserve it, and you were being a bad parent by assaulting them.

Apologizing for actions is usually easier than admitting motivations – but without admitting motivations, apologies mean less than nothing – they are just traps, designed to pretend to restore trust, while continuing the exploitation.

You will be very tempted to say to yourself – and your children – the following:

"I am sorry for hitting you, that was wrong, but it's how I was raised, and it's how everyone in my family deals with their children – and everyone I know – and I did get angry when you didn't listen, or do the right thing – which doesn't make what I did right, but I'm just trying to help you understand *why* it happened. Parenting turned out to be way more difficult than I anticipated, and I did lose my temper – but my work life can be really crazy, and your mom was going through that health scare, and we were really tight on money – a lot of unexpected bills – and then my car broke down, and I was biting my nails until they hurt every day – it was just a really, really bad time... Look, I'm not saying I handled it super well, but there was a lot that was going on that you guys didn't know about that made it harder for me to keep my temper – again, I'm not blaming you, I'm just trying to give you the circumstances, so it makes a bit more sense. I wasn't just this random mean ogre who woke up in the morning looking forward to – doing what I did. There were reasons – which you wouldn't know about – and shouldn't know about – and I'm telling you now so you don't take it so personally."

Right...

That is all total crap!

If you say that you didn't really want to hit your children, but habits and circumstances conspired to *make* you do it – you're just telling them that they can expect to be hit again, when the habits and circumstances reemerge.

Also, believe it or not, children who are trapped at home with parents who hit them *also* experience significant stress, fear and anger. Did you as a parent ever excuse their "bad" behaviour because they were stressed, frightened, angry and upset?

Of course you didn't – that's why you hit them.

So, you are saying that stress is a justification for bad behaviour – but only for adults. Only for forty-year-olds facing stress at work, *never* for eight-year-olds facing violence at home.

After you 'apologize,' you will now ask them to be good, while showing them that they can create endless justifications for bad behaviour, so it isn't really their fault at all.

Also, you are saying that they can behave badly – at least up until the age of forty or so – and it's not really important, as long as they can find some external pretend justifications to excuse themselves.

So – what *do* you say?

In other words – ***why*** did you hit your children?

It's a very tough question, and perhaps you are feeling some shame.

Maybe a lot.

It's hard, but necessary I'm afraid.

You must accept the shame, so you can change for the better.

If you tell your children that you hit them because you were hit yourself as a child, then you are teaching them that human beings have no free will, that we are just a series of dominoes that get knocked over

from the beginning of time – and that you hit them for acting badly as children, while also knowing that children who are hit act badly.

This is the moral equivalent of slipping alcohol into their hot chocolate, then punishing them for being drunk.

Why did you hit your children?

You can't say that you hit them because of external circumstances, because you did not hit them in public, or in front of a policeman, or at parent/teacher conferences, or at church, or the mall – you were perfectly able to refrain from hitting your children, so you cannot blame external circumstances for causing you to hit your children, since you clearly exercised total control over hitting them, and could stop for long periods at will.

If you claim that you hit your children because of stress at work – well, the stress you feel at work doesn't vanish the moment that you step out in public, right? Going to the mall doesn't magically erase all of your external stressors – but you didn't hit your children at the mall, even though you still felt stressed.

Stress does not cause you to hit your children.

Your bad childhood does not cause you to hit your children.

As an adult, you did not have a bad childhood when you are sitting at home, but a really great childhood when you take your children to the mall.

You were not beaten as a child when you yelled at your children in the backyard – but peacefully reasoned with as a child when you took your children to church.

If, as a parent, you ever hissed at your children, "Just wait till we get home!" – then you did not hit your children for any external reason.

You hit your children because you could get away with it.

You hit your children because you were bigger, and they were smaller and dependent on you.

Why did you hit your children?

Because you wanted to.

And you could.

I can feel the moral conscience of the world – billions of souls – recoiling from this simple statement of obvious fact.

Everyone who does wrong wants to create a complicated series of domino-style causalities, so that they can somehow live with having done wrong.

Certainly, when we see people who have done very bad things, we almost always see a bad childhood.

This is a basic logical error – "*Post hoc ergo propter hoc*" – "After this, therefore because of this!"

Sure, sometimes it makes sense – people open their umbrellas after it starts raining – therefore they open their umbrellas *because* it is raining.

Makes sense.

But not always.

People sometimes receive a cancer diagnosis after they get a test – does that mean that they receive their cancer diagnosis *because* they got tested? Therefore no one should ever get tested, because testing causes cancer?

Of course not.

The problem with seeing bad childhoods behind adult immorality is that it avoids the rather essential fact that many people become *better* because of their bad childhoods.

Saying that Bob became an alcoholic because his father was an alcoholic does not explain why his brother never touched alcohol, because *his* father was an alcoholic.

Saying that you hit your children with a belt because your father did that to you is not rational or causal – it is an excuse – a pathetic excuse, plain and simple.

You have *less* excuse to hit your children with a belt if your father did it to you – because you know *exactly* how much it hurts, how terrifying and painful it is!

It's literally like saying that you have no idea how painful sunburns are, when you have repeatedly experienced painful sunburns.

Those who have experienced abuse have the *least* justification for inflicting abuse – because they know *exactly* how terrifying and painful and destructive it is!

It's like a torturer claiming that he has no idea what causes pain – despite targeting the most sensitive areas of the human body in his victims.

It's beyond ridiculous, beyond contemptible.

Why did you hit your children?

Because you wanted to, and you could.

But – but – what about the causality of a bad childhood, of neglect, of the cycle of abuse?

Total crap!

If you say that you hit your children because you were hit as a child, then you are saying that being hit as a child produces evil outcomes.

If you admit that hitting children produces evil outcomes, then why did you hit your children?

If you say that you hit your children because you thought you were doing the right thing, who can disprove you?

Everyone charged with a crime could then claim that they had no *idea* that what they did was illegal!

If an adult hits a twelve-year-old for his carelessness – and then the twelve-year-old hits a five-year-old for her carelessness – the adult generally punishes the twelve-year-old again.

It's the same moral rule, though – hit those younger than you for their carelessness.

Why does the adult punish the twelve-year-old for enforcing the *exact same moral rule* on the five-year-old?

It makes no sense.

An adult may punish a child for forgetting something – but the adult will never be punished for forgetting something.

You have to be honest about *why* you hit your children – if you ever wish to regain their trust.

You say: "I'm incredibly sorry that I hit you guys. It was wrong, and I have absolutely no excuse. I did it because I was bigger, and I knew I could get away with it, and I knew you guys couldn't leave, or fight back. Hitting you made me feel better – stronger. It was really pathetic, I have absolutely no justification, and I've taught you guys exactly the wrong thing – many wrong things. I've taught you that it's good to use violence against smaller and more helpless people. I lied to you about why I hit you – I told you it's because you were bad or disobedient or you didn't listen or you broke something – those were all total lies. I just made stuff up in my head so that I would feel better about hitting you. You weren't wrong, you weren't bad – I was wrong, and I was bad – and not just for hitting you, but for lying about why. I don't want you to feel bad about yourselves because I lied to you about why I hit you. It's not your fault that I hit you – it's my fault entirely. You weren't bad – I was. And the worst thing I did was not just hitting you – it was telling you that I did it because you were bad. You don't have any marks on you because I hit you – but I put thoughts in your head that are gonna be very hard for you to get rid of – and that's all on me, it was me being mean and cruel and nasty."

Do you have the strength and integrity for that kind of speech?

Because I'm telling you – that is what is needed.

And you only get one shot – one chance.

If you violate the moral standards you have inflicted on your children while apologizing for violating the moral standards you have inflicted on your children – they will never trust you again.

They may go through the motions, they may pretend, they even may laugh and joke with you – but they won't trust you.

If you punished your children for dishonesty – and then you are dishonest in your apology – you will never escape your maze of corruption.

Honesty requires the absolute rejection of manipulation.

If you falsely accuse an employee, and then "apologize" while laughing and asserting that, "Well, you were acting really suspiciously!" then she will quit, if she has any sense or integrity at all.

If you punished your children, denying them any excuses for their childish actions – and then claim excuses for your *own* adult punitive immorality, you are lost for all time.

Sometimes, life really does come down to one shot, one moment, one speech.

Don't screw it up.

Restitution

Assuming you are honest in your apology, the next step is restitution.

Remember the 7 to 1 rule.

Maybe, given the strength of the child/parent bond, we can reduce this to a 3 to 1 rule.

If you hit your children for a year, it will take three years to repair the damage.

If you yelled at your children for a year, it takes three years of calm negotiation to restore trust.

If you hit your children for five years, it will take fifteen years to restore trust.

Ten years of abuse requires thirty years of positive interactions to overcome.

Are you up for it?

Restitution is the act of making whole the injuries that you have inflicted.

If you break someone's arm, you pay for their medical bills, rehabilitation – and throw in extra money for their pain, time and effort.

Restitution is defined by the victim, not the perpetrator.

Restitution is achieved when the victim is neither happy nor unhappy that the wrong occurred.

We have all heard of the scam artist "slip and fall" strategy – when people get hurt on your property, then sue you for millions of dollars.

That is excessive "restitution" that breeds corrupt and bad behaviour.

If you ding someone's car, and pay for the repairs, and give them free dinner at a nice restaurant – they are not happy that you dinged their car, but they are not unhappy that it happened either.

What does it take to achieve restitution with your children?

If you break your son's tablet, then getting him a new tablet, and restoring the data – and maybe buying him an ice cream – well, that should be enough.

Restitution is achieved when you are okay with what happened.

What would it take for your children to be *okay* with being hit for years?

What would it take for your children to be *okay* with being yelled at and insulted for years?

What would it take for your children to be *okay* with being dumped among strangers in daycare for years?

What would it take for your children to be *okay* with having their personalities defined by violence, verbal abuse and insults?

Do you see the problem here?

I don't know the answer to that.

Think of your own childhood – if you experienced neglect, molestation, physical or emotional abuse...

What would it take for you to be *okay* with what happened?

I'm fully aware of the 7 to 1 rule, so I make sure that things don't go even slightly badly for very long – and problems that are found early can be fixed easily.

Child abuse irrevocably shapes and forms the personality of the child.

Child abuse forms and reforms the neural connections in the brain.

How much money would you take to give up twenty years from your lifespan?

Instead of dying at eighty, you die at sixty.

Instead of seventy, fifty.

What is twenty years of your life worth?

\$1 million?

\$10 million?

Would you take *any* money to die twenty years earlier?

Child abuse can take *twenty years* away from people's lifespans.

Child abuse is the slow-motion murder of the future.

Child abuse produces addiction, criminality, promiscuity, ill health – and an early death.

Child abuse permanently destroys what you could have been without being abused.

It is not a death sentence – the effects can be changed – but it is heavy labour to change them.

You can spend days breaking your back and fingernails digging out of a deep hole – that doesn't mean that being buried in the hole in the first place was okay.

People shoot the messenger when no restitution is possible for the evils they have committed.

People refuse to reform when reform becomes impossible.

People stop saving for the future when death is imminent.

If you hurt your children, your children deserve an apology.

Maybe this will fix the relationship, maybe it won't.

But we don't judge the morality of an action by its consequences.

We don't say that we can't end the evils of slavery because society will have no way to produce food and cotton.

We don't say that we shouldn't free political prisoners because it will make their persecutors feel bad, or they might have a tough time finding jobs.

When I was a child, I was told: *Do the right thing, though the skies fall!*

Tell the truth, and shame the devil!

Well, it's time for us to do the right thing, and tell the truth – though the skies fall, and the devil is shamed.

After you apologize, you make restitution, as best you can.

And then you do everything – absolutely everything – in your power to show that you will never do evil again.

You go to therapy, you study moral philosophy, you take courses in anger management – you reject and abandon the evil people in your life who will not reform – you do everything that is necessary to prevent the return of evil into your heart and your hands.

There are workbooks written by psychologists that help you get to the root of your own motivations – you buy stacks of those, and work through them every night, every weekend.

You talk to your own parents, you examine your own childhood, you trace the growth of your immorality – you confront yourself at every turn, challenging the devils that live in the heart of each and every one of us.

You weep, you wail, you gnash your teeth – you confront the heart you have blackened with badness – you overthrow the devil you grew yourself to be, and throw your broken soul into the arms of the angels.

You surrender your twisted will – your excuses, your manipulations, your hypocrisies – to the shining standards of universal virtue.

You obey what is good, what is right – not your pathetic pleasures of the moment.

You stop being a slave to your base animal hedonism – and serve righteousness, morality, virtue – God, in a word.

You stop making excuses, and start making progress.

You stop lying for immediate benefit, and start telling the truth for long-term happiness.

You give your children freedom by taking responsibility for everything you have done – and everything you failed to do.

You find your soul – and then save it.

You graduate from self-righteousness to – well, just *righteousness*, the service of virtue, rather than your own ego and vanity.

You drop the need to feel *right*, and pursue the glory of being *good*.

Perhaps you make it, perhaps you don't.

Perhaps it's too late – perhaps it isn't.

But I promise you one thing: *If you finally and honourably live the values you have always claimed – that you would do anything for your children – the world – not just your world, but the one we all inhabit, into the infinity of the future – will become inestimably better.*

Think of all the great souls who have dragged humanity up the thorny cliff-sides of virtue – think of all of the freedoms and opportunities you possess, because of the sacrifices of people in the past.

It is far better to add to the honour of the species than to exploit the sacrifices of your ancestors.

We will all be gone soon enough – the purpose is to be good before we go!

Add to the truth of the world, not the hypocrisy that serves only your vanity, and those who rule us.

Talk to your children – apologize, make restitution – and be better.

Morality is empirical, not verbal.

Virtue is for living, not talking.

If you are not doing good, you are not good.

Stop reading, go act.

Child Abuse and Power

The purpose of moral education must be to make people *want to be good*.

But – why should we be good?

Fear and desire are the two most powerful human motivators.

A young man is fearful of being rejected, but his desire drives him to ask out girls.

Fear of failure is a shadow cast by the drive to succeed.

Philosophers have written about almost every topic under sun and moon – except the specific ethics of child abuse and peaceful parenting.

Some thinkers talk about being nicer to your children, and reasoning with them, and using non-coercive forms of punishment – what makes this different from peaceful parenting?

These are all arguments from *effect* – the effects of spanking and harsh parenting are negative, therefore we should not do them.

This has not solved the problem of aggressive parenting – or society's generally predatory relationship to its own children, its own future.

Why not?

Well, if the good or bad of an action is to be determined by its positive or negative outcomes – well, that is utilitarianism, or pragmatism.

What is wrong with that?

Everything.

A theft occurs because the thief experiences stealing as a positive action – the results of stealing are positive for the thief.

A man or woman is raped because the rapist experiences the assault as a positive.

If a wife poisons a troublesome husband, his resulting death is a positive for her.

We may very well say that surely these people will feel regret and remorse – but so what?

It is quite uncommon for a criminal to turn himself in because he feels great remorse for his misdeeds.

And even if the wife confesses to her murder – the husband does not come back to life.

If we say that we should be nice to our children because that has positive outcomes – we are entirely glossing over the fact that people are nasty to their children because that has positive outcomes for *them*, for the parents, teachers and other “caregivers.”

Thieves take more out of the economy than they receive in benefits from stealing. The amount of time, expense and effort that property owners have to put into protecting their goods from thieves is far greater than the value of the “free” stuff stolen by the thief.

Does stealing have positive outcomes, or negative?

It depends who you ask.

If stealing were always purely negative, it would never happen.

If violence were always negative, it would never happen.

Bad things happen because they feel good to bad people.

“You’ll feel better if you don’t hit your children – and your relationship with your children will improve, and they will do better in life in the long run – so please don’t hit your children!”

Nonsense.

Does that work?

You are asking for cruel and vicious people to empathize with:

1. their children
2. their children in the future, as adults
3. themselves
4. themselves in the future, over time

If people had the capacity to empathize with themselves and their children, both in the moment, and for the decades to come – they wouldn't be cruel and vicious to begin with!

Modern exhortations to better parenting all involve appealing to the conscience of people who have no conscience.

It's like saying that only Japan has a problem with bad parenting – and then making sure that no books designed to improve parenting ever get published in Japanese, or in Japan.

Madness, right?

Diet books for thin people.

"How to Quit Smoking!" for people who have never smoked.

How do you get people without a conscience to act better?

We already know the answer to that.

If you don't have a conscience, you only fear consequences.

If you have a conscience, the consequence you fear is having a bad conscience.

If you don't have a conscience – well, you won't feel at all bad about any crime, brutality or violence that you can get away with.

Do you understand that jails exist for people without a conscience?

Let me ask you this – if you could steal a million dollars, and know in advance that you would never be caught, would you take it?

Would you murder someone you hated, if you knew you would get off scot-free?

Would you cheat on your spouse, if you knew you wouldn't get caught?

Do you refrain from crime out of a love of virtue, the fear of your conscience, or a fear of negative consequences?

Clearly, parents who abuse children do not love virtue – and they do not fear their own conscience.

They may have moments of unease – even regret – but these flash by like trees past the window of a midnight train.

Do child abusers fear any consequences?

It doesn't seem so – certainly not enough to change their course.

Do you understand why child abuse has not stopped?

There are no consequences.

Parents who read books on parenting are already good parents – they are just looking to become better.

How do we stop bad parents from abusing their children?

They abuse their children largely because they refuse to defer gratification – they get angry, they lash out – they feel better.

And there are no negative consequences.

And – most likely – you are colluding with the abusers.

You are an abuse excuser.

Do you doubt me?

Have you ever counselled an adult victimized by abusive parents as a child to forgive, work things out, go back, reconcile, be the bigger person?

Have you ever made excuses for abusive parents? “They did the best they could with the knowledge they had, they meant well, that’s how they were raised...”

Imagine a friend coming to you saying that he had been seriously abused as a child, and was thinking of taking a break from seeing his unrepentant parents.

What would you say?

More importantly – how would you feel?

We both know, most likely...

You would feel anxious, frightened, tense – and you would attempt to reduce your anxiety by telling your friend to forgive his or her parents, to not be too judgmental, to be the bigger person, to rise above – and to not make a decision that she would regret for the rest of her life!

Sadly, most of us are foot soldiers in the war against children.

We collude with the brutalizers.

A young man unjustly persecuted by a brutal regime – well, he knocks on your door, you invite him in, give him a coffee – then quietly call the secret police, to come and take him back to the Gulag.

But it’s even worse than that.

We send adults escaping abusive relationships right back to their abusers – and threaten and curse them if they refuse to return to those who brutalized them.

We collude with evildoers to keep the cycle going.

We cripple the escaping slaves who beg for our help, and send them right back to their owners!

We betray principles, children, virtue – and ourselves.

We collude with evildoers, then endlessly complain that the world is immoral.

What will you do when a friend reveals that he was abused?

Will you stand up for what is right – will you have sympathy – or will you snarl and scowl and send him back?

The future of the world depends on your decision.

How do we stop people from abusing their children?

Consequences.

If society promotes the idea that it is healthy to escape abusive relationships – then people will restrain their abuses out of fear of consequences – the consequences of losing touch with their victims as they age.

Society runs on virtue, on violence – or on ostracism.

Ostracism is the shunning of others – *moral* ostracism is the shunning of evildoers – those who refuse to apologize and make restitution.

We punish evildoers through ostracism.

That is the only consequence that can help reform them.

That is the only blowback that can give them pause.

When I was a child, the government ran endless ads trying to convince people to stop drinking and driving – and smoking as well.

In all these ads, horrible negative consequences were shown – mangled people in wheelchairs, people croaking words out of a hole in their throat, bodies and morgues – you name it!

Frighten people with the consequences of their own actions – and you will change the minds of a large number of people – even if the dire consequences are unlikely – or decades down the road.

Children are threatened with losing a year of their life if they fail to study for tests, do their homework, and pass their school grade.

People are threatened with fines for speeding.

If you don't pay your taxes, you go to jail.

People who make unpopular or offensive arguments on social media are banned, doxxed, fired – sometimes they lose access to bank accounts, the right to fly or rent a car.

They lose their reputations and incomes – they are viciously punished – for words, not deeds!

It can't be that we avoid judging abusive parents because we as a society just hate to be morally judgmental – the hysterical and vicious moralizing mob charges from person to person, pitchforks and flaming torches at the ready, looking to castigate and destroy with random attacks!

We absolutely love morally castigating our fellow citizens – we are addicted to it, it's what millions of people wake up for every morning – the chance to condemn and attack moral transgressors!

Yet...

Yet...

Yet abusive parents somehow escape this rampaging mob.

It's quite remarkable really!

The mob considers itself an upstanding moral force, tearing across the social landscape, attacking, uprooting and destroying people's lives for the wrong words, the wrong ideas, unpopular arguments and "offensive" memes.

It is very strange to see – when you see it, at least.

It's like watching a thunderous river coming down a mountainside – and then strangely parting around one rock in the middle – flowing all the way around it, never touching it – but destroying everything else in its path.

Do you see?

A parent who viciously beats and abuses a helpless little boy?

Say nothing!

The mob doesn't even whisper – people just – pass right over it.

All these moralists who want to attack evildoers – they ignore abusive parents, and instead point their rage at people who make unpopular arguments.

This is why it is impossible to take the "moral mob" in any way seriously.

They are the attack dogs of the rulers – they have no more morality in them than jackals descending on a playground.

Do you see the hypocrisy?

In the hellscape of modern "morality," abusing a child is fine, and should be excused – and forgiven – and you should really learn to love such a vicious abuser – but quoting inconvenient facts, or making unpopular arguments – that can never be excused, never be forgiven, and such a person must be utterly destroyed!

This is the world we live in.

This is the world made by abusers.

This is the world we create and support by betraying the victims of child abuse.

I promise you one thing...

We won't survive much longer if we don't stop.

If evil people should never experience negative consequences, then let's just make that a principle, and live by it, as a society.

There should be no punishments, no attacks, no consequences – no police or courts or jails – no enforcement of laws – no failing children in school – no attack mobs – no cancel culture – no one must *ever* experience any negative consequences for misdeeds or evil actions.

Oh wait, you don't want to live in that kind of world?

You think that bad people should face negative consequences?

You think that evildoers should be punished?

Then – why do you excuse abusive parents?

If your good friend reveals that she has been beaten by her husband for the past decade – would you encourage her to forgive him, and go back home, and understand his bad childhood, and realize that he was doing the best he could with the knowledge he had, and find some way to love him no matter what?

Of course you wouldn't.

But – if that same friend reveals to you that she was beaten by her parents for ten years straight – you know exactly what you would say.

You would tell her to forgive and forget, to move on, to be the bigger person, to continue to see and defer to her parents, to understand them, to sympathize with them, and to put the past in the past.

Do you see the hypocrisy?

The abusive husband your friend voluntarily chose to marry and stay with is stone evil, and she must escape him!

The abusive parents your friend never chose to live with – who abused her when she was a helpless and dependent little girl – well, she's a bad person for even bringing their abuses up! She must never get away – that would be judgmental, wrong, insensitive, selfish!

And you will curse her, should she even think about escaping – “You have to reconcile with them, or you will regret it for the rest of your life!”

It's unthinkable that a wife should stay with an abusive husband – it's unthinkable that an adult child should escape abusive parents!

It's good for a woman to escape the abuser she chose – it's evil for a woman to escape the abuser inflicted on her by blind nature.

It's all too revolting for words.

Peaceful Parenting and Reconciliation

Those who society deems immoral are attacked, castigated and cast out. If you are deemed a “racist” or “misogynist” or have a “something-phobia” – almost no one tries to negotiate with you, or instruct you, or gently bring you into the fold of reasonable discourse – you are attacked, destroyed, ostracized – cast out of society, into the wilderness.

I think there is actually quite a lot of anger out there in the world against unjust authority – said authority channels that anger into attacking anyone who questions or opposes unjust authority.

People are very angry at the abuses they suffered as children. Since they haven't made the connection, or are too frightened to get angry at their abusers, they are easy to weaponize against those inconvenient to current regimes – personal, economic and political.

This has all happened a thousand times before – this book is my plea that it not happen a thousand times again.

You know evildoers, in your life.

Are they to be cured, or cast out?

There are a number of ways to try and establish that – and the stakes are incredibly high.

Evildoers gain most of their power by provoking needs in others, and then refusing to satisfy them.

A kidnapper knows his victim prefers freedom – so he denies that freedom.

A rapist knows that his victim does not want to be raped – her revulsion and struggle is a sick excitement to him.

Abusive parents know that their children don't want to be confined, hit, yelled at, neglected – that their children are desperate for love, interaction and positive attention!

They then deny these needs, in order to feel wanted, in control – powerful!

How does it generally work out for people to desperately need things from evildoers?

Badly.

Provoke a need, refuse to satisfy it – that is the modus operandi of immorality.

If you need evildoers to give up their immorality – well, how do they respond to your need?

By refusing to satisfy it – which gives them power.

Knowing this fundamental mechanism, how should one appeal to them?

Should we appeal to their conscience?

If they had a conscience, they would have already been horrified at their own aggressions against their children, and would have already read books on how to parent better, or gone to anger management or therapy.

How often does this happen?

If a wife is being regularly assaulted by her husband, how often do such brutes reform themselves, without a court order, or their wife leaving them, or hitting rock bottom in some other way?

How many abusive parents would ever read a book with the title: "Peaceful Parenting"?

How many feminists would read a book entitled: "You Too Can Learn to Love the Patriarchy!"

How many socialists read Ludwig von Mises?

It doesn't really happen.

95% of people who try to lose weight never keep it off – and often gain even more weight back after dieting.

The diet industry is largely based on the myth of permanent weight loss.

Dieting is not even a moral issue – and people who lose weight gain immediate and tangible benefits – endless praise, better health, better sleep, more energy, less pain, cheaper food costs – you name it!

The benefits are massive, the costs relatively minor – yet only one in twenty people who lose weight actually keep it off – and many of those do so because of surgical interventions like gastric bypass surgery, or a significant health scare that shocks them into changing their lives.

Overweight people almost never lose and keep their weight off.

Is it easier to lose weight, or confront your own evil actions?

Is it easier to lose weight and keep it off, or turn away from a multi-decade path of evil to a life of humility, apology and virtue?

Come on.

We all know the answer to that.

I've been working out regularly for over forty years – at the gym, everyone knows what happens at the beginning of the year – everyone makes their resolutions, shows up for a few days or weeks, and then the place empties out again.

Everyone knows the cliché of the pear-shaped man who orders some exercise equipment in a fit of late-night consumer panic – uses it for a few days or weeks, then leaves it to gather dust under his bed.

How many people keep their New Year's resolutions?

How many people keep getting involved in dysfunctional relationships – despite knowing the red flags, and exactly how bad they are?

Most people fail to reform their bad habits – even when they only suffer themselves, and everyone is encouraging them to do better, and they quickly reap the direct benefits, and the process is relatively easy and simple.

Dieting is not that complicated – eat less and exercise more.

You don't need to learn vector calculus or become a gymnast.

Just eat less and exercise more.

Quitting drinking is not that complicated – don't pick up alcohol.

I get that the emotions are difficult – but why?

People in general are not addicted to substances, but relationships.

An obese person is not primarily addicted to food, but to the family and social circles that provoked and enabled her obesity.

If your family and friends encouraged and allowed you to become fat, then losing weight is a massive criticism of every single one of those relationships.

Most people who are fat became overweight as children, when their parents were in charge of their diet and exercise.

If you became fat as a child, can you lose weight without criticizing your parents?

Of course not.

Obesity is generally compliance to dysfunctional relationships.

Fat children are being sabotaged by their parents – to lose weight is to uncover that sabotage.

Everyone has been to a restaurant and seen a fat family encouraging overweight children to eat more.

Eat less, and you offend your dysfunctional parents.

If a teenage girl is surrounded by ugly friends, and she loses weight, exercises and gets a great hair cut – how do her ugly friends react?

They attack her, of course!

They call her – usually not to her face though – vain, shallow, materialistic, boy-crazy, they complain that she thinks she is too good for them, that she's become just another plastic Barbie – you all know how this goes.

It's a force of nature – a law of psychological physics.

So...

If you improve your parenting around people who are *not* improving their parenting, what will happen?

You know this.

You know *exactly* what will happen!

Peaceful parenting draws inevitable attacks – direct or indirect, explicit or implicit – from aggressive parents.

You cannot become a better person without drawing fire.

You desperately need the approval of your parents – we all do, we are programmed that way – and abusive parents desperately need you to *stop parenting peacefully*.

Quick question – in general, throughout your life, have your parents mostly gotten their way?

Of course they have – that's true for all of us, that's how we survive.

If you have decades of compliance under your belt, how do you stop complying?

You *can't*.

That is the great secret that gives you great power.

If you grew up speaking Japanese, and spoke it daily for decades – when do you stop understanding Japanese?

I don't know Japanese, so if someone speaks to me in that language, I don't have a clue what they are saying.

If you are fluent in Japanese – and have been for decades – how long does it take for you to have no clue what people speaking Japanese are saying?

If you speak fluent Japanese, you only stop understanding Japanese when you are dead.

You have complied with your parents for decades – that compliance will never stop – even after they are dead, their voices and arguments remain in your head, commanding your obedience.

A famous psychiatrist once reported that *every single one* of his suicidal patients heard parental voices in their heads commanding them to kill themselves.

Can you cure multi-decade evils committed against the innocent?

Can you grow a conscience in a criminal?

We actually know the answers to this – it has been studied and examined and written about for centuries.

Recidivism rates for criminals are extraordinarily high.

People who commit crimes almost never reform themselves.³³

A thief remains a thief, and will most likely return to stealing.

Pedophiles cannot be cured.

Rapists get out of prison still wanting to rape.

Empathy requires the wiring together of thirteen distinct parts of the brain, from birth to three years of age.³⁴

If you didn't get enough food when you were a child, and grew up 6 inches shorter than you should have been – can you fix that by eating more as an adult?

Of course not – you won't get any taller, just wider.

If children do not learn language when they are young, they remain linguistically crippled for the rest of their lives.

The “observing ego” – the part of the mind that compares our proposed actions to ideal standards – is usually the first thing to go in situations of extreme trauma, violence – or after committing a series of evil actions – particularly against helpless and innocent children.

Evil cannot be reformed, because it lacks the ego strength to criticize itself.

³³ [Rate of Recidivism](#)

³⁴ [Parts of the Brain Associated with Empathy](#)

Evil cannot be fixed, because it justifies every action it takes as necessary and virtuous.

How many times have you heard of abusive parents calling up their adult children, wracked with guilt and remorse, apologizing, making restitution, promising reform, going to therapy, finding their hearts and minds and souls – their *consciences*?

You won't hear of it, because it does not happen.

If a disease is incurable, you can only focus on prevention.

If you refuse to focus on prevention, in order and try to cure the incurable, it is because you *prefer disease to health*.

You are part of the problem.

I want parents-to-be to reject violent and aggressive parenting.

I want children to be born into homes of peace, reason and negotiation.

I don't care about prior generations of abusers.

I only care about prevention, because cure is impossible.

When I was a child, I constantly heard that men are chauvinistic pigs, that I was part of a patriarchy, and that all men were oppressive and dictatorial.

Did that make boys and men feel good?

Nope.

Should society have never discussed the link between smoking and lung cancer, because that would upset long-term smokers?

I've been an entrepreneur for over thirty years – I am constantly told that, as a boss, I am an evil guy who is exploiting my workers.

Every boss hears and knows all about this!

I am not calling all parents evil, of course – I am a parent myself, more than most fathers, since I have been a stay-at-home parent for fifteen years straight!

I am not painting with a wide brush here – it is very specific to the immoral actions I have detailed over the course of this book.

So – if your parents were abusive for decades, can they reform?

I don't know.

I wouldn't bet a single thin dime on them becoming better, but so what?

I have always recommended talking to parents about prior abuses – I also recommend engaging with a good talk therapist over the course of this process, because it is so grueling.

If physically safe, it is important to confront those who did you wrong.

But not forever.

You tell your parents what happened, how it affected you – and what you want them to do next.

This is no different from a generic intervention for addictive behaviour.

Interventions with drug addicts follow this pattern – everyone gets together with the addict, informs him of how his behaviour has negatively affected them, demands that he get help – and directly tells him that he will be ostracized if he continues down his destructive path.

This is not considered immoral, or controversial, or wrong, or dysfunctional – there are entire television series devoted to showing and promoting this practice!³⁵

If your parents are addicted to power and abuse – stage an intervention!

An intervention is a one-time thing, often managed by a therapist – and there's nothing wrong with bringing your parents into a counselling session with a good psychologist.

“Hi there – here is how you have hurt me, do better, or I'm ending the relationship – and you have to decide now, I'm only doing this once!”

Perfectly sensible, perfectly natural – widely accepted as best practices in the realm of addiction.

³⁵ For instance, the show “Intervention,” which started in 2005 on A&E.

Doctor Phil has this to say about abusive parents:

The emotional wounds caused by parental abuse can last long beyond childhood. If you want to rebuild a relationship with your parent now that you are both adults, Dr. Phil has some advice.

Be heard

You won't be able to repair the relationship until your parent fully understands how the abuse has affected you. He or she may feel guilty, but you're the one who needs to be helped.

Redefine the relationship

It's up to you to express yourself. Tell your parent what you need now that you're not getting. Be honest and clear; this is your chance to say exactly what you need emotionally.

Nothing can change the past, but you can create a new history with your parent. Treat each other as the people you are now.

Do what is best for you

Consider the possibility that it may not be healthy to have any sort of relationship with your parent. It's a difficult pill to swallow, and it should be used as the last option. However, it may be the option that helps you the most.

Tell them, be honest – be direct, talk to them about what happened, how it affected you – and what you need from them going forward.

Have a conversation.

Then have it end.

See what they do.

Personally, I have a twenty-four hour rule when it comes to apologies – if someone has wronged me, and I tell him about it, and I don't get an apology within twenty-four hours, I know that I will never get one.

When people feel that they have done wrong, they either take responsibility and admit their fault – or they change whatever definitions they need to in order to feel that they were good, and right, and honourable, and noble – and you are bad and immature and hyper-critical for attacking them.

Without philosophy, people can convince themselves of just about anything – especially in the realm of morality!

If twenty-four hours have passed without an apology, I know for absolute certain that the person who wronged me has now convinced himself that he is in the right, and I am in the wrong, and no apology will ever happen, in this or any other lifetime.

It's very simple – and has been 100% accurate, over the course of my life.

One of the great values of certainty is you *don't have to waste time!*

If you spend the day fishing in a lake, and catch nothing, that's really frustrating, right?

What if you were heading down to the lake at dawn, and someone told you that there were no fish in the lake?

They just saved you a whole day, right?

Knowledge of facts is conservation of resources.

Acceptance of facts saves time.

Talk to your parents – that is my advice.

If they listen, and reform – fantastic, they are one in a thousand!

If they don't, they will continue to abuse you, and you can make your sensible choice with that certain knowledge.

Defining the Cycle of Abuse

To build a new house, you need to clear what came before – trees, rocks, an old house – or a prison, most likely.

To reshape your choices in the image of virtue, you need moral clarity.

Nothing else will do.

Why does the cycle of abuse repeat?

When asking why something happens in the human mind, we have to avoid any sense of inevitability.

Why do the victims of child abuse tend to become more aggressive, more promiscuous?

Human behaviour is not like physics – the blind laws of matter and energy are inevitable; they do not evolve, or respond to any biological needs or preferences.

Life – and in particular, human life – is shaped by the need to survive and reproduce.

Women raised by violent men are more likely to choose violent husbands.

Animals cannot evolve in a single generation – human beings can!

If the oceans dried up very slowly, whales and dolphins could theoretically evolve to return to the land their ancestors originally came from – but this would take millions of years.

Some tribes living at high altitudes have adapted their lungs to an environment of lower oxygen.³⁶

Caucasians developed lighter skin in order to better process vitamin D in northern climates where sunlight was more scarce.

All blue-eyed people in the world can be traced back to one ancestor with a mutant gene.

If you listen to people who hit their children, they tend to justify their actions as moral – as good, necessary – virtuous.

For them, it is *good* to hit your children – and *bad* to refrain from hitting your children.

Can you perform an action you define as immoral?

Of course – but you don't brag about it.

You don't *justify* it.

A man who cheats on his wife knows that what he is doing is wrong – and would never defend it as virtuous and good – but he does it anyway.

Thieves rarely defend their predations as noble and virtuous – Robin Hood style – they know that what they are doing is wrong – but they do it anyway.

A murderer does not define killing as good, moral – he might claim that he exists in a state of nature, like an animal, and that morality does not apply to him, but he will not morally defend his actions.

The cycle of violence is really the cycle of justification – moral justification.

If your parents hit you because they say you are bad – and you believe them – then you believe that children who act badly must be hit – should be hit, it's good to do so, because it trains them out of their "badness."

In this view, children are born with a moral illness, and spanking is a form of inoculation, which prevents that moral illness from growing and spreading into rampant criminality.

It doesn't feel good when a dentist scrapes at your gumline – it feels like it's doing you harm – but it is, in fact, helping you by removing plaque.

Starting an exercise program feels terrible – dieting causes discomfort – but they help you out in the long run.

Children are believed to be born selfish and irresponsible – malevolent even – and the only way to save them is through strict – and often coercive – discipline.

You are not hurting your children by hitting them – they might cry, but then they also cry when they don't get chocolate for dinner.

³⁶ (Vandana Sharma, 2022)

It is not a cycle of abuse.

It is not a cycle of violence.

It is a cycle of – *justification*.

Why do so many women abandon their children in order to go to work?

Because they never define it as abandoning their children.

How do they define it?

They say that they are being strong, independent women, modelling female workplace empowerment to their impressionable offspring – and becoming a better mothers overall by not hanging around all the time feeling isolated, poor and bored.

It's *good* for the children, don't you see?

If anyone talks about privatizing the educational system – making it responsive to both parents and children – he is immediately accused of somehow *not* wanting children to be educated!

Since the perception is that only the government can educate children, if the government doesn't educate children, those children will grow up as illiterate savages.

"Government education" is thus reframed as "education" – the word is entirely dropped from the phrase – and so if you say that you don't want the government to educate children, then clearly you don't want children to be educated in any way.

It's amazing.

The same arguments were used to oppose the end of slavery – slaves picked crops, so if you wanted to end slavery, you obviously wanted all the crops to rot in the fields, and everyone to starve to death.

The more things change, the more they remain the same.

Humanity is still several brain cells short of learning a few basic principles.

Do you see the pattern?

If I say: "Don't discipline your children by hitting them!" – what do people hear?

Well, you know.

Say it with me!

They hear: "Don't discipline your children!"

When I say: "Don't try to improve your children by *yelling* at them!"

They hear: "Don't try to improve your children."

When I say: "Your children are not born bad..."

That's a big one.

What do people hear?

What do you hear when I say: “Your children are not born bad”?

Because they weren’t.

I wasn’t.

You weren’t.

What does that mean?

Well, if you weren’t born bad, but your parents hit you, then *they* were bad – not you.

How do you feel about the possibility that your parents were bad?

Pretty anxious, I bet!

Totally understandable.

I sympathize, more deeply than you may ever know.

If one man shoots another, either it is murder, or self-defense.

Either the shooter is bad, or the man he shoots is bad.

Someone has to be in the wrong.

It was either you, or your parents.

If you were not bad, then your parents were bad.

If you were not in the wrong, your parents were in the wrong.

And we all know what happened to little children, over the course of our evolution, who morally condemned their own parents.

Bye-bye.

So – we feel very uncomfortable doing that, for obvious evolutionary reasons.

But – so what?

It feels weird to climb into a giant metal tube and be hurled across the sky using the explosive power of rescued dinosaur flesh.

We didn’t evolve to do *that*, right?

It feels odd to look into a tiny flat metal box, and see another person on the other side of the world.

But hey – we’ve adapted, haven’t we?

It is strange to walk into a cool room on a hot day, and get ice in the heat of summer from a giant metal box.

Don’t tell me we can adapt, evolve, grow – embrace new ideas, experiences and paradigms!

You're doing all that just by consuming this book.

The cycle of justification occurs when you internalize your parent's perspective that you were punished because you were bad.

Your *badness* comes first – their punishment comes afterwards – just as in the law; the crime comes first, and the punishment comes afterwards.

A policeman who locks up a thief is not an abuser – and your parents who punish you for being bad are not abusive – they are just necessary enforcers of the moral law.

They are good – because *you* were bad, and the only moral response was to punish you!

A doctor who performs an emergency tracheotomy is not just randomly stabbing someone – he is acting decisively to save that person's life!

The woman is *choking*, for heaven's sake – cutting open her neck is the only way to save her!

It is easy to believe this causality, because cause and effect are lost in the foggy depths of early memories – and because we are constantly *told* that we are being punished because we are bad.

You get humiliated by a teacher because you did not do your homework.

You have to stay for detention because you were talking in class.

You fail a class because you did not pass the exam.

You did something wrong, and then you were punished.

This is how we were raised, right?

It's incontrovertible, in our minds.

Also – it is utterly and completely false.

It is an active, malevolent lie – one that is destroying the world, if you really want to know the truth.

You were not punished because you were bad.

You were called bad so you could be punished.

You did not get humiliated by the teacher because you did not do your homework.

Homework is assigned so that teachers can humiliate students.

You don't believe me?

It's easy to prove.

Homework provides little to no educational benefit to students – this has been well proven, many times.³⁷

So – if homework has nothing to do with educating you, then what is it for?

It is to humiliate the students who refuse to “do it.”

This conditions the class to obey authority without any proof, without any benefit, without any improvement – just because those in authority can punish kids for noncompliance!

Homework is assigned to punish those who disobey ridiculous commands from those in authority.

Homework doesn’t teach anyone anything – except fear, subjugation and compliance.

That is the purpose of homework.

That is the one constant.

If the goal of the educational system was to improve the knowledge of students, then it would try out homework as a theory, measure its progress, and then abandon it when it failed to achieve the goal of improving the knowledge of the students.

But it is even more sinister than that – as it always is.

Homework is specifically designed to humiliate and punish those most likely to change the system.

Those at the bottom of society have little stake in its continuance – at least in its current form.

Who doesn’t do homework?

The unprotected victims of abuse and chaos.

Who *does* the homework?

Comfortable middle-class kids with significant parental involvement.

Who *else* doesn’t do homework?

Kids so poor that they need to have one or more jobs just to stay afloat.

Not those comfortable kids whose parents pay for everything.

Who *else* doesn’t do homework?

Kids who find homework useless and boring.

³⁷ “There is no conclusive evidence that homework increases student achievement across the board. Some studies show positive effects of homework under certain conditions and for certain students, some show no effects, and some suggest negative effects (Kohn 2006; Trautwein and Koller 2003).”

In other words, those children who have an *entirely accurate view of homework*.

The kids who instinctively understand that homework is useless busywork designed to crush resistance in the young – how do those in power view such children?

As enemies to be destroyed.

And destroy them they do.

Or at least try.

As I said – you were not punished because you failed to do your homework.

Homework is assigned so that children can be punished.

This cause and effect is *everywhere* in childhood...

You were not hit because you were bad.

Your “badness” was invented so that you could be hit.

The evidence was planted, the witnesses paid off, the judge bought and bribed – the fix was in, the verdict was preordained, the kangaroo court was – and is – eternally in session.

How do I know that you were not hit because you were bad?

Brace yourself.

I can prove it very easily.

You were hit so that you would not become more bad, right?

Being hit was to *prevent* you from becoming a really bad person, right?

But – if hitting children prevented them from becoming bad, why did they then grow up to be adults who hit children?

Violence is just about the worst form of immorality – and children are hit so that they don’t become more violent – but the most widespread use of violence is parents hitting their own children – so clearly hitting children does not prevent them from becoming more violent, since parents who hit their children are the most violent of all!

Syllogistically:

1. Violence is the worst form of immorality;
2. Children must be hit so that they do not become more immoral;
3. Hitting children is the most prevalent form of violence;
4. Therefore, hitting children does not prevent them from becoming more violent.

Of course, the argument can be made that hitting children prevents children from becoming rapists and murderers.

Very well – let us look at the childhoods of violent criminals, and find out if they were hit as children?

You don't need to look up much at all – we all know the answer to that.

Almost all violent criminals were hit as children.

"Ah," comes the reply, "but those criminals were hit too much, too often, in the wrong way, with the wrong motives! If you don't hit your children at all, they will become criminals – but also, if you hit your children too much, they will become criminals as well!"

This argument says that hitting children falls into the Aristotelian mean, like the narrow vertical in a bell curve – like eating, for instance. If you don't eat at all, you die prematurely – if you eat too much, you also die prematurely.

You have to eat *just the right amount*.

Thus, hitting children is very complicated! Too little is extremely dangerous – too much is deadly!

Gosh, then to find this narrow happy medium between two absolute disasters – parents must have studied and read and researched corporal punishment in great depth and detail, to make sure that they did not hit just a little bit too much, or just a bit too little!

Oh wait – hang on a second – if your parents did an enormous amount of research to find out how to hit children in just the right way so as to prevent disaster, then they absolutely would have come across the basic moral and empirical arguments *against* hitting children.

I can't study physics for years, then claim to have no idea who Albert Einstein is.

"Ah," comes the inevitable reply, "but you don't need to study how much or how little to hit children when you have a good instinct for it, because of how you were raised! You don't need to become a professor of English literature to teach your children how to read, because your parents taught *you* how to read, and so you know enough to teach your own kids, at least!"

But you can't solve this problem by lowering the stakes!

The theory of hitting children is that it has to be just right – not too little, not too much – otherwise children turn into rampantly selfish criminals!

Therefore, comparisons with being slightly better or worse at teaching your children how to read are ridiculous.

Parents who hit their children are administering a very dangerous medicine, that has to be in just the right dose, at just the right time, because too little or too much medicine will destroy their children!

Parents who give medicine to their children at least *read the directions*, right?

I mean, we don't consider parents any good if they just jam pills down the throats of their children without any knowledge as to dosage?

No no, hitting children is a delicate balance, that has to be just right in order to avoid absolute disaster.

Parents who say that they hit in the right way because they themselves were hit in the right way are like people who say that they can give the same medicine and doses to their own children that they were given by their parents when they themselves were children.

How do you know?

You were a child, how do you know what the right dose was?

Things have changed since you were a kid.

Maybe your kid has an allergy, or the dose has new ingredients, or you were older or younger when you got your dose – or maybe there is an alternate treatment now, and you don't need to give this medicine to your children at all!

Children's medicines used to contain powerful opiates, cocaine, marijuana – you name it!

Would we consider parents responsible if they gave their children these drugs now?

Of course not!

Things change – we have to do our research.

If parents do the research, they will quickly find out that spanking has negative effects, as we have discussed above.

Not only does spanking harm children, but it is completely unnecessary.

Parents hit their children to teach them consequences – so that the children will consider the effects of their actions in the future, and make better decisions.

But this is a complete lie.

If you hit children for failing to think of the consequences of their actions, *have you researched the consequences of hitting children?*

Of course not.

You are hitting helpless children for a sin that you are in fact committing by hitting them.

“How dare you fail to consider the consequences of your actions!” shouts the spanking parent, who has utterly failed to research the consequences of spanking.

Do you see?

The parent is not hitting the child to make the child better, because being hit as a child did not make the parent better – in fact, it made him worse!

The parent is not hitting the child to teach the child to think of the consequences of his actions – because the parent has never thought of the consequences of spanking – one of which is unjustly and hypocritically hitting your own children!

But there is more – as there always is.

The mother hits the child because she *herself* was hit as a child.

She claims to know exactly the right dose of spanking to apply – not too much, or too little, which turns the child evil!

In other words, she has an automatic instinct for spanking, based upon her own childhood experiences.

Since she has not studied parenting as an adult, it is her childhood instincts that control her spanking.

However, she is punishing her children for their own childhood instincts, which she calls “bad”!

So – her childhood instincts about spanking are good – and must be used to punish her children for their childhood instincts, which are bad.

Childhood instincts are both good and bad at the same time, don’t you know?

If she wants to claim that her instincts for spanking are different because she is an adult, then she has an adult’s responsibility to do research – to find exactly the right dose of spanking to prevent evil, and to figure out the long-term consequences of spanking – in which case she will encounter the arguments against spanking.

No, she is using her own childhood instincts to punish her children’s own childhood instincts.

Also, almost every child who has been hit is perfectly aware that sometimes parents hit, and sometimes they don’t.

If the parent is in a really good mood, the chances of punishment are low – if the parent is in a foul mood, you’re almost certain to be punished.

This would be considered utterly corrupt in any other authority figure.

If it could be definitively proven that a judge let criminals go when he had a pretty girlfriend, and threw criminals in jail when he was single – we would throw that judge in jail, right?

If you are punished because you are bad, then what does it mean to escape punishment when you are bad – because your parent is in a good mood?

Well, it means that you are not being punished because you are bad.

You are being punished because your parents are in a bad mood.

In other words, your “badness” is invented so that your parents can punish you, so that they can feel better.

Let me ask you something.

If you sympathize with the plight of a homeless man, and want to give him some money, do you always wait until there is no one else around?

Do you lead him into an alley, where you are alone, and more likely to be unobserved by people or cameras?

Do you always make sure that no one else can ever see your kind and noble deed?

Of course not.

Does a woman who spends thousands of hours perfecting her figure always wear baggy clothing in public, to make sure no one knows how attractive her physique is?

Please!

Does a man with great hair always wear a baseball cap?

Nope!

Hitting children is a good deed, apparently – so why do parents hide it?

Yelling at children and calling them names is the *best* way to teach them about virtue, and the value of considering consequences – so why do parents so often wait until they get home, or are in the car, and do it in secret, and in private, and out of hearing?

Why do aggressive parents hide their own good deeds?

Don't they want to help society by showing all the other children what happens to bad children, how children are improved by good parents, who hit them and yell at them?

Why would they withhold such benevolent examples of the improvement of virtue from other children and society everywhere?

That would be like me yelling at my daughter in public, hitting her only when other people were around – and then sweetly, peacefully and reasonably negotiating with her when we got home.

I am a dedicated advocate for peaceful parenting – so what do I do in public?

Why, I parent peacefully!

I chat with, negotiate with, and engage with my daughter!

When people inevitably tell me how fun and charming my daughter is, what do I say?

I say that our family does not believe in punishment, and that I have never yelled at her, or raised my voice at her, or called her names, or punished her in any way whatsoever!

Also, that she is homeschooled.

I constantly spread the message of peaceful parenting in public, by word, deed and lectures!

I don't do the opposite in private that I do in public, because I am proud of my parenting!

I am a peaceful parent, which is to say a moral parent – so why would I not do everything I can to spread virtue in the world?

I mean – my daughter has to grow up and live in the world of the future, so the more children who are parented peacefully, the better the world my daughter will live in will be!

It would be immensely cruel to my daughter to be aggressive in public, while parenting peacefully in private!

Imagine if I wrote a book advocating spanking, yelling, name-calling – aggressive parenting of any and every kind – while parenting peacefully at home!

Wouldn't that be rather – insane?

How can something be good in one place, but bad in another?

That is just rank moral relativism, which is to say formalized hypocrisy.

I am a peaceful parent everywhere I go – proudly, loudly!

So – why are aggressive parents peaceful in public, but violent in private?

It doesn't make any sense!

Why would they hide all their necessary virtues from the world – making the world much worse thereby?

They say that hitting children is the most essential ingredient for a moral world – but then they don't hit their own children in public, thus depriving everyone of essential moral improvement!

It's incomprehensible, really!

Look – children know this, deep down.

They know exactly how revolting this all is.

Their parents tell them that spanking is good, but almost never spank them in public!

(Of course, I am talking about spanking in situations where it is legal – in other situations, you can substitute “yelling” or “name-calling” or “threatening abandonment.”)

Imagine a lifeguard trained to rescue drowning people, who stood by and watched a child die by drowning.

“Why the hell didn't you do anything?” you would demand. “That kid is now dead!”

“Oh,” the lifeguard smiles. “I decided not to rescue him, because people were watching and filming!”

Would that make any sense?

Saving a child from drowning – particularly if that is your job – is a good thing, right?

Why would the lifeguard not do a good deed just because there are other people around?

More importantly – why is he taking money for a job he never actually plans to do?

Would you fire that lifeguard, if he worked for you?

Interesting, right?

If aggressing against children is moral and good and right, why do you never see it in public?

I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I have seen a parent aggressing against her child in public.

If you believe that you were hit because you were bad, why were you not hit in public when you were bad?

This simple question breaks the equation.

It shatters the cause and effect.

If you were hit because you were bad, then you would be hit in public.

So – why were you not hit in public?

Ah – because hitting you in public would make your *parent* feel bad.

Because there would be negative consequences for your mother!

Someone might intervene, she would get dirty looks, she would feel – humiliated, embarrassed, judged.

Interesting, right?

Your parents did not hit you in public – they refused to do and demonstrate the right thing – because it didn't serve their immediate self-interest.

Ah.

Refusing to do the right thing because you don't feel like it.

Wait a minute.

Isn't that kind of what *you* were hit for?

You were hit because you put immediate self-interest above moral principles and long-term positive consequences.

But – your parents did not hit you in public – despite hitting you being the “right thing to do” – because they put their immediate self-interest above moral principles and long-term positive consequences!

In other words, your parents were bad for not hitting you!

Also – punishment for children is supposed to happen as close as possible to the misdeed – waiting until later, at home, is punishing *badly* – which is to say, doing *wrong*!

If you defer punishment for children, punishment becomes unjust, immoral, bad.

Even by the standards of aggressive parenting, punishing a three-year-old child hours after the misdeed is totally wrong, because the child can no longer associate the action with the punishment.

But your parents *deferred your punishment all the time*!

Now – the parents might say that they punish the child in private, because they didn't want to humiliate the child by punishing him in public!

But that makes less than no sense – if the parents are so sensitive to the humiliation of the child, then why do they humiliate the child by punishing him at home?

Do you see what I mean?

Do you see why I say that you were not punished because you were bad.

You were punished so that your parents could feel better.

But they can't feel better if their cruelty is clear to them – so they have to invent your “badness” so that they *can* feel better about hurting you.

That way they get to hurt you twice – by punishing you, and by implanting in you the permanent evil ghost of your “badness.”

It's a terrible lie – and, if you continue to believe it, the cycle of violence will continue.

Breaking the Cycle of Abuse

How do we break the cycle of abuse?

Moral clarity is all we need.

Psychologically speaking, the cycle of abuse goes like this:

1. A child is told he is bad;
2. The child is hit, and told that he is being hit *because* he is bad;
3. The child internalizes this badness – because if he doesn't, his *parents* are revealed as bad, which threatens the parental bond, and thus his own survival;
4. “Badness” turns out to mean “disobeying”;
5. Therefore, disobeying parents is bad, and must be punished;
6. When the child grows up, his own children will disobey him;
7. Disobeying parents is bad, and must be punished;
8. Therefore, the next generation is hit.

I have been working feverishly to undermine all of the ghastly assumptions in this chain of “reasoning.”

But there is no way to break the cycle of abuse without judging the *parents* as bad.

Either the parents are judged as bad, or the next generation will be hit.

There is no other option – no second choice.

We either justly judge our parents, or unjustly punish our children.

We either condemn our parents for what they did, or destroy our children for who they are.

Without moral clarity, all we ever do is repeat historical evils.

If you refuse to judge your parents, you will become them.

Whatever we justify, we repeat.

If you think that it is good to hit your children, you will hit your children – and that is a guarantee, a solemn promise from the infinite dominoes of cause and effect.

Condemn child abuse, and you will never abuse a child.

Justify abuse, you will become an abuser.

I know it's uncomfortable.

So what?

Think about the last time you were low on cash.

Did you ever seriously consider robbing a bank?

A gas station?

A random stranger in an alley?

Of course not.

You earned, begged or borrowed – but you *did not steal*.

In fact, you *did* all those other things *because* you refused to become a thief.

Stealing was not an option – so you found another way.

It's exactly the same with parenting.

So you have a conflict with your child – so what?

Hitting and yelling is not an option – so you will find another way!

Just put *hitting your child* on the same moral level as, say, *robbing a gas station*.

It's just – not on the table.

With evil on the table, you get only one endless bitter meal.

When you take evil off the table, you end up with an infinite buffet.

Possibility.

Choice.

Virtue.

I'm sure you have consumed endless stories about heroes who overcome unimaginable obstacles to fight the good fight and do the right thing.

No one is asking you to risk your life fighting a super villain, or march into Mordor with Sauron's ring, or battle Thanos to the death – or liberate 1945 Berlin – all you have to do is apply universal moral judgements to your own parents.

You won't die – I promise you.

You won't lose a limb.

You won't even get a scratch.

On the other hand, you probably won't get a medal.

You will probably be emotionally attacked, ostracized, lied about, slandered.

So what?

Everything we have of benefit is the result of people making sacrifices in the past.

Stop taking – and join us!

This is the ultimate heroism.

Stop merely reading about heroes.

Stop living courage vicariously.

Step into the suit.

March with us.

Save the world.

The Effects of Child Abuse over the Lifespan

In this book, I have talked about the physical effects of child abuse on longevity and overall health – but it is also important to talk about the psychological effects.

I started off this book by saying that if the world is hell, it is because of childhood.

One main reason I am writing this book is for my own child – so that she has a chance to grow up a world that is more sane, peaceful and reasonable than I did.

Traditionally, families are viewed as insular, and it seen as rude or intrusive to criticize parents.

However, children are raised in order to be *released*.

I may have an abstract dislike of how you treat your goldfish or your hamster – but mistreating those animals will not have a direct negative effect on my life, because they stay in their fish tank, or cage.

If you mistreat a dog that you always keep in your house – I strongly oppose that, but it does not affect me directly.

However, if you torture a dog that you also let roam the neighbourhood, then I have a much more visceral and significant problem.

Your dog can now attack my family – and probably will.

We all have a stake in peaceful parenting.

We all have to live among the *products* of parenting.

Abused children are often difficult, divisive, manipulative, violent, disruptive.

They are far more likely get pregnant out of wedlock, commit crimes, get addicted, ruin their health, attack us – or simply withhold their contributions to society out of resentment.

Even if all they do is pass society by, as basement ghosts addicted to digital distractions – that is a great loss to us all.

It pains me to think of the amount of brilliant art and wonderful inventions that have been lost to us by child abuse.

It is terrible to think of the destruction of love and commitment and connection committed by abusive parents.

It is awful to think of how careful and cautious we have to be when walking a city at night, because the children preyed on for decades have become predators who prey on us all.

Morally, no parent has the right to be abusive.

Practically, we must all strenuously oppose child abuse, because we have to live among all the people that parents produce.

Humanity is at its best when we possess strength, empathy and moral clarity.

Strength gives us the power to promote virtue and oppose evil – empathy allows us to figure out who can be saved, and who must be ostracized – and moral clarity ensures that we understand virtue, and how best to oppose evil.

Neglect

The severity of child abuse can be ranked accordingly, from most serious to less serious:

1. Sexual abuse
2. Neglect
3. Verbal abuse
4. Physical abuse

The effects of sexual abuse are so egregious that it is hard to find any sympathy for pedophiles who are murdered in prison.

Verbal abuse reshapes children's personalities in the twisted language of the abuser.

Verbal abuse defines the child *for* the child – *lazy, stupid, clumsy, useless, ugly, hateful, bad* – and such language does not heal over time without significant intervention – and the adult child who heals can never return to who he might have been in the absence of verbal abuse.

A child who is accidentally injured is not injured in his soul, or his mind – the injury does not define the *essence* of his personality – and the injury heals over time – we hope at least – and the child returns to normal.

Physical injury – falling off a bicycle, for instance – does not harm the child in the long run. In fact, physical danger is *essential* to the child's development, because it instructs the child on how to manage risk. All physical activity carries with it the possibility of injury – but a lack of physical activity carries the *certainty* of muscle and bone degeneration.

If we move, we could get hurt – if we don't move, we will for sure.

Imagine the unlikely scenario of a father who beats his daughter, but openly tells her that she has done nothing wrong, she's not bad in any way – he is just angry at something that happened at work, and he needs to relieve his stress.

He causes her physical injury, but at least he is honest about the cause, and doesn't blame her. She is physically hurt, but does not internalize the habit of attacking herself for being 'bad.'

Generally, however, parents hit their children after a culmination of verbal abuse – they call their children terrible names, whipping themselves into a frenzy, and only *then* beat them.

It is essential to separate the emotional damage from the physical injury.

The body heals on its own – the mind does not.

Or, to put it another way, a broken mind is like a broken bone set poorly, or not set at all.

If you break your arm, and the bone does not set properly, your arm needs to be re-broken in the future, and fixed.

The hopeful goal is to get your arm back to 100% functionality, as if it were never broken.

Emotional abuse reshapes the brain, changing neural pathways and affecting the development of the hippocampus and the amygdala.³⁸

This is like a broken bone healing badly. It requires significant intervention in the future – a re-traumatization – to repair.

So – the body generally heals on its own, and physical trauma is essential to growing up.

The brain internalizes language and definitions, substituting the abusive judgement of aggressive parents for the authentic identity and experience of the child.

Therefore, verbal abuse is far worse than physical abuse.

Now – why do I say that neglect is even *worse* than verbal abuse?

A great question...

³⁸ [Annual Research Review: Enduring neurobiological effects of childhood abuse and neglect - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

The Effects of Neglect

Which is more traumatic – verbal and physical abuse, or neglect?

We can answer this question philosophically, empirically – or *morally*.

The destination will be the same; it doesn't matter which path we take.

Children are well-known to “act out” – to behave in ways they know for certain will elicit an abusive parental response.

A teenage boy will engage defiantly with his aggressive father, knowing that a blowup will result.

A child being commanded to not push over a plant will often smile deviously, and push over the plant.

Why do children act in ways they know will elicit a hostile response from their parents?

To understand *that*, we need to remember our evolution.

For a child, the greatest danger is being ignored by his parents.

If his parents ignore him – don't care whether he lives or dies – then he will almost certainly die.

A child desperately needs to feel that he is providing value to his parents.

If his parents love him – telling and showing him – then he rests content in the knowledge that he is of great value to them.

He possesses the security of knowing that his parents will always strive to protect and take care of him.

He can relax.

So, how do children provide value to parents who seem to dislike them?

Tough question.

How do you help someone build a house, if you have no building skills?

Do you know the answer?

You can help someone build a house without hammering a single nail, bringing a single piece of wood, refusing to help out with the construction in any way.

You know how?

You take away the garbage.

Building a house produces massive amounts of refuse and leftovers – when you drive past houses being built, you can see the big blue containers, where they put all of the debris left over from building.

The way you help build a house if you know nothing about building houses is: you take away the trash.

You can be of value to aggressive parents by offering yourself up as a punching bag.

It's sad – very sad, I know.

But it's the truth.

If you're trying to sell a car in your driveway, and everyone who comes by says they won't offer you a penny for it – how do you view a man who offers to tow it away for free?

He's not paying you a penny, but he is still providing a great benefit!

He's not giving you money – but he is at least reducing your costs, since you would have to pay at least a few hundred dollars to have the car towed away.

Reducing *costs* is similar to making money.

Reducing a negative is similar to adding a positive.

If no positive is possible, reducing a negative is the greatest value you can add.

If you can't sell your car, the man who offers to take it away for free is the greatest value that can be added.

If your parents don't love you – if they seem to dislike you – then the greatest value you can offer is to reduce the negative.

If they don't take pleasure in hugging you, perhaps they'll feel better by beating you.

If they feel better by beating you, then that is the value you can provide!

And provide it you will, because evolution!

Remember, your genes don't care about your happiness – they only care about your *survival*.

If the price of survival is being beaten – then take it, pay it, make it to adulthood, and reproduce!

In other words, those children who failed to provoke and submit to the beatings that made their parents feel better – those children did not survive.

Sometimes, a doctor can't make you feel *better* – but he can significantly reduce your pain.

Are you happy to receive anesthetic at the dentist, or in the hospital?

Of course you are!

Anesthetic does not make you feel better – but it sure prevents you from feeling a lot *worse*!

Anesthesiologists make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, precisely because they stop people from experiencing excruciating agony.

It's a great value to society!

And children who can provoke the abuse that makes their parents feel better are finally able to provide great value to their parents!

Broken, bruised, bleeding – they can rest secure in the knowledge that the parents who do not love them now *absolutely need them*.

Shattered in mind, soul and spirit – but relatively sound in body – these children will likely make it to adulthood, and get to reproduce.

Yay evolution!

The reason I say that neglect is worse than emotional and physical abuse is because children regularly provoke emotional and physical abuse in order to gain and keep the attention of their parents.

Children empirically *act* on the fact that neglect is worse than abuse.

Why do they believe this?

Why is neglect worse than abuse?

Why would we have evolved to prefer negative attention to no attention at all?

Because we can survive with negative attention – but we cannot survive with no attention at all.³⁹

If parents find no value in our existence, we will not make it to adulthood.

And – even if we *do* make it to sexual maturity, we will lack basic and essential social skills, and will be highly unlikely to win a mate and reproduce.

Remember your old car, sitting for sale in the driveway? A bunch of people come by, look it over, say it's worthless, and walk away.

Do you stop them?

Of course not.

The man who comes and says your car is worthless, but is willing to save you \$500 by towing it away himself, because he wants some part or the other – if he tells you this and starts walking away, do you call him back?

Of course you do!

You let people walk away when they provide no value to you – either in paying you for the car, or saving you the money of having it towed away.

Those who offer you neither a positive nor the reduction of a negative – you don't care about them, they can just wander off.

Once you accept you can't get a positive – being paid for the car – you find value in the person who can help you reduce the negative, the cost of towing it.

You have no relationship with those you are indifferent to – you *want* a relationship with someone who can reduce a negative.

Do you see?

Neglect is when your parents let you wander off because they don't care about you.

³⁹[We Cannot Survive Without Touch](#)

Abuse is when your parents call you back so they can hit you.

If you are neglected, you likely die.

If you are abused, you likely live.

So – always choose abuse over neglect.

In other words, your emotions will program you to risk abuse, rather than the certain death of being neglected.

And, sadly, this pattern does not cease in adulthood.

But that is a topic for another time.

In nature, animals stick together, even if they are abused.

Ducks will stay in a flock, even though the males regularly assault the females, and the females attack each other.

Abuse is better than neglect.

Being in a bad crowd is better than being alone and vulnerable.

Ducklings are programmed to follow their mother, and stay with the flock, even though the males may attack them.

Isolation is death – abuse is life.

In the past, neglected children generally died – in the present, neglected children usually attempt to gain attention and social skills via the Internet.

Neglected children are so depressed and isolated that they rarely form their own in-person social groups – but online, they can gather together and – usually – reinforce their worst habits.

Neglect produces constant stress in children – because they are unprotected, they have to become hypervigilant.

Also, because neglect feels so foundationally humiliating, victims either pathologically self-isolate, or become hyper-brash and extroverted, to cover up the utter absence of value they feel inside.

Neglected children are involuntarily lonely – and loneliness is a massive health hazard for human beings. Loneliness is estimated to be the equivalent of smoking half a pack of cigarettes a day.⁴⁰

Recent studies found that:

- Social isolation significantly increases the risks of premature death from all causes – at rates similar to smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity!
- Social isolation increases the risk of dementia by 50%.

⁴⁰ [Loneliness as Lethal as Smoking](#)

- Social isolation or loneliness comes with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke.
- Loneliness is associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.
- Among heart failure patients, loneliness was associated with a nearly 4-fold increased risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization, and 57% increased risk of emergency department visits.⁴¹

We are wired to be social beings – as Aristotle once said, only beasts or gods can live alone.

In other words, our individual bodies are part of a larger whole – it takes a village to raise our children, a tribe to protect a person.

We have evolved to offload part of our self-protection to others – a man without a group is like an arm without a body.

Parents who neglect their children are – quite literally – poisoning them.

The stress of being neglected is greater than the stress of being abused, since abusers will work to protect their children, so they can continue to feel better by harming them.

You don't like it if someone steals your garbage can, right?

You need it, as a place to throw your trash!

How would we feel about a parent who forced his child to smoke half a pack of cigarettes a day?

That would be pretty appalling, right?

That's the effect of neglect.

We have a greater hunger for social contact than anything other than immediate food and drink.

We have a greater hunger for social contact than we do even for sex – because you can't have sex without social contact.

Trapping a child in your house, and then neglecting him, is kidnapping followed by poisoning.

How strong is our thirst for social contact?

Think of the number of teenagers who fall into a bad crowd, just to have people to hang out with!

Think of the women who risk pregnancy, stalkers, attacks, STDs – just to have random strangers around in the nighttime.

Think of the billions of people who drink and do drugs, just to have a social life.

Think of the lonely older women who invent ailments, just to talk to a doctor.

As isolation has increased in our society, mental illness has gone through the roof.⁴²

⁴¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>

⁴² [Isolation and Mental Illness](#)

We go mad on our own.

Sanity is only possible in a community.

Think of the veterans who look back on their combat years with great sentimentality – often calling them the *best years of their lives*, because they had strong companionship.

Think of the gruesome initiation rites inflicted on pledges by fraternities – people happily pay that price for the sake of a tribe.

Decades ago, a friend of mine who wanted to get into a fraternity was fed beers until he threw up, and then his vomit was collected in a plastic bag – and he had to try and charge through a line of fraternity brothers, while his own vomit was dumped on him from overhead.

He willingly paid that price, just to get friends.

I'm not reviewing this from a moral standpoint, just pointing out the empirical facts.

Think of the number of long-married couples who die within a few weeks or months of each other.

Without companions, what is life?

Think of the explosion of hysterical pet ownership – the cliché of the older single woman, surrounded by a herd of cats.

We cannot survive solitude.

Children cannot find their own companions.

The way that you isolate a child is to cripple his social skills by neglecting him – and then create a home hostile to other children.

Don't play with them – and then make sure that no *other* children will play with them.

Seal him up in the tomb of his own room – then happily watch him rot!

[Sadism and Neglect](#)

There is significant cruelty in neglect.

In most countries, it's perfectly legal to give up your own children, if you don't like them.

You can take your babies, toddlers and kids and drop them off at a police station, a fire station, a hospital – just about any official building – and they will be taken care of!

If you get a dog, and then find out that you hate having a dog, why would you keep the dog?

It doesn't make much sense – until you remember the reality of sadism!

Look, we all want to feel wanted, needed, treasured – loved!

How do you feel needed, if you refuse to provide any value?

If you are a movie star, you are in very high demand, because you add tens of millions of dollars of value to a movie!

People call you, send you scripts, want you, need you, offer you freebies, beg to meet – you name it!

Beautiful people are constantly in high demand – pretty women get hundreds of messages a day on social media and dating apps.

They provide value – either earned or unearned – so they are in high demand, and so feel needed.

How do you feel needed, if you don't provide value?

Well, you trap someone – and then *withhold what they need!*

An ugly man who cannot get the attention of a beautiful woman can kidnap her and lock her in his basement.

She didn't need anything from him before, but she certainly needs something from him now!

Her safety, her freedom – and food, water, perhaps medical care.

Do you see?

In a state of freedom, she didn't need him. Now she is trapped, and he holds a monopoly over her, so now she desperately needs him.

Why would parents have children, and then neglect them?

So that the parents can feel *needed* – they can feel that they have value, because their children want things from them.

It's pleasurable – in a sadistic way, of course!

If you feel powerless at work, you can go home and dangle a leash in front of your dog, but refuse to take him for a walk!

Your dog desperately needs something from you that he cannot provide for himself – *well lookee there, you have power!*

Well, you have power as long as you *don't* take your dog for that walk!

The moment you take the dog for the walk, he now has power over you – because you are doing what *he* wants!

You go from ruling over *him*, to him ruling over *you*!

That's not how to feel powerful!

Of course, you have to take the dog for a walk occasionally – otherwise he will stop associating you dangling the leash with him getting out of the house, and he won't want a walk from you anymore.

In the same way, neglectful parents will occasionally have fun with their children, just to keep their children's hunger for them alive!

(Plus, they can then cruelly blame their lack of interaction on their children, for being 'difficult' or 'bad' or something like that.)

No, neglecting children is about feeling needed, feeling wanted – but only very occasionally satisfying that want, in order to keep the flame alive, so to speak.

It's about trapping children in a state of inevitable, necessary expectation – and then denying them satisfaction.

Such strong and wonderful people!

Bullying toddlers because toddlers need interaction, how brave and noble!

Some people also take a strange satisfaction in provoking others to a state of craziness, while remaining eerily calm themselves.

It's a form of passive aggression, tragically common.

These parents provoke and ignore their toddlers, then get weirdly quiet and reasonable when their toddlers have their inevitable tantrums.

It's a form of torture, and savage 'superiority' – and it happens all the time.

These parents will spend a lifetime complaining about the emotionality and irrationality of their children, like arsonists complaining about smoke in the air.

They train their children to equate *need* with *pain* – which cripples their ability to love and be loved.

To *want* things from people is to be *hurt* by people – so they show no vulnerability, admit no need, and pass through life like a tiny leaf on a high breeze, leaving no mark in the minds and hearts of those around them.

Also, by stealing their children's childhoods, these parents also often erase their grandchildren.

After crippling their children through neglect, these parents also scorn their children for their social awkwardness and inability to form adult relationships.

Thus do people wound others, put them in wheelchairs, and then mock them for their failure to stand up for themselves.

Thus do parents fail to teach their children German, then move them to Germany, and mock them for their language difficulties.

Monstrous.

As adults, children who were neglected often try to solve their emotional and social problems on their own – but problems that arise from isolation cannot be solved in isolation.

Just as their parents felt superior because their children needed them – as adults, the victims of neglect often provoke feelings of false superiority in those around them, who scorn and pity them for their lack of social skills and emotional awkwardness.

It is very hard to break out of this cycle.

As usual, the only solution is just anger.

If you were a neglected child, you have my full and deep sympathy.

When you are neglected, the first thing to vanish is your anger – your parents are looking for *any* excuse to avoid you – if you get angry, you will get even *less* of the attention you so desperately need to survive.

Any significant or deep emotional state will alienate your parents, since they are cold-hearted, distant from themselves and you – and thus will recoil from any genuine and authentic feelings.

However, it is important to recognize that you were most cruelly treated – ignored, abandoned, stripped of the connection you totally deserved – and desperately craved.

To help get in touch with your anger, imagine a man who spends a year researching dog ownership, picking out a dog – and who then ignores his dog, tying it up in the basement, and driving it slowly mad through isolation.

That was your parents, I'm afraid.

If you don't want to spend time with kids, don't have kids.

If you find out that you don't like spending time with your kids, get therapy, fix your heart.

If you can't fix your heart, then give up your kids – the option to keep them home and ignore them *does not exist in any moral universe!*

If your parents neglected you, they are vicious and cruel.

In my view, this is an irredeemable sin – a mortal sin, which cannot be repaired.

However, your family is not my family, so I will not presume to speak for you and yours.

You were more cruelly treated than children who are beaten with belts.

You were more cruelly treated than children who were screamed at.

I'm so sorry.

You can fix it, but not without getting angry first.

And I strongly recommend personal talk therapy to overcome isolation, because it is essential to finally have someone who listens, who is in your corner, and with whom you can finally connect!

[Empathy](#)

The first – and most essential – ingredient in improving the world is *empathy*.

Empathy occurs when we truly understand and feel the deep emotions of another person.

For me, empathy is distinct from sympathy – sympathy is when we understand the deep emotions of another person – and *approve* of them.

If a child is sad because a pet has died, we agree with her emotion, and feel compassion for her grief.

If a man is happy because he is getting married to a wonderful woman – we approve of his emotion, and share in his joy.

If a belligerent man is angrily trying to start a fight with us – we feel his anger – we empathize with his emotion – but we do *not* approve of it, and work to resist or avoid it.

If a woman fakes crying in order to gain our pity and compliance, empathy allows us to understand the shallowness of her pretend emotion, and resist her pitiful manipulation.

Empathy is *feeling* the emotions of another person – sympathy involves *agreeing* with those emotions.

A woman walking alone at night hears a man trying to sneak up behind her – she feels his aggression – but opposes it, and may reach for the gun in her purse.

Think of coming across a child trying to catch a frog in a pond. How would you feel if the child gently lifts up the frog, laughing in happiness?

Pretty good, right?

How would you feel if the child only laughed after pulling a leg off the frog?

Pretty horrified, right?

Feeling good about the gentle child is sympathizing with the child's positive delight in nature.

Feeling horrified about the abusive child is empathizing with the child's positive delight in torturing animals.

As a lion creeps up on a zebra – the zebra edges away. The zebra understands that the lion is hungry, and wants to eat him – he empathizes with the desire of the lion, but emphatically does *not* agree to satisfy it!

Without moral strength, empathy always tries to twist everything into bottomless *sympathy* – this is the habit of the horribly corrupt individuals who try to convince the victims of child abuse to endlessly *sympathize* with their parents – “Well, she did the best she could with the knowledge she had... Your mother had a bad childhood... Your father means well, he just doesn't know how to express it... It's understandable that he would get defensive, he feels attacked..! You need to approach them with love, sympathy and empathy – you need to forgive them – if you don't forgive them, you will regret it for the rest of your life – they are old, have some pity and patience – don't hold onto resentments, all this is in the past – you need to be the bigger person and take the high road – the best revenge is a better life – staying angry with your parents will destroy your life – forgiveness is happiness, forgiveness is release, forgiveness is joy – forgive, forgive, forgive!”

This is all vile cowardly nonsense, easily disproved logically.

If you were abused by your parents, and you are angry at them, and people tell you to forgive your parents – whether or not they apologize – then people are judging *you* negatively for judging your *parents* negatively.

This is one marker of the deepest possible corruption.

It is, in fact, collusion with evil.

You see – there are the evildoers, and then there are the evil-enablers.

There are those who commit the crimes – and those who facilitate the crimes.

The bank robbers, and the getaway drivers.

They are two sides of the same coin.

How much more likely is a criminal to commit a crime, if he knows that he will get away with it?

Child abusers rely on abuse *excusers*.

These apologists condemn anyone who stands up to abuse – they curse anyone who opposes evil.

Just think of the common clichés about the effects of failing to forgive your parents.

“Your parents are old – they made mistakes, sure, but they did the best they could with the knowledge they had – and they certainly did better than their own parents, who mistreated them horribly! Holding on to resentment about your past will poison your life – it’s all done – and I’m sure you are doing better than they did, but you really do need to let go of all of this anger you have about their failures. If you don’t forgive your parents, this will eat you up alive inside – you will stay embittered forever – and then, when they get old and die, you will regret being so cold-hearted and judgmental for the rest of your life – and by then it will be too late to do anything about it, and you will seethe in this discontent forever!”

Thus do these repulsive apologists use verbal abuse to defend parental abuse.

They are trying to place an abusive curse on those who stand up against evil.

They are trying to poison the minds of those trying to clear their minds of prior poison.

They are trying to define standing up to evil as immoral and self-destructive.

And they only do this with parents – never anyone else!

Can you imagine them saying to a woman trying to flee a violent and abusive relationship: “You need to stop judging your boyfriend – it’s really self-destructive! He’s doing the best he can – he’s made mistakes, sure, but I’m sure he had a pretty bad childhood, and we all have our struggles – the important thing is not to be judgmental, but to accept people for who they are – because if you judge him, and confront him – and, God forbid, *abandon* him – then you are being cruelly intolerant, and you will regret your cold-heartedness for the rest of your life – and you will be utterly unable to fall in love ever again, because you will be so consumed by bitterness about your boyfriend! No – the most mature and virtuous thing is to go right back to your boyfriend, just – just love him, and try to do what he wants, and

not be too judgmental, and let go of all of this fear and anger and bitterness – whatever he did to you is all in the past, and you need to just let it go, or you will be miserable forever!”

No, that speech never really seems to happen, does it?

In the old Soviet Union, the secret police relied on citizens to spy on – and inform on – each other. In Communist East Germany, a third of citizens regularly betrayed friends, colleagues, family members – even strangers – by reporting them to the secret police.

Without this spying and reporting, the secret police were largely unable to terrorize the population.

The secret police and the informants were one and the same.

The child abusers and the abuse excusers are one and the same.

The victims of child abuse are very susceptible to being judged negatively, for obvious reasons.

The abuse excusers know this, and regularly jam their thumbs into these ancient wounds in order to bully compliance with the needs and preferences of abusive parents.

It’s revolting.

The abuse excusers totally understand the deep vulnerabilities and sensitivities of the victims of child abuse – and use those vulnerabilities to compel compliance with evil.

They see two people – a child abuser, and a helpless victim of child abuse – and only ever criticize the *victim* – never the perpetrator, never the abuser.

Abuse excusers are so good at what they do – and so prevalent in society – because they are highly skilled at verbal abuse.

They tend to come from the ranks of elder siblings, who had to constantly defuse the anger and resentment of the younger siblings, in order to placate the parents, and hopefully reduce future abuse.

Because they have not processed their own victimhood, they continue to victimize others.

An older sibling often feels great anxiety when a younger sibling gets angry at an abusive parent – knowing that the parent cannot be changed, the older sibling tries to manage the only variable – the willpower of the younger sibling.

If you see a child standing on a train track – do you pick up the child, or try to stop the train?

If defiance provokes abuse, and you can only control the defiance – well, that’s what you do!

Whatever you have to do to defuse the defiance, you will do – otherwise, the parental abuse might escalate to the point of grievous injury or death.

This is how abusive parents get you.

To protect your younger siblings from their abuse, they enlist you as a co-abuser.

To prevent the parents from aggressing against the children, the older siblings bully the younger siblings into silence and compliance.

This way, the abuse spreads down the chain – with the added bonus that the older siblings will often blame the younger siblings for the abuse of the parents.

When these older siblings – again, assuming the trauma is unprocessed – meet people as adults who are talking about confronting abusive parents – well, what happens?

All the old anxieties and fears erupt, and these older siblings use all the emotional and psychological tactics they possess in order to reduce their own anxiety... This has nothing to do with morality, or maturity – or the corrosive compulsion of endless forgiveness – it's just good old plain anxiety management.

Aggressive parents are managed by family and friends by controlling the youngest children.

Also, since older siblings are so often put in charge of younger siblings, the older siblings are often included in any punishment meted out to the youngest.

Since you can't control the aggression of the abusive parents, you end up controlling the resistance of the helpless children.

Unfortunately, that means that any resistance against abusive parents – at any stage of life – is relentlessly and viciously opposed.

“We can't control evildoers, so we have to control those who identify evil!”

We can understand this in the tyranny of, say, North Korea, where parents have to rigidly control what their children say, because any hint of skepticism or disobedience to the supreme leader is met with Gulags and death.

In a famous television show that aired when I was young – in the show's finale – an American doctor is sitting in a bus in Vietnam during the war, and they are being hunted by enemy soldiers. He hisses at a woman to quiet her crying baby, otherwise they will all be killed – and the mother ends up smothering her baby to death.

This is an extreme example of what I am talking about.

The cruelty of the soldiers cannot be controlled – the crying of the baby, tragically, can be.

This also occurs between one parent and the children. The typical example is the mother who snarls at children to be quiet and polite, because her violent husband is in a bad mood.

The abusive husband cannot be changed – the only variable is the children.

By the way, this is one reason why it is so difficult to be rational in society. Most people do not have any moral standards they are willing to sacrifice immediate comfort for, so when they see a conflict, they immediately scan for the most reasonable and mature person, and then work to alter that person's behaviour. They resolutely avoid the immature and aggressive, instinctively understanding that those people are not variables they can alter – and pursue the most reasonable person, because that is something they can have an effect on.

Thus, to be reasonable is to be bullied.

To be unreasonable is to be rewarded.

And people wonder why the world gets more and more crazy!

Naturally, people cannot say to reasonable people: “Well, that crazy person who is picking a fight with you is kind of scary and unreasonable – but I really don’t like that this fight is happening – so I’m afraid you’re going to have to appease the crazy person – and I say this because you are far more reasonable and mature! As a good and kind person, I’m afraid that you are going to have to appease the crazy bad person, and give him what he wants – at your expense, I know – because I am frightened of crazy people, and I have no moral compass whatsoever!”

No, you are just told to *keep the peace* and – laughingly – be *reasonable* – and surrender your will and self-interest to the crazy aggressive evil person.

It’s the same thing with the abuse excusers.

They will endlessly lecture you on virtue, tolerance, forgiveness and kindness – knowing that you are a good person – but they will never lecture your abusive parents on virtue, tolerance, forgiveness and kindness!

You see, forgiveness is a *virtue* – but not for your parents, not when you were a helpless and dependent child!

It’s essential to forgive parents who willingly did evil – but those parents should never be held accountable for failing to forgive their children!

If forgiveness is such a virtue, and child abuse results from the ultimate failure to forgive – then why not condemn abusive parents?

We all know why.

We all know the pitiful and contemptible reason why these “moralists” who condemn people for failing to forgive – never condemn parents who failed to forgive their own children!

If a failure to forgive means that you are bitter and miserable for the rest of your life – well, what about the parents who failed to forgive their own children in the past – and continue to withhold forgiveness in the present?

Since abusive parents fail to forgive, then they must be angry, bitter and miserable forever!

Who wants to spend time with angry, bitter and miserable people?

Abusive parents – by definition – have failed to forgive others, so every “curse” put on children who don’t forgive their parents – is put a thousandfold on parents who have failed to forgive their children!

I think that this is what Jesus meant when he said: “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?”

If forgiveness is a virtue, surely the lack of forgiveness that results in violent abuse against helpless children is the worst!

Parents who forgive their children have no excuse to abuse them.

Victims of child abuse are angry at their parents because their parents refused to excuse them, and used violence against them.

Victims of abuse should forgive the abusers who used a lack of forgiveness as an excuse to abuse them.

When I was a child, my school regularly had fire drills, to practice orderly evacuations.

Which is worse, setting fire to a school – or escaping the fire?

If you see an arsonist setting fire to a school, would you yell abuse at the fleeing children?

Would you cover up the horrifying crime of the arsonist?

What about the children who got third-degree burns over 50% of their body?

Would you demand that they forgive the arsonist – the arsonist whose crimes you are covering up?

The adult children of relentlessly abusive parents may choose to escape that relationship.

The children did not start the abuse.

They are standing up to evil.

They are defending themselves against abuse.

They are staying away from those who did them great harm – and continue to do so.

Their parents set fire to the building – the children are just escaping the flames.

You see abusers, and victims – and you protect the abusers, and verbally abuse the victims.

Adults struggling to survive and escape abuse – those innocent people must be condemned, cursed, castigated for their cruelty – but those who abused innocent children – well, they were doing the best they could, they must be forgiven – they are the *real* victims, don't you know!

It is not abusive to beat helpless children – it is abusive to protect yourself from abusive parents.

Abused children are not victims – the real victims are abusive parents, if the children ever judge them morally.

The real criminal is not the rapist, but his victim who gets away.

Appalling...

But it gets even worse.

Unrepentant child abusers continue to abuse their adult children.

Abuse excusers verbally abuse adult children for struggling to set boundaries with abusive parents.

But the real hell is still ahead of us.

Let's talk about grandparents, parents and children.

Let's talk about the situation where the grandparents remain abusive to the parents.

Now, either the grandparents will abuse their grandchildren – as they abused their own children – or they won't.

Either outcome remains abusive.

If the excuse abusers convince the parents to keep the abusive grandparents in the lives of their children, they are exposing the children to both direct and indirect abuse from the grandparents.

If the grandparents screamed at the parents, they are likely to scream at the children.

If the grandparents hit the parents, they are likely to hit the children.

If the grandparents molested the parents, they are likely to molest the children.

The excuse abusers are advocating for the continued abuse of the children.

They are handing over access to children to unrepentant child abusers.

They are serving the preferences of child abusers.

They are child abusers themselves.

Now, if the grandparents are violent and abusive to the children, that is a monstrous evil of course.

However, if the grandparents are reasonable and peaceful to the children – that remains abusive.

Remember – the story is that the grandparents who abused the parents were doing the best they could with the knowledge they had, and didn't really have any choice, and couldn't do any better, because they were abused themselves, etc.

If the grandparents treat the children well, this is all proven to be utterly and completely false!

If the grandparents treat the children well, then clearly the grandparents knew all about peaceful parenting, and love, and protection, and affection – and thus cannot claim to have done the best they could with the knowledge they had, since their knowledge also includes peaceful parenting!

Of course, there are some logical objections – easily dealt with.

Perhaps the grandparents underwent a massive change of heart, and rejected their formally abusive ways, and virtuously committed to peaceful interactions with children!

Well, that is quite a journey – why wouldn't they tell their own children?

If you were an abusive parent, and you now realize how terrible you were – then the first thing you would do is apologize to your children!

You would listen to them, accept their anger and criticisms, apologize and make restitution – and go to therapy, anger management, whatever was needed to prove to them that your abusive behaviour would *never happen again!*

By the way, this never happens.⁴³

⁴³ [Abusive Parents Restitution Rate](#)

If, at the age of seventy, I go to Japan and speak fluent Japanese – I either knew it when I was younger, or learned it when I was older.

If, as a grandparent, I treat children well – I either knew how to treat them well when I was younger, or learned how when I was older.

Abusive grandparents who treat children well are continuing their abuse.

They are saying to their own children: “Oh, we always knew how to be nice! See how nice we can be? Look at us, not losing our tempers, not yelling or hitting – not even raising our voices! We are as meek and peaceful as little lambs, isn’t that interesting? Boy, you must’ve been a really terrible child to provoke us to such anger – because these kids, our grandkids – well, they are just nice and lovely, and don’t provoke us, and we can finally have a good relationship with children – which you did not allow us to have, because you were just so bad!”

It’s revolting.

Without admission of guilt – without apologies and restitution – all evil remains destructive manipulation.

Abusers are not bad for failing to forgive their repenting victims – only the victims are bad, for failing to forgive their unrepentant abusers.

Strength

Strength is required to pass moral judgement against the preferences of evildoers.

It would be very strange to set up a literacy project that only targeted fluent readers.

Can you imagine setting up a clinic to help people lose weight that only accepted slender customers?

How about becoming a hair transplant specialist, who will only treat men with a full head of hair?

All of this is silly nonsense, right?

Well, that is a state of modern “morality.”

Modern moralists are merely diet experts for thin people.

Sociopaths don’t care about morality – ethically sensitive people do.

So – who do “moralists” target?

The cold, the cruel, the abusive, the manipulative, the destructive?

Nope.

They target the morally sensitive.

Modern “moralists” abuse people who care about morality – and collude with abusive people to cover up their crimes.

“Morality” was not invented for goodness, but for abuse and control.

I’m fine if you think that forgiveness is the ultimate virtue.

I don’t agree, but I will respect your integrity if you look around the world, and figure out *who is doing the most damage by refusing to forgive others*.

If you want me to donate to your charity, because you tell me that you want to give toys to needy children – and I find out that you give toys to wealthy adults – what do I think of your “charity”?

Abusive parents do lifelong harm to trapped children by refusing to forgive them.

This is the most damage that the “failure to forgive” does in the world.

So – if forgiveness is the ultimate virtue, then surely you have relentlessly confronted abusive parents for their failure to forgive their children – which resulted in destructive violence against their helpless offspring!

Right?

Oh, that’s not what you’re doing?

Not at all?

You are in fact lecturing the victims of child abuse on the virtues of forgiving lifelong and unrepentant abusers?

Oh.

I see.

But – if the adult victims of child abuse excuse and forgive the abuse they suffered, won’t that make it more likely that their own children will be abused, either by themselves, or the unrepentant and abusive grandparents?

Oh, you haven’t thought of that?

That doesn’t matter?

You monster.

Historically, I had a similar issue with libertarians, who promote the nonaggression principle – that the initiation of force is the greatest evil.

Fine, I agree with that – so what would it mean to promote that value?

If you care about the nonaggression principle, then surely you should look around the world, and figure out the greatest violations of the nonaggression principle, that are the easiest to change and improve.

Well, that is spanking, right?

Child abuse of every kind...

I made this case to libertarians for many years – and a few listened, to be sure – but most of them continued to rail against taxation and central banking and foreign aid and all sorts of activities that they had no practical chance of changing or improving.

Imagine an ER doctor stepping over a dying patient he could save in order to watch television and try and solve a fictional case from thirty years ago.

Would that not be a sign of insanity?

Ah, but moral insanity is the norm in society.

If you have an illness that can be cured by exercise, but your doctor doesn't tell you that, but instead puts you on useless pills, wouldn't that be terrible?

What if the pills actually made you *more* sick?

What if the illness, if left untreated, would kill you?

Wouldn't the doctor be kind murdering you?

Isn't he, in fact, a sort of sadistic killer?

Excusing unrepentant evil – which is what the appeasers who promote endless forgiveness argue for – only makes the illness of evil worse.

By pretending to do good – pretending to forgive the unrepentant – you are actually doing evil, which is giving child abusers continued access to children – your *own* children, who you are sworn to protect!

Empathy without strength always gets twisted into pathological altruism and pretend sympathy.

Strength without empathy turns into cold-hearted dominance, subjugating others and stealing their resources.

Moral Clarity

Moral clarity is required to defend yourself against those who strive to abuse you through false morality – the greatest enemies of mankind really.

If someone tells you to forgive your abusive parents, simply ask him: "They did not forgive me when I was a child – you should really go and talk to them!"

If that person does not immediately reply: "Gosh, you are right, I'm so sorry – let me go and sit down with them!" – then that person is a moral sophist, aiming to deliver you unto evil.

That is simple moral clarity.

Somebody who equates escaping evil with abusing the innocent is deeply immoral, and should also be escaped.

If somebody tells you that forgiveness is a great virtue, say this:

“Since forgiveness is so important, I’m sure that you will forgive me if I refuse to forgive my abusive parents!”

“Of course I will – I just know that if you refuse to forgive your parents, you will regret it for the rest of your life!”

“No, that can’t be the case!”

“Why not?”

“Well, if forgiveness is such a virtue, and you can forgive me for failing to forgive my parents – then I can certainly forgive *myself* for failing to forgive my parents!”

“What?”

“Well, you can forgive me, which means a lack of forgiveness can be forgiven – which means I can forgive myself for failing to forgive, and so will *not* regret it for the rest of my life!”

“Well, maybe I can’t forgive you for failing to forgive your parents!”

“Ah, then forgiveness is not such a high value, if you can’t even achieve it yourself! Now you just look like a fat person telling me how to lose weight! Also, you are asking me to forgive my parents who abused me – and have never apologized or forgiven me – which means that forgiveness can be granted even to people who have done great evil, and have never repented! Well, I haven’t done great evil, and have nothing to repent for – are you saying that it is good to forgive evildoers, but you cannot forgive their victims? That is incredibly corrupt – I’m telling you!”

Stuttering and sputtering will result, because the grappling hooks of moralistic manipulation have failed to take hold in you.

That is moral clarity.

We are a long way from judging each other by objective moral standards – but we can at least judge these pretend moralists by the standards they are attempting to impose upon *us*!

It really is the only way we can possibly protect ourselves from the worst scourge of the species, which is moral manipulation of the innocent for the sake of rewarding and appeasing the guilty.

When you bring strength, empathy and moral clarity to your life, you will be free of all possible malevolence!

Fail on any or all of these, and you remain a slave until you die – leaving nothing but a legacy of continued enslavement to your descendants.

Break this chain – or enslave your children.

There is no other choice.

Education

All decent parents want their children to be moral and happy – the real question is: *how is this achieved?*

Historically – evolutionarily, really – the answer has been to train children with punishments and rewards until they comply.

If a child behaves in a way the parents approve of, affection and praise is showered on the child.

If a child “misbehaves,” affection is withdrawn and punishments are applied.

Carrots and sticks, sticks and carrots...

It is the same way in school – gold stars and detentions, praise and harsh criticism.

It does not seem to trouble people too much that this is exactly the same way that we train animals - encouragement and harsh words, treats and punishment.

Moral happiness is a uniquely human attribute – yet we train our children as if they were dumb animals, incapable of virtue.

We rob them of their greatest possible joys - the joys of ethical excellence, self-generated integrity, moral courage and our capacity to love.

Love is our involuntary response to virtue, if we are virtuous.

We cannot aim directly at love - any more than we can aim directly at health.

We can control the actions that will encourage the state of good health, such as eating well and exercising.

We can control the actions that will encourage the state of love – both for ourselves and others – such as honesty, moral courage and integrity.

Friedrich Nietzsche somewhat sarcastically described the goal of Socrates as providing mankind the equation that reason = virtue = happiness.

If we are rational, then we can be virtuous – if we are virtuous, then we can be happy.

Aristotle described the best life as one spent in pursuit of moral excellence.

So – the question is not new, but peaceful parenting is a radical new answer.

How do we encourage our children to be moral?

Do we punish them?

Do we hit them?

Snarl at them?

Call them names?

Threaten them?

Withdraw our affections if they displease us?

Abuse them?

Beat them?

Do we lock them in their rooms, withhold food, abandon them, neglect them, shake them, call them evil for the sin of disobedience, humiliate them, threaten them with eternal hellfire – and more?

If we punish our children, we are saying that they are born evil, but through punishment, they can become good, wise, noble and virtuous.

However, if we punish our children, we are telling them that the highest purpose of morality is to end up in a situation where we use violence, abuse and manipulation against helpless and dependent children.

Would you respect the dietary advice of a fat man who forced you to follow his eating habits?

Would you respect the marital advice of a woman currently going through her fourth divorce?

Would you respect the career advice of a homeless man?

Of course not.

Children cannot hear what we are saying over the din of what we are actually *doing*.

The bizarre, twisted spectacle of a woman hitting her child while screaming “Don’t hit people!” is a scene out of an insane asylum, not any rational moral instruction.

Parents who regularly insult their children somehow pretend to be shocked and horrified when the children grow up and end up insulting them back. “How dare you talk to me that way?” they cry, clutching at their pearls as they inevitably reap the bitter words they have sown for decades.

No.

No to all that.

How should we teach our children?

We teach our children how to be good not through punishments and rewards – *but by being good ourselves*.

Ah, but that’s a whole lot more difficult, isn’t it?

It’s a whole lot harder – at least in the short run – to lead by virtuous example rather than self-righteous aggression.

If you want your children to be peaceful, you have to be peaceful.

If you want your children to use their words, not their fists – you have to use your words, not your fists.

If you want your children to reason with others, you have to model reasoning with others – and with them.

If you want your children to be pleasant, you have to be pleasant.

People generally resort to using violence and intimidation with their children because they are trying to teach their children a language they do not themselves speak at all.

It is the *hypocrisy* that leads to the violence.

If you use violence on your children – either physical or emotional – you lose all moral credibility with them.

Initially, all moral instruction takes the form of “Be like me!”

We know all of this.

You never see a fat man on the cover of a diet book.

You never see someone with bad skin on an advertisement for make up.

You never see a flabby man trying to sell his exercise program.

All instruction starts with “be like me.”

Do your children want to be like you?

If you use violence against your children, do they want to grow up to be just like you?

Of course not.

They fear you, and will in time grow to hate you.

We treat our children so often far worse than our animals.

Very few people would confess to regularly beating a dog or a cat – but the majority of parents take great pride in assaulting their own children.

You have to ask yourself – if your children don’t want to be like you, what do you have to teach them?

Would you take dating advice from a man who had never gone on a date?

Would you take hair-care advice from a bald woman?

If you want your children to listen to your moral advice, they first have to respect your moral decisions.

If you want your children to control their tempers, you first have to model controlling your own temper.

If you want your children to be considerate, and think of the needs of others, you must first be considerate towards your children, and think of their needs first.

The wonderful thing about peaceful parenting – one of the many wonderful things – is that you don’t actually need to morally instruct your children much at all if you consistently model moral behaviour.

A non-Scottish actor who needs to learn a Scottish accent for a particular role will subject himself to months of training.

Scottish parents, however, inevitably produce children with Scottish accents – they don’t need to *train* their children on that accent, it just happens naturally, because they copy their parents.

Do the right thing, and your children will copy you.

Do the wrong thing, and your children will resist you.

Peaceful parenting is fundamentally about *credibility*.

If you live the kind of life your children want, they will copy you.

If you want your children to go out and exercise, what do you do?

Do you just yell at them to stop being lazy and go out and touch grass?

Of course not!

Your children need to have seen you for many years going out and exercising, and then they will have a habit of joining you, and enjoying both your company and moving around.

Do you snarl at your children to get off their tablets, while staring at a big-screen television yourself?

Do you tell them to eat better, while snacking on junk food yourself?

We all understand this, we don't need a lot of examples.

If your children want to be like you, instruction happens naturally, inevitably, through the process of enjoyable interactions.

If you are violent towards your children, then they don't want to be like you, so you end up in an endless pitched battle against their deepest instincts, their deepest perceptions of your own rank hypocrisy.

This is why violence towards children does not work.

A mother who screams at her children to be quiet cannot be respected.

Children will not listen to moral advice from parents who yell at each other.

Children will have significant problems respecting the authority of parents who got divorced. "Who are you to tell me how to live, when you couldn't even stay married?"

Of course, this does not mean that you have to be perfect as a parent – but you do have to be honest about your imperfections, admit fault, apologize and make restitution when you do wrong.

It's tragic how many parents demand that their children admit wrongdoing, while never admitting any wrongdoing themselves.

It's ghastly how many parents demand apologies from their children, while never apologizing to those children.

If you want your child to behave in a certain way, the first question you need to ask is: *How well have I modelled that behaviour?*

Parents turn immediately to punishment in order to cover up their own hypocrisy.

In truth, parents are not actually punishing their children, just covering up their own moral crimes.

If you are poking around in a man's flowerbed – the place where he has buried a body – he will snap at you to stop and drag you away if need be!

He doesn't hate you, he's not angry at you – he's just afraid of being caught.

If a man is running from the police, and you are in his way, he will violently shove you aside – not because he has any problem with you, you are just blocking his escape route.

Parents who get seduced into moral corruption and hypocrisy attack their children rather than look in the mirror and learn how to be better.

They don't hate their children, they just hate their own hypocrisy, which they see reflected in the hurt and skepticism in their children's eyes.

A man who beats his dog hates it when the dog later shies away from him, because it reminds him of his own violence towards the helpless animal.

If you are aggressive towards your children, they will fear you.

They will not want to be like you.

They will resist you.

And so the battle will never end – even after you die, it will continue, onto the next generation, forever and ever, Amen, until we change...

Part Two: Conclusion

The greatest intellectual advancement in the history of our species has been the introduction of the scientific method.

In science, a theory has to first be logically consistent, and then tested against the empirical evidence.

This approach has given us unprecedented control and power over nature, paving the way to just this kind of book, which can be distributed around the world through the miracles of science and engineering at a moment's notice.

Engineering takes scientific theories and puts them into practical practice.

In the science of morality, an ethical theory has to first be logically consistent, and then tested against the empirical evidence.

The Syllogisms

The syllogisms of peaceful parenting are remarkably simple.

1. Children should not hit each other, because hitting is wrong.
 2. Since hitting is wrong, we should not hit children.
-
1. Those with the most power over others have the highest moral obligations.
 2. Parents have the most power over their children.
 3. Therefore, parents have the highest moral obligations regarding their children.
 4. It is more moral to use reason than to use force.
 5. Therefore, since it is more moral to reason, and parents have the highest moral obligations towards their children, parents must reason with their children.

1. Adults are more responsible for their actions than children are.
 2. Therefore, adults cannot claim excuses that they do not accept from their children.
-
1. Violence is only morally acceptable in an extremity of self-defence.
 2. Therefore, parents are not justified in using violence against their children.
-
1. It is immoral to use violence to settle disputes.
 2. Therefore, it is immoral for parents to use violence against their children to settle disputes.
-
1. It is wrong for children to call each other hurtful and harmful names, because verbal abuse is immoral.
 2. Therefore, it is immoral for parents to call their children hurtful and harmful names.
-
1. It is abusive to terrify children by repeatedly inflicting horrifying scenarios upon them, which they have no capacity to control, affect or change.
 2. Therefore, it is abusive to frighten children by telling them that environmental disasters – which they can have no control over – will cause the end of the world in their lifetimes.
-
1. It is hypocritical and abusive to punish others for moral standards you refuse to uphold yourself.
 2. It is also hypocritical and abusive to punish children for behaviour you have modelled for them.
 3. Therefore, it is hypocritical and abusive for parents to verbally abuse children who verbally abuse others.
 4. It is also hypocritical and abusive for parents to physically hurt children who physically hurt others.

We could go on and on, but you get the general idea.

The Empirical Evidence

Practical morality is taking ethical theories and putting them into actionable practice.

In this book, I have made the case for the morality of peaceful parenting, and then shown you how to put this moral case into practice over the middle portion of my writing.

Following the general principles of the scientific method is never a bad idea, since it has been the most productive approach to the world.

In this spirit, the final section of this book turns to the empirical evidence that supports the ethics of peaceful parenting.

Now, if I make the scientific claim that cholera is transmitted through contaminated water, and tell people to boil their water before drinking it, then I should check to see if those people who boil their water are in fact less likely to contract cholera.

One way we know that an action as evil is that it has harmful effects on the innocent.

Since I have provided both the moral theory of peaceful parenting – and how to be a peaceful parent in your life – it is now incumbent upon me to also provide the empirical evidence for the virtues of peaceful parenting.

If, for some bizarre reason, peaceful parenting was both moral and practical, but it ended up making your children sick and neurotic, then the theory would have, to put it mildly, a significant problem.

If, on the other hand, the moral is the practical, then we should be able to find significant evidence for the physical and mental health benefits of peaceful parenting – and, in contrast, aggressive parenting – abusive parenting – should be harmful to the bodies and minds and spirits of innocent children.

Do you think that spanking is good or bad for children?

I don't mean just morally, but rather practically, physically, mentally and psychologically?

Human beings have been spanking their children for tens of thousands of years – do you think that anyone has studied the phenomenon, to find out if it actually works?

What about other forms of abuse, such as verbal aggression and neglect?

Do you think that experts have studied the effects of such aggressive parenting choices?

If so, do you think that there is significant debate among these experts as to whether aggressive parenting is good or bad?

If experts have studied aggressive parenting for many decades, and are unanimous in their conclusions as to whether it works, whether it is beneficial to children - especially in the long run - then only one question really remains.

Why don't you know what these experts have found?

Well, we are about to answer that question.

Neither the questions, nor the conclusions – or why you don't know either – are very pretty at all.

But we need to know.

And then we need to know why we didn't know already.

Let's begin.

PART 3: EVIDENCE

This book has covered the theory of - and moral arguments for - peaceful parenting.

It has also provided a large number of practical examples of peaceful parenting – the mindset, actions and conversations that allow you to interact with your children in a moral manner.

The last part of this book goes into intense detail about the scientific, social, biological and medical evidence for the virtues of peaceful parenting.

It's one thing to know that smoking is expensive, wasteful and unpleasant to those around you – it's quite another thing to know that smoking will likely kill you.

It's important to be aware that the information in this last section of the book will be *extremely* disorienting and upsetting.

Our society is currently founded on the abuse of children. Almost all of our educational, social, legal and political institutions rely on children being abused and broken before being delivered into adulthood.

This is why the information that you are about to consume has been systematically and deliberately kept hidden from you.

The only way to improve the world is to improve childhood.

Those who currently profit from a broken world require that children be broken.

Those who profit from the sale of cigarettes will try to keep the dangers of smoking hidden from you.

Those who profit from breaking children will try to keep the dangers of child abuse hidden from you.

It is a grim reality that is bewildering, disorienting and fundamentally unnerving.

Be of courage, though, I implore you.

Although this information is grim and upsetting, it represents our greatest hope for the future.

Ideologies have failed to improve the world.

Politics has failed to improve the world.

Hedonism, subjectivism, relativism, distractions, mind-altering drugs, promiscuity, education, the Internet – these have all failed to substantially improve the world.

Either there is something we have yet to try, or the world cannot be improved.

Fortunately, peaceful parenting is the undiscovered country whose exploration will save us all.

But first, we have a brutal desert to cross.

The desert of data.

Let us begin.

Does Society Love its Children?

Does society truly love its children?

This is perhaps the most essential question, because if society truly does love its children, then treating children even better will not achieve much good.

If you are very unhealthy, but already eat well and exercise, increasing the quality of your diet and exercise will probably not improve much.

On the other hand, if you are unhealthy, and eat badly and don't exercise, you can at least pursue the possibility of improving your health by changing your habits.

One central thesis is that parents *claim* to love their children, but usually use violence against them. The claim of love is used as a cover for the violence.

If this thesis is true, then society will claim to love its children - but such claims will be denied by the empirical evidence of how children are treated in society.

Let's look at the reason and evidence.

We gave the artificial intelligence GPT-4 this exact prompt:

"Exhaustively generate a list of social issues that people draw attention to. Order the list by importance based on the attention society gives the topic, focus on the US only:"

'Child welfare' - which encompasses child abuse - did not appear on the list until we asked it to continue the list in a second prompt. In all, it was number 19 on the list. This is not bulletproof research, but it is an essential data point. GPT-4 has an estimated 1.8 trillion parameters and was trained on gigabytes upon gigabytes of human expression. Implicit in that are the things that people talk about and focus on the most.

Empirical Priorities

This is the combined list generated by GPT-4:

1. **Racial and Ethnic Inequality:** Issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement, racial profiling, and police brutality.
2. **Healthcare:** Affordability, access, and quality of healthcare, including debates over policy proposals.
3. **Economic Inequality:** Income inequality, wage stagnation, job security, and the wealth gap.
4. **Climate Change and Environmental Issues:** Concerns over wildfires, hurricanes, sustainable energy, pollution, and conservation.
5. **Gender Equality and Women's Rights:** Wage gaps, workplace discrimination, reproductive rights, and the #MeToo movement.
6. **LGBTQ+ Rights:** Debates over marriage, military service, discrimination protections, and transgender rights.
7. **Immigration:** The status of undocumented immigrants, DACA, border security, and refugee policies.
8. **Gun Control:** Mass shootings and debates over the Second Amendment and firearm regulations.

9. **Education:** Public school funding, college tuition, student debt, and educational equity.
10. **Criminal Justice Reform:** Sentencing guidelines, prison privatization, drug decriminalization, and police department reforms.
11. **Mental Health:** Mental health crisis, stigma, and the rise in suicides and addiction.
12. **Housing and Homelessness:** Urban housing crises, affordability, and homelessness.
13. **Veterans' Issues:** Mental health, homelessness among veterans, and post-service care and support.
14. **Native American Rights:** Land rights, environmental degradation on reservations, and cultural preservation.
15. **Drug Abuse and Addiction:** The opioid epidemic and the effects of addiction on communities.
16. **Internet and Technology:** Privacy concerns, cybersecurity, the digital divide, and social media effects.
17. **Religious Freedom vs. Discrimination:** Balancing religious rights with discrimination concerns.
18. **Election and Voting Rights:** Gerrymandering, voter suppression, and mail-in voting debates.
19. **Child Welfare:** Foster care systems, child abuse, and children's rights.
20. **Food Insecurity:** Access to affordable, nutritious food and "food deserts."
21. **Affordable Childcare:** The cost of childcare services, parental leave policies, and implications for working families.
22. **Elderly Care:** Challenges of an aging population, access to healthcare, and social security.
23. **Disability Rights:** Accessibility, discrimination, and rights of people with disabilities.
24. **Human Trafficking:** Labor and sex trafficking and countermeasures.
25. **Animal Rights and Cruelty:** Debates over animal testing, factory farming, and wildlife treatment.
26. **Substance Regulation:** Legalization and regulation of substances, notably marijuana.
27. **Free Speech and Censorship:** Balancing free speech rights with concerns like hate speech and misinformation.
28. **Right to Privacy:** Government surveillance, data mining by corporations, and individual privacy rights in the digital age
29. ...(and so on and so forth)

So...

Society may *claim* to care about its children, but in reality, child welfare is *very* low on the list of priorities.

The Dangers of Smoking vs the Dangers of Child Abuse

One way we can determine society's *actual* preferences is to note the efforts and energies put into warning citizens of the various dangers to their health and well-being.

For many decades, society has hammered home the message that cigarettes are very dangerous, and everyone should stop smoking.

I'm sure you have heard anti-smoking messages hundreds or thousands of times.

Since the 1950s, smoking rates have dramatically declined.

What is more dangerous for people – smoking, or child abuse?

Because society claims to care about things that are harmful or dangerous – especially if they cause ill health, death – then whatever reduces the lifespan as a whole must be roundly condemned, right?

Let's pull together some data points on the harm of child sexual abuse; for brevity we will focus on only the US.

First, we must talk about a central measure of child abuse: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

ACEs were developed to help quantify harmful events or experiences among children.

The ACE Study was a collaboration between Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designed to examine the long-term relationship between ACEs and a variety of health behaviours and outcomes throughout the lifespan. (We will discuss ACEs in more detail later.)

Adverse Childhood Experiences

There are 10 types of ACEs:

Physical abuse: Any intentional act that causes physical harm through bodily contact.

Sexual abuse: Any forceful, unwanted, or otherwise abusive sexual behavior.

Psychological abuse: Any intentional act that causes psychological harm, such as gaslighting, bullying, or guilt-tripping.

Physical neglect: Failure to help meet the basic biological needs of a child, such as food, water, and shelter.

Psychological neglect: Failure to help meet the basic emotional needs of a child, such as attention and affection.

Witnessing domestic abuse: Observing violence occurring between individuals in a domestic setting, such as between parents or other family members.

Witnessing drug or alcohol abuse: Having a close family member who misused drugs or alcohol.

Mental health problems: Having a close family member or otherwise important individual experience mental health problems.

Imprisonment: Having a close family member or otherwise important individual serve time in prison.

Parental separation or divorce: Parents or guardians separating or divorcing on account of a relationship breakdown.

Prevalence: ⁴⁴

- 63.9% of adults report at least one ACE.
- 17.3% experienced four or more ACEs.

Adverse Childhood Experiences vs Smoking

Let's compare ACEs to smoking.

Smoking is *chosen behaviour, mostly by adults*.

(Children who smoke are experiencing parental neglect and enablement – an ACE.)

Even if they start smoking before adulthood, all smokers choose to keep smoking as adults. It is willed behaviour that has to be sought out, and paid for – and often involves significant inconvenience, since it is hard to find places to smoke.

Child abuse is unchosen by the victims – externally inflicted on helpless dependent babies, toddlers and children.

Surely, as a society, we should focus *at least* as much on destructive abuse inflicted on helpless children, as on voluntary behaviours chosen by adults.

*Ah, you might say, but perhaps the risks and dangers of **smoking** are far greater than the risks and dangers of child abuse.*

Even if this were true, this would not overcome the involuntary nature of child abuse, versus the voluntary choice to smoke.

But – what if it *wasn't* true?

What if the health effects of child abuse were *far worse* than the health effects of smoking?

Wouldn't that be more than strange – for society to focus on behaviours chosen by adults that were far less dangerous than violence and neglect inflicted on helpless and dependent children?

Let me ask this another way.

Do you know how dangerous smoking is?

Of course you do!

Everyone does.

Now...

⁴⁴ (Elizabeth A. Swedo, 2023)

Do you know the long-term health effects of child abuse?

Almost certainly not.

This next set of data will change you forever.

Long-Term Health Risks of Child Abuse

Risks: ⁴⁵

- Individuals with 4 or more ACEs were *176% more likely to develop any disease before age 70*.
- Mortality risk and ACEs:
 - Those with 4 or more ACEs had a mortality rate *97% higher* than those with no ACEs ($P < 0.001$).
 - ACEs can reduce life expectancy by *20 years*.⁴⁶

Roughly 41% of respondents reported having no ACEs. (Please note that not all negative childhood experiences are captured by the ACE questionnaire.)

22% reported one ACE, and 8.7% reported five or more ACEs.

17% experienced four or more ACEs.

Let's compare that to smoking cigarettes:

Prevalence: ⁴⁷

- 11.5% of people in the US smoke.

This means that there are almost 40% more children who have four or more ACE's than there are adult smokers.

Risk:

- Current smoker: increased risk of mortality = 176% for women, 180% for men.⁴⁸
- Life expectancy for smokers is at least 10 years shorter than for nonsmokers. (Tobacco-Related Mortality, 2023)

Thus, smoking is only roughly *half* as lethal as significant child abuse. On average, smokers lose 10 years of their life.

Victims of significant child abuse can lose 20 years of their lives.

Yes, smoking exposes you to a myriad of health problems, but ACEs are almost certainly underreported. Who underreports smoking?

⁴⁵ (M.A. Bellis, 2014)

⁴⁶ (Keebler, 2017)

⁴⁷ (Current Cigarette Smoking Among Adults in the United States, 2023)

⁴⁸ (The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress, 2014)

Smokers can quit at any time – helpless children are trapped in abusive households for close to two decades.

Smokers get enormous social, medical and pharmacological help to quit the habit – from support groups to nicotine patches to hypnosis.

What help do most children get?

Little if any...

Yet society spends almost infinitely more time, money and attention on the negative outcomes of smoking than on the negative outcomes of child abuse.

Why is that?

But it gets worse...

Spending on Child Sexual Abuse Awareness

We can measure society's priorities by how it spends its money.

So...

Childhood sexual abuse is inflicted on 1 in 3 girls, and 1 in 5 boys.

33% of girls, 20% of boys...

And surely the number is much higher, given the stigma of reporting - especially for boys.

So – for every *one* adult smoker, there are roughly 3 little girls and two little boys who are sexually abused as minors.

Adults choose to smoke – children are always unwilling victims of sexual abuse.

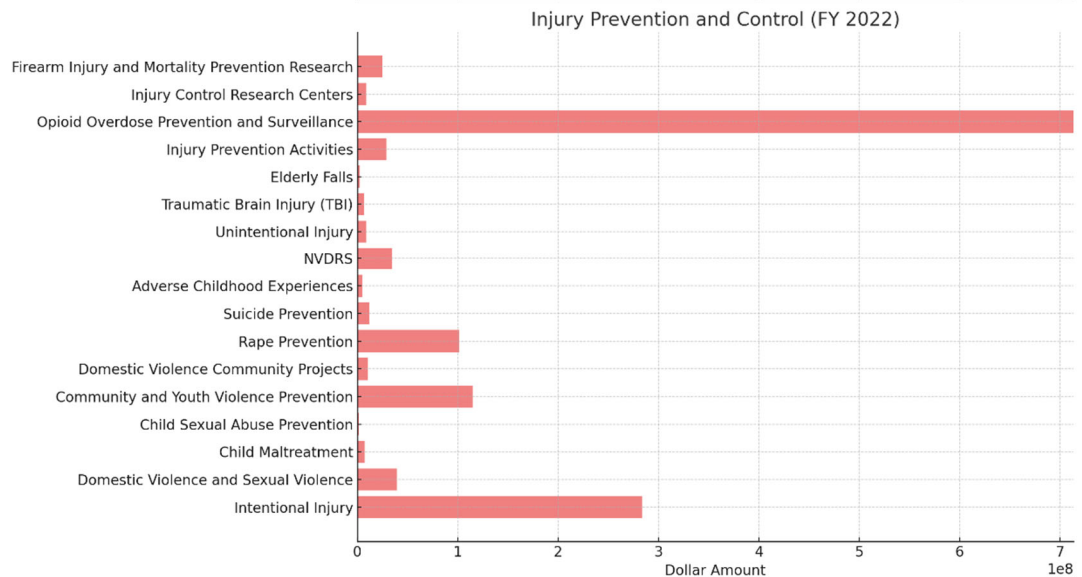
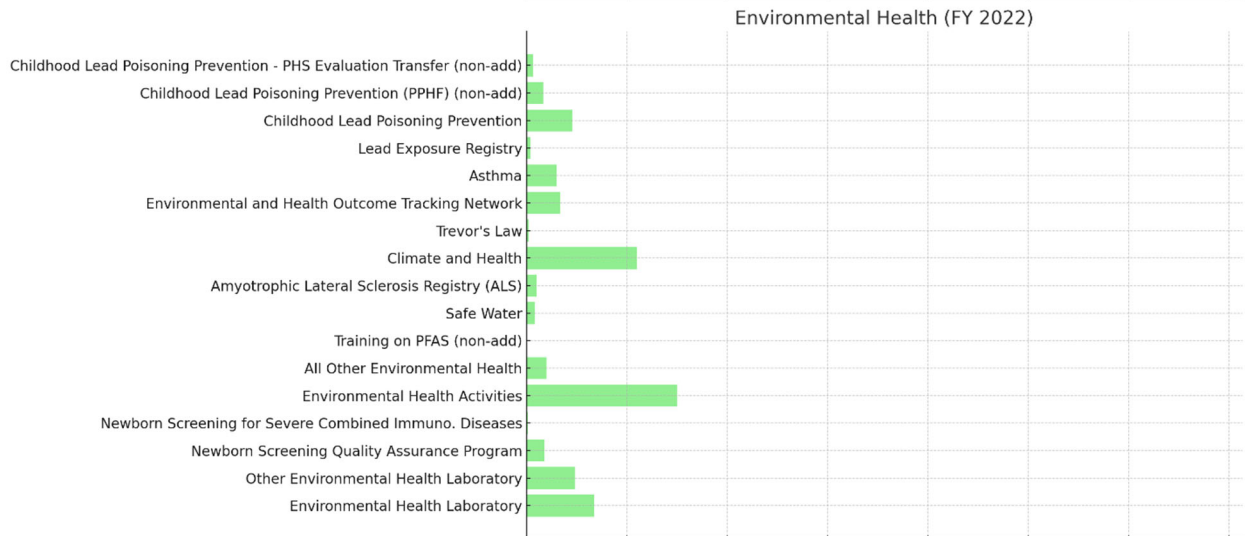
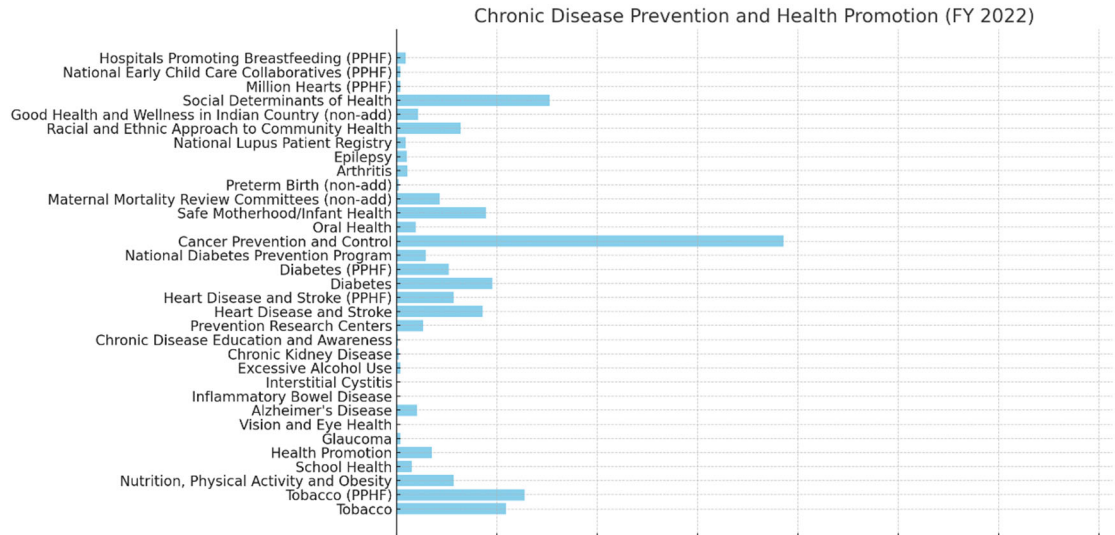
How much is spent by the US Federal government on child sexual abuse awareness, research and prevention? This data is not very accessible. What we did find was:⁴⁹

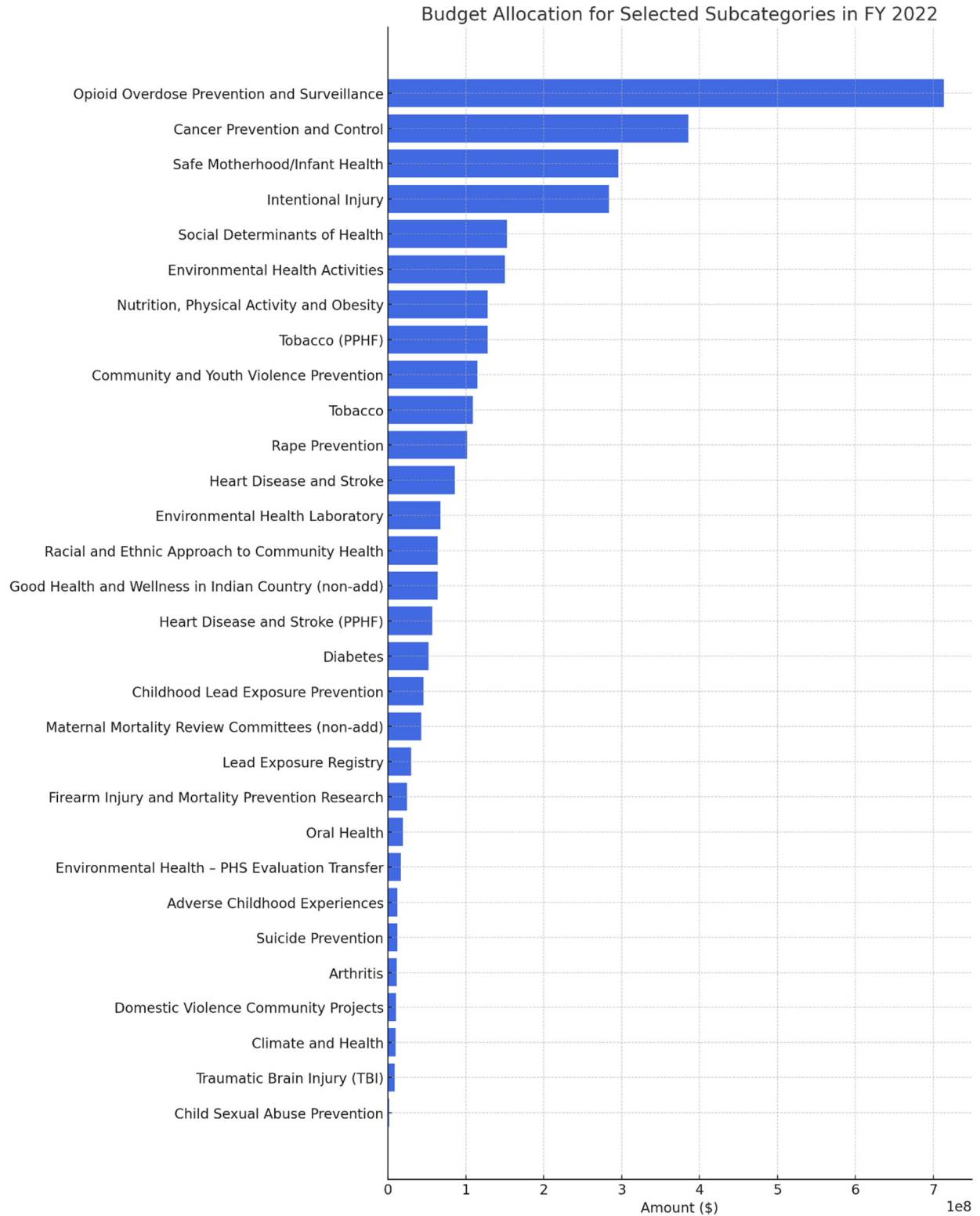
- US Federal government's prevention of child sexual abuse research investment increased from \$0 in 2019 to \$2 million by 2022.
- For every \$3,125 spent on punishing offenders, only \$1 is spent on prevention research.

Let's look at the CDC 2022 budget and make some comparisons:⁵⁰

⁴⁹ (Is the Federal Government Spending Enough to Prevent Child Sex Abuse?, 2022)

⁵⁰ (CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION FY 2022 President's Budget , 2022)





⁵¹ (CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION FY 2022 President's Budget , 2022)

1. **Explanation of the graph:** The graph visualizes the budget allocations for specific health-related subcategories in FY 2022. Each horizontal bar represents a subcategory, and the length of the bar corresponds to the budget amount allocated to that subcategory.
2. **What does 1e8 mean?:** The notation "1e8" on the x-axis is a scientific notation. It stands for 1×10^8 , which is equal to 100,000,000. This notation is often used in graphs to represent large numbers more succinctly. In this context, it represents the dollar amount in the scale of hundreds of millions.
3. **What is non-add?:** "Non-add" typically indicates that the amount for that line item is included or embedded within another amount listed and should not be added again to avoid double counting. It's a way to provide a breakdown of a specific portion of a budget without suggesting that it's an additional amount to the larger category.
4. **What is PPHF?:** PPHF stands for the "Prevention and Public Health Fund." It's a mandatory funding stream created by the Affordable Care Act (often referred to as Obamacare) to support public health and prevention activities.
5. **Why are there two entries for tobacco?:** There are two distinct budget allocations related to tobacco:
 - **Tobacco:** This budget allocation might be for general programs, initiatives, or research related to tobacco use, its effects, and prevention efforts.
 - **Tobacco (PPHF):** This represents funding specifically from the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF) that's allocated for tobacco-related efforts. It indicates that a portion of the tobacco-related budget comes from this specific fund.

In essence, while both entries pertain to tobacco-related efforts, they originate from different funding sources or are used for different initiatives within the broader realm of tobacco prevention and control.

Let's look at the numbers:

- **Opioid Overdose Prevention and Surveillance:** \$713,369,000
- **Cancer Prevention and Control:** \$385,799,000
- **Safe Motherhood/Infant Health:** \$295,799,000
- **Intentional Injury:** \$283,550,000
- **Social Determinants of Health:** \$153,000,000
- **Environmental Health Activities:** \$150,600,000
- **Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity:** \$128,100,000
- **Tobacco (PPHF):** \$128,100,000
- **Community and Youth Violence Prevention:** \$115,100,000
- **Tobacco:** \$109,400,000

- **Rape Prevention:** \$101,750,000
- **Heart Disease and Stroke:** \$86,030,000
- **Environmental Health Laboratory:** \$67,750,000
- **Racial and Ethnic Approach to Community Health:** \$63,950,000
- **Heart Disease and Stroke (PPHF):** \$57,075,000
- **Diabetes:** \$52,075,000
- **Childhood Lead Exposure Prevention:** \$46,000,000
- **Maternal Mortality Review Committees (non-add):** \$43,000,000
- **Lead Exposure Registry:** \$30,000,000
- **Firearm Injury and Mortality Prevention Research:** \$25,000,000
- **Oral Health:** \$19,500,000
- **Environmental Health – PHS Evaluation Transfer:** \$17,000,000
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences:** \$12,000,000
- **Suicide Prevention:** \$12,000,000
- **Arthritis:** \$11,500,000
- **Domestic Violence Community Projects:** \$10,500,000
- **Climate and Health:** \$10,000,000
- **Child Sexual Abuse Prevention:** \$1,500,000

This is after decades of research showing the harm of child abuse. This is not a call for more Federal spending, just a reflection of society's priorities.

[National Debts, Unfunded Liabilities and Children](#)

As a society, we constantly tell ourselves how much we care about our children, and how many sacrifices we are willing to make on their behalf.

Words are easy – deeds are hard.

What are the facts?

Are we in fact willing to make significant sacrifices for the sake of our children?

There are some pretty big numbers that would argue otherwise.

The national debt is the excess money that we greedily consume now, at the expense of our children – enslaving our descendants for many generations at this point.

If we truly loved our children, we would bequeath them a fiscal surplus, just in case something bad happened in their lifetimes.

If a man cares for his children, he should try to leave them something in his will, rather than spending every last dollar on his own life.

If we bury our children in enslaving debt, we cannot also claim to love them.

The national debt is a form of taxation without representation - a form of intergenerational theft that allows us to sell the future productivity of our offspring for the sake of “free” goods and services in the here and now.

If a father claimed to love his children, but turned out to have been secretly running up hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt on their credit cards – debts they could not escape – would we believe his claims of how much he loved them?

Of course not.

We cannot defraud our children of their future, while simultaneously claiming to love them unconditionally.

If you doubt this, just understand that every politician wants to get elected, and no successful politician in living memory has ever run on the platform of radically cutting government spending in order to pay off the national debt, and thus liberate the children from enslavement to mostly foreign bankers.

Politicians want to win, but they never ask the population to sacrifice “free” stuff for the sake of the children.

These politicians know that if they actually asked the adults in their society – particularly the parents – to make financial sacrifices for the sake of their children, they will never get elected, because almost nobody actually really wants to do that.

OK - what kinds of numbers are we talking?

It varies around the world, of course – with Japan being the worst offender – but let’s focus on the United States.

Here we go...

“In 2022, the gross federal debt in the United States amounted to around 92,528 U.S. dollars per capita. This is a moderate increase from the previous year, when the per capita national debt amounted to about 85,552 U.S. dollars.”⁵²

Let’s look at the forecast of the gross federal debt of the United States going forward to 2033:

“By 2033, the gross federal debt of the United States is projected to be about 51.99 trillion U.S. dollars. This would be an increase of around 21 trillion U.S. dollars from 2022, when the federal debt was 30.84 trillion U.S. dollars.”⁵³

⁵² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/203064/national-debt-of-the-united-states-per-capita/>

⁵³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/216998/forecast-of-the-federal-debt-of-the-united-states/>

(These numbers have gotten *much* worse since this research was first conducted.)

There were 73.1 million children in the US as of 2020.⁵⁴

What happens when the children grow up to pay taxes on the debt?

Let's run some rough numbers.

Fifty-two trillion dollars divided by 73.1 million children means that each child is burdened with \$711,354 of debt just for the privilege of being born.

Unfunded liabilities are the promises that the US government has made to its citizens that it does not have the money to pay.

As of 2021, the combined unfunded liabilities for Social Security and Medicare were \$163.2 trillion.⁵⁵

That means that each child is born holding a debt of \$2,243,558.

Combining the two numbers gives a debt per child in the United States of almost *3 million dollars*.

What does this mean?

Well, the average American will pay \$532,910 in taxes throughout his or her lifetime.

That is a third (33.23%) of all estimated lifetime earnings (\$1,571,244) spent on taxes.

Residents of New Jersey will pay the most in lifetime taxes (\$1,168,919) and people in Wyoming will pay the least (\$338,079).

Thus, Americans take home just over \$1 million over the course of working for an entire lifetime.

This means that American children are born into a debt that would take them three lifetimes to pay off – assuming no interest, of course.

Assuming a forty-year payout, and an interest rate of only 5%, the debt is utterly and completely impossible to pay off, no matter what timeframe you choose.

The interest payments on \$3 million over forty years are \$150,000 a year – vastly more than most Americans make.⁵⁶

(In fact, after forty years, \$9 million is owed, not \$3 million.)

At 8% interest, the interest payments are \$240,000 a year.

Even at 3%, we are looking at \$90,000 a year just to pay the interest on the debt.

After taxes, the average American takes home \$38,100 per year.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ <https://www.aecf.org/resources/the-changing-child-population-of-the-united-states>

⁵⁵ <https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/585679-you-owe-more-than-500000-and-counting/m>

⁵⁶ <https://www.calculator.net/simple-interest-calculator.html?balance=30%2C000&principal=3%2C000%2C000&rate=5&ratebase=y&term=40&termbase=y&ctype=balance&x=86&y=18>

⁵⁷ <https://salaryaftertax.com/us/salary-calculator>

Even if we assume no interest rate at all, it would take almost *two lifetimes* for the average American to pay off his or her share of the national debt and unfunded liabilities.

As soon as any real interest rate is added to the equation, the debt cannot be paid off, no matter how hard or long the average American works.

We think that slavery is something in the distant past.

We are wrong about that.

Slavery is very real, and we have forced it on our children through our greed and irresponsibility.

If you want to know how much Americans care for their children, ask yourself what would happen to a politician if he or she demanded that taxpayers give up benefits in order to reduce the debt for their kids.

Exactly.

[Spanking and Health Effects \(Return to page\)](#)

Society claims to be laser-focused on potential dangers to children's health.

Are they getting too much screen time? Are they too sedentary, are they are getting enough exercise or healthy food? What are the effects of vaccines or cell phone radiation? The list goes on and on...

The prevalence of spanking in America is appalling.

Over a third of parents in the US report using corporal punishment on children *less than one year old*. 85% of American youth have been physically punished by parents during childhood or adolescence – according to parental self-reports, which is surely undercounting these assaults.

Over 25% of parents have also reported using objects such as a hairbrush or wooden spoon to hit their children, according to a 1995 survey.

Parents are very concerned with the health of their children.

So - we must ask the question...

Is spanking unhealthy for children?

The answer has been blindingly clear for decades.

I have been reporting on this for 15 years.

Why do parents not know the answer?

Here are the facts.

"Physical punishment is increasingly viewed as a form of violence that harms children. This narrative review summarises the findings of 69 prospective longitudinal studies to inform practitioners and policy makers about physical punishment's outcomes."

“Our review identified seven key themes. First, physical punishment consistently predicts increases in child behaviour problems over time. Second, physical punishment is not associated with positive outcomes over time. Third, physical punishment increases the risk of involvement with child protective services. Fourth, the only evidence of children eliciting physical punishment is for externalising behaviour. Fifth, physical punishment predicts worsening behaviour over time in quasi-experimental studies. Sixth, associations between physical punishment and detrimental child outcomes are robust across child and parent characteristics. Finally, there is some evidence of a dose–response relationship. The consistency of these findings indicates that physical punishment is harmful to children and that policy remedies are warranted.”⁵⁸

“A meta-analysis of five decades of research has proven the detrimental effects of spanking. “Meta-analyses focused specifically on spanking were conducted on a total of 111 unique effect sizes representing 160,927 children. Thirteen of 17 mean effect sizes were significantly different from zero and all indicated a link between spanking and increased risk for detrimental child outcomes. Effect sizes did not substantially differ between spanking and physical abuse or by study design characteristics.”⁵⁹

“This study used propensity score matching based on the lifetime prevalence and recent incidence of spanking in a large and nationally representative sample (N = 12,112) as well as lagged dependent variables to get as close to causal estimates outside an experiment as possible. Whether children were spanked at the age of 5 years predicted increases in externalizing behavior problems by ages 6 and 8, even after the groups based on spanking prevalence or incidence were matched on a range of sociodemographic, family, and cultural characteristics and children’s initial behavior problems. These statistically rigorous methods yield the conclusion that spanking predicts a deterioration of children’s externalizing behavior over time.”⁶⁰

So – if we love our children, and want what is best for them, why do we hit our children, when it is violent and immoral and very, very bad for them?

Since parents love their children, and want what is best for them, why doesn’t the media constantly remind parents about the harm that spanking does to their offspring?

If the media found that some incredibly prevalent substance was harming children – which was easy to protect them from – wouldn’t the media be eager to tell parents - and wouldn’t parents be eternally grateful for being repeatedly informed about the dangers to their children?

⁵⁸ From: ‘Physical punishment and child outcomes: a narrative review of prospective studies’ 2021 – Anja Heilmann, Anita Mehay, Richard G Watt, Yvonne Kelly, Joan E Durrant, Jillian van Turnhout, and Elizabeth T Gershoff.

⁵⁹ From ‘Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses’ 2016 – Gershoff-Kaylor.

⁶⁰ From: ‘Strengthening Causal Estimates for Links Between Spanking and Children’s Externalizing Behavior Problems’ 2018 – Elizabeth T. Gershoff, Kierra M. P. Sattler, Arya Ansari.

Yet this does not happen.

The media delivers what people want to watch.

The media does not generally inform parents about the harm done to their children through physical punishment.

There can only be one reason for this.

The parents don't want to know.

In fact, the parents would likely be very angry to be told this – which means that they don't love their children, because they would rather keep hitting them than protect them from the dangers of physical assault.

The world is very simple to understand if we simply look at the available data.

But it gets even worse, as it usually does.

Remember Covid?

Spanking versus Covid

Spanking produces clear negative outcomes for the vast majority of children.

When we compare the harm done to children with the risks that children faced over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, we can clearly see the difference in how society deployed its resources to deal with these two different dangers to children.

Children faced absolutely minuscule risks from Covid-19 – but schools were closed, novel vaccination technology was forced upon children, parks and recreational facilities were closed, and children's lives were completely overturned for years – resulting in massive increases in depression, anxiety, learning losses and even child suicides.⁶¹

From a recent paper:

⁶¹ <https://theconversation.com/how-childrens-secure-attachment-sets-the-stage-for-positive-well-being-213423>

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/newsroom/news-releases/2024/03/johns-hopkins-childrens-center-study-shows-negative-impact-of-covid19-pandemic-on-youth-minority-mental-health>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-well-lived-life/202103/covid-19-and-how-it-affects-our-children>

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/how-the-pandemic-has-affected-children>

<https://theconversation.com/pandemic-babies-how-covid-19-has-affected-child-development-155903>

<https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/headed-back-to-school-a-look-at-the-ongoing-effects-of-covid-19-on-childrens-health-and-well-being/>

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-pandemic-has-had-devastating-impacts-on-learning-what-will-it-take-to-help-students-catch-up/>

“For children, the collateral damage of the COVID-19 pandemic response has been considerable: ‘nearly insurmountable’ educational losses, deteriorating mental health, low routine childhood vaccination rates, 39 billion missed school meals by January 2021 and millions of estimated life-years lost among students in the USA alone.”⁶²

All for a virus that endangered or killed virtually no children.

Imagine if society committed the same resources to combating life-threatening child abuse that it committed to battling a virus that did almost no deadly harm to children.

Now – ask yourself why we didn’t.

[\(Return to page\)](#)

Government Schools and Child Abuse

I’m sure you have heard of the Catholic child abuse scandals, going back many decades.

Did the media report on the scandals because it cares about child abuse, or because exposing these corruptions follows the general modern anti-Christian narrative?

Well, if you cared about child abuse in institutions, you would do your research to find out which institutions abuse children the *most*, right?

It’s not the Church.

Not even *close*.

Children are far more abused in government schools than they ever were in the Church.

“In the last decades, studies have uncovered troubling statistics about the occurrence of sexual abuse of children in schools, with a large study estimating that 9.6% of students in Grades 8 through 11 had been victimized (Shakeshaft, 2004).”

“Harris Interactive administered survey to a nationally representative sample of 2,064 students in Grades 8 through 11 from 1,559 public schools in Fall 2000, asking about their experiences with sexual harassment or abuse during their school lives. Specifically, questions in the survey included who committed the harassment or abuse (students, teachers, or other school employees), and when and where the incident happened. As Shakeshaft’s (2004) secondary analyses of the AAUW data indicated, nearly 9.6% of students in the sample reported being victims of sexual misconduct by educators.”

How much worse is it for children in government schools?

Hofstra University researcher Charol Shakeshaft has deeply studied the problem.

Here is her assessment:

⁶² <https://bmjpaedsopen.bmj.com/content/6/1/e001553>

"[T]hink the Catholic Church has a problem?" she said. "The physical sexual abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse by priests."

Reporter Wayne Laugesen has pointed out that a federal report said that 422,000 California public-school students would be victims before graduation — a number that dwarfs the state's *entire* Catholic-school enrollment of 143,000.

During the first half of 2002, the 61 largest newspapers in California published almost 2,000 articles about sexual abuse in Catholic institutions — mostly regarding past abuses.

Over the same six months, those newspapers ran only *four* stories about the federal government's discovery of the much larger — and *ongoing* — abuse scandal in government schools.⁶³

In other words, the media reported 500 times more on stories about the past that affected 1% of the number of children abused in government schools.

The current victim of an educator received 50,000 less attention than the past victim of a priest.

I hope that you understand that the multi-decade focus on the sexual abuse of children in Catholic churches is motivated almost exclusively by rampant anti-Christianity — this is evident from the simple fact that children are much more likely to be sexually abused in government schools — but you never hear about that, do you?

Also, the Catholic Church is a voluntary institution — children are generally compelled to attend government schools, and all taxpayers are compelled to pay for those schools.

Far more children attend government schools than go to Catholic churches.

Do we care about the abuse of children?

If we did, there would be endless media articles exposing the prevalence of child sexual abuse in government schools.

There is not.

Asked and answered, very sadly.

Also, when we look at the outrage and protests and riots after the death of George Floyd — and compare them to utter absence of organized outrage after reports were released revealing the massive sexual abuse of children in government schools, we can see exactly how largely indifferent most parents are to the victimization of their children.

There should have been mass protests, marches, hearings, investigations — a massive rise in homeschooling, in order to protect children — but almost none of that happened.

Do we, as a society, genuinely love our children?

We don't seem to get too upset when our children are regularly sexually abused, molested and raped in government schools.

⁶³ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/has-media-ignored-sex-abuse-in-school/>

I wish it were different.

It is not.

Schools and Bullying

Children are generally forced into schools that their parents are forced to pay for.

How often are they bullied?

“49.8% of tweens (9 to 12 years old) said they experienced bullying at school and 14.5% of tweens shared they experienced bullying online. (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020)”⁶⁴

What are the Effects of Bullying?

Students who experience bullying are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school. (Centers for Disease Control, 2019)

Students who are both targets of bullying and engage in bullying behavior are at greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems than students who only bully or are only bullied. (Centers for Disease Control, 2019)

Bullied students indicate that bullying has a negative effect on how they feel about themselves (27%), their relationships with friends and family (19%), their school work (19%), and physical health (14%). (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019)

Tweens who were cyberbullied shared that it negatively impacted their feelings about themselves (69.1%), their friendships (31.9%), their physical health (13.1%), and their schoolwork (6.5%). (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020).⁶⁵

Where are the marches, the protests, the outrage, the steadfast demands for change?

Remember how angry and aggressive people were about the unvaccinated during Covid?

I don't see that happening with the protection of children.

Global Prevalence of Child Abuse

Well, perhaps child abuse is so rare that there's no good reason to prioritize it, right?

Not so.

Globally, reports indicate that approximately half of children aged 2-17 years encounter various forms of violence annually, and about 58% of children in Latin America and 61% in North America underwent physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse within the past year.

Notably, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, instances of physical child abuse surged.

From a recent paper:

⁶⁴ <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/info/stats.asp>

⁶⁵ <https://www.pacer.org/bullying/info/stats.asp>

“There is emerging evidence that lockdowns significantly worsened child abuse on a global scale. Low-income and middle-income countries are particularly vulnerable to increases in child abuse. In Uganda, for example, there was a 1565% increase in the average number of calls per day to the Uganda Child Helpline in the first month of lockdown. Yet, even wealthy nations in the West did not escape unscathed. In the UK, there was a 1493% increase in cases of abusive head trauma at Great Ormond Street Hospital. In France, there was an 89% increase in national child abuse helpline calls, a 48% increase in home visits by law enforcement officers and a 50% increase in the relative frequency of child abuse hospitalisations. Furthermore, there appears to have been insidious changes with potentially long-term effects which are more difficult to measure. In the Netherlands, for example, there was a 32% increase in previously rare harsh parenting behaviours, including shaking and name calling...

“...the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that more than 11% of surveyed adolescents experienced physical abuse and more than 55% of adolescents experienced emotional abuse during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic alone, with socially vulnerable adolescents disproportionately harmed. These results were compared with a similar pre-lockdown survey which found 5.5% physical abuse and 13.9% emotional abuse in 2013.”⁶⁶

This rise in physical abuse significantly correlated with soaring unemployment rates, marked by a strong correlation coefficient of 0.92.

Corporal punishment is a pervasive global issue, causing harm and even fatalities for numerous children annually. Shockingly, up to 77 countries endorse violent penalties for children, encompassing acts ranging from execution to corporal measures such as caning, flogging and stoning, and, in certain cases, amputation.

From a recent source:

- A minimum of 50% of children in Asia, Africa, and Northern America experienced violence over the past year.
- The number of 2-17 year olds who experienced the most severe forms of violence is estimated to be at least 64% of children in Asia, 56% in Northern America, 50% in Africa, 34% in Latin America, and 12% in Europe.
- Overall, over half of all children in the world – 1 billion children ages 2-17 years – experience violence every year.⁶⁷

How often are children under the age of 2 hit?

"In a national survey conducted by the Commonwealth Fund, 11% of parents reported having spanked a child 6 to 11 months of age, 36% reported having spanked a child 12 to 17 months of age, and 59% reported having spanked a child 18 to 23 months of age."⁶⁸

59%! Again, that is only what is reported – and by the perpetrators!

In a 2014 study, mothers agreed to wear audio recorders at home as they parented. The study shockingly revealed that, while American parents *reported* spanking their children 18 times a year, the actual

⁶⁶ <https://bmjpaedsopen.bmj.com/content/6/1/e001553>

⁶⁷ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26810785/>

⁶⁸ (Eric P Slade, 2004)

recordings showed they were hitting at a rate that would equate to a staggering 936 times a year. That is a dramatic *52 times* more than they admitted!⁶⁹

A 2009 study on the reliability of self-reported childhood physical abuse by adults revealed that, when individuals were asked about CPA (child physical abuse) on multiple occasions, the reported prevalence increased, suggesting a significant underreporting on a single inquiry. The report showed an increase over time of 27.5%!⁷⁰

From: 'Reliability of self-reported childhood physical abuse by adults and factors predictive of inconsistent reporting':

"These results are also compatible with several studies which demonstrated that child abuse is frequently underreported by adults (Della Femina et al., 1990; Widom & Shepard, 1996; L. M. Williams, 1994). One study estimated that only half of subjects exposed to CPA are identified through initial questioning (Fergusson et al., 2000). Furthermore, research has indicated that few individuals report a history of abuse when none exists (Fergusson et al., 2000; Hardt & Rutter, 2004). If true, inconsistent reporters of CPA predominantly represent individuals with a history of CPA and using any positive response across multiple inquiries would seem a reasonable approach to obtaining a more accurate estimate of CPA prevalence. However, though estimates based on multiple inquiries are likely an improvement over single inquiry, such estimates are still likely to be conservative since some respondents who experienced CPA do not disclose it even when asked multiple times."

According to the American Society for the Positive Care for Children (APCC), 45.6% of children who die from child abuse are under one year of age – and children under the age of one experience the highest rate of child abuse!⁷¹

Let's look across the world.

A 2014 UNICEF report titled 'Hidden in Plain Sight' estimates that roughly 6 in 10 children worldwide between the ages of 2 and 14 are regularly physically punished – beaten – by their caregivers.

That is almost a *billion* children.

Here, of course, we are only counting direct violence against children – other forms of psychological and mental abuse and torture are not captured by generic child abuse statistics.

For instance, what about the agony of children going through protracted parental divorces?

What about the mental effects on children of telling them that the world is going to end in fire and destruction within a decade or two due to global warming?

What are the psychological effects on children when they find out that multimillion dollar inescapable loans have been taken out in their names before they were even born?

⁶⁹ (George W. Holden, 2014)

⁷⁰ (Christy M. McKinney, Reliability of self-reported childhood physical abuse by adults, 2009)

⁷¹ (National Child Maltreatment Statistics, 2023)

What about society's unwillingness or inability to find moral meaning and spiritual comfort after the general fall of Christianity as a cultural and psychological force?

What effect does it have on boys to be consistently scorned and attacked by feminist teachers over the course of their education?

There are countless ways in which modern society harms or undermines children that are not counted in typical reviews of the prevalence of child abuse.

If we truly unearthed everything that was going wrong, we would find it hard to find anything that was going right.

Children Can Perform Moral Reasoning at 15 Months [\(Return to page\)](#)

Perhaps children are hit because they cannot perform moral reasoning?

Let's look at the data.

"Human cooperation is a key driving force behind the evolutionary success of our hominin lineage. At the proximate level, biologists and social scientists have identified other-regarding preferences – such as fairness based on egalitarian motives, and altruism – as likely candidates for fostering large-scale cooperation."

"First, in contrast to past work suggesting that fairness and altruism may not emerge until early to mid-childhood, 15-month-old infants are sensitive to fairness and can engage in altruistic sharing. Second, infants' degree of sensitivity to fairness as a third-party observer was related to whether they shared toys altruistically or selfishly, indicating that moral evaluations and prosocial behavior are heavily interconnected from early in development."

"Our results present the first evidence that the roots of a basic sense of fairness and altruism can be found in infancy, and that these other-regarding preferences develop in a parallel and interwoven fashion."

From: 'Fairness Expectations and Altruistic Sharing in 15-Month-Old Human Infants' 2011 – Schmidt, Sommerville.⁷²

So – for *years* we hit children who are capable of moral reasoning.

We beat when we should speak.

And then we complain about the violence in the world.

[The Bomb in the Brain](#)

Now we turn to the darkest heart of the matter.

If the world is hell because of childhood, then child abuse is the relentless fuel feeding that inferno.

⁷² (Marco F H Schmidt, 2011)

From the moment they take their first breath, the happiness of children is a blank canvases—waiting, eager, and ready to be painted with experiences, memories, and lessons. The strokes we choose to mark them with will heavily influence – even define – the adults they will become.

When a child’s canvas is marred by the savage slashes of abuse, a bomb is silently implanted in their brain—a bomb that slowly detonates over time, damaging their potential, those around them, and our collective future.

To truly understand this, let's step into the world of a very young child.

In their eyes, everything is new, fascinating, and profound. They look up to their caregivers for guidance, acceptance, and love. The early years of a child's life are the formative years. During this time, their brain is like soft clay, molding and adapting to the environment and the stimuli provided.

What happens when this environment is filled with violence, neglect, abuse and trauma?

We know.

We know what happens – and we have known for many decades – but the information has been kept hidden from the public, doubtless by those who enact and profit from it.

Here’s exactly what has been kept hidden from you – and denied you your chance to truly understand the world and how to fix it.

[Adverse Childhood Experiences](#)

How can we measure the pain of a child?

How can we measure and quantify the effects of early brutal suffering?

Let’s delve more deeply into the metrics of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences studies and methodologies have mapped the suffering of children over many decades – even entire lifespans.

The horror and tragedy of early abuse – and its effects on lives as a whole – have consistently emerged in horrifying detail and clarity.

Adverse Childhood Experiences, colloquially known as ACEs, are not merely passing clouds in the vast sky of life—they are tectonic tempests that have profound and lasting impacts on the architecture of the developing child's brain, on their emotional fibers, and on the health and safety of their adult lives. These scars are not always visible to the naked eye, and that's where the gravest dangers lie.

[Thirty Years of Data Hidden from the Public](#)

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study is an ongoing collaboration between The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente’s Health Appraisal Clinic in San Diego.

Starting in 1995, over 17,000 HMO patients have provided detailed information about their own childhood abuse, neglect and dysfunction while also undergoing comprehensive physical exams. The

data from these continuous ACE studies have been used as the foundation for more than 50 scientific articles and over 100 conference and workshop presentations.

Of note, these were not people low in socio-economic status; they had premium health insurance in a time of far fewer state subsidies in the industry.

As of the time of writing this book, almost 30 years have passed since the beginning of the ACE research.

It took less time for scientists to prove that smoking was largely responsible for lung cancer.

Why have the dangers of child abuse not been broadcast to the public as a whole?

Why do we remain so elementally ignorant?

It is a painful question – and an even more painful answer.

The ACE Data – What it Shows

The data shows that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are unexpectedly common, have profound negative effects on adult health and well-being even a half-century later, and are prime determinants of adult health status in the United States.

How many times have you heard *that* on the nightly news? The same news that is so eager to tell you about every other conceivable form of danger, real or imagined?

The same media that terrified you about the relatively slight risks of Covid refuses to inform you of the deep and genuine risks of child abuse.

ACEs Defined

ACEs are a set of traumatic events or circumstances that children can experience before they reach the age of 18. The ACE quiz is ten ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions – for each question you answer ‘yes’ to, you add one point to your ACE score, the total number at the end is your overall ACE score.

- Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
- Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
- Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
- Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn’t look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
- Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn’t have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

- Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
- Was your mother or stepmother:
 - Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
- Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
- Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
- Did a household member go to prison?

Of note, some ACE studies modify the questions slightly, but in general they follow the same patterns and associations.

Prevalence of ACEs

Over the decades, a massive amount of data has been gathered which sheds light on the prevalence of these traumatic events. Recent studies have indicated a staggering prevalence of ACEs across populations.

How accurate is the reporting?

As we get into the studies and numbers, it is important to note that abuse is significantly underreported – and some abuses cannot be remembered at all.

How prevalent is horror and abuse in the lives of children?

According to the CDC – sampling from every U.S. state and the District of Columbia from 2011 to 2020 – 64% of adults reported they had experienced at least one ACE, while 17% stated they had faced 4 or more different ACEs.⁷³

A 2020 study of 211,376 adults across 34 states showed 57.8% of adults report at least one ACE – with 21.5% reporting three or more ACEs.⁷⁴

From: ‘The Frequencies and Disparities of Adverse Childhood Experiences in the U.S.’:

“...females had significantly higher ACEs than males (1.64 to 1.46). Multiracial individuals had a significantly higher ACEs (2.39) than all other races/ethnicities, while White individuals had significantly lower mean ACE scores (1.53) than Black (1.66) or Hispanic (1.63) individuals. The 25-to-34 age group had a significantly higher mean ACE score than any other group (1.98). Generally, those with higher income/educational attainment had lower mean ACE scores than those with lower income/educational attainment. Sexual minority individuals had higher ACEs than straight individuals, with significantly higher ACEs in bisexual individuals (3.01).”

⁷³ (CDC, 2021)

⁷⁴ (Zachary Giano, 2020)

ACEs and Health

Adverse Childhood Experiences are terribly common. Let's start to break them down by race and income – and examine the health effects associated with higher ACEs.

The results of a 2016 study show:⁷⁵

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Distribution:
 - 25.7% of children experience serious financial hardship.
 - Most other ACEs affect <10% of children.
 - Death of a parent and explicit racial or ethnic discrimination impact <5% of children.
- Adversity Experience Based on Household Income:
 - Majority of children in the lowest 2 income groups report at least 1 ACE.
 - Children in families below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are:
 - 3 times more likely to have ≥2 ACEs than those at or above 400% of the FPL (34.9% vs 9.7%).
 - 5 times more likely to experience ≥4 ACEs than those at 400% of the FPL.
 - 28.7% of low-income and 20.9% of middle-income families are likely to experience ≥2 ACEs.
 - A significant decrease in ACEs for children in families at or above 400% of the FPL.
 - 75% of children in the highest income group reported no ACEs versus only 33% in the lowest income group.
- Relationship Between Income Gradient & Specific ACEs:
 - Financial hardship steeply varies with income – however, 25% of children in families above 200% of the FPL experience it.
 - Divorce affects >20% of all but the highest income group.
 - Drug and alcohol exposures impact >10% of all but the highest income group.
 - Over 8% in all but the highest income group have a parent with a mental illness.
 - Only the highest income group seems mostly free from these common adversities.
- Health Outcomes and ACEs:
 - 1 ACE increases the odds of health issues by 25%-84%.
 - 2 ACEs increase odds by 48%-160%.
 - 3 ACEs result in 53%-251% increased odds.
 - ≥4 ACEs amplify odds by 95%-462%.
 - Emotional, behavioral, and developmental problems are notably influenced by a higher number of ACEs.
- Differences Based on Income:
 - For the lowest income group (<100% FPL):
 - Having up to 4 ACEs doesn't consistently affect general health, oral health, or weight.
 - Asthma and emotional, developmental, and behavioral problems show a stepwise increase in odds – the more ACEs, the more problems.
 - For the highest income group (>400% FPL):

⁷⁵ (Neal Halfon MD, 2017)

- Each extra adversity usually correlates with higher odds, except inconsistently for asthma.
- Though ACEs are rarer in this group, when they occur, they significantly increase health problems.

ACEs and Health

The original ACE study found that individuals who experienced four or more categories of childhood exposure – compared to those with none – faced 4 to 12 times higher health risks for alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide attempts.

They also had 2 to 4 times higher risk for smoking, poor self-rated health, engaging in sexual activity with 50 or more partners, and contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Additionally, they exhibited a 1.4 to 1.6 times higher risk for physical inactivity and severe obesity.

To view this information in graphical, narrated format, please visit <https://freedomainplaylists.com/bib/>

Types of Abuse

In general, it is helpful to delineate the most common forms of child abuse.

They are:

- Verbal/Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

We will examine these major types of abuse – and their effects – in the sections below.

Before we start, I would like to make a couple of caveats and notes.

First of all, I really appreciate your courage and dedication in examining these issues. Before we start, it might be worth going through the ACE questionnaire for yourself, to get a sense of what your own history was like, and how any prior traumas might affect your consumption of this information.

Secondly, as you go through this data, it is important to continually ask yourself why this has all been kept hidden from the general public.

In Platonic philosophy, there exists a realm of perfect Forms that are inaccessible to the general population, but deeply understood by wise experts.

The difference between those who study and understand the ACE data in the general population is one of the widest gaps in human society – not just because those of us who understand this information are in possession of deep knowledge that almost completely explains society – but because we are also aware of what can only be described as sinister forces that keep this information from the general public, thus aiding and abetting the billions of child abusers the world over.

The Silent Scars: Verbal Abuse and Its Consequences

In many cultures and households, words are wielded like weapons, leaving scars that are invisible yet profoundly damaging. Verbal abuse, often overshadowed by its physical counterpart, is a form of abuse that can wreak havoc on a child's psyche, shaping their worldview and undermining their self-worth for years, if not a lifetime.

First of all, what is verbal abuse?

Verbal abuse is the use of harsh and hurtful language while communicating with people. These include harsh words, swear words, abusive words, hurtful words, negative labels, and put-downs that are aggressive in nature.

Verbal abuse is associated with the following behaviors:

- Insulting
- Yelling
- Nagging
- Criticizing
- Belittling
- Undermining
- Swearing
- Threatening

Research conducted at the University of New Hampshire revealed that among over 3,000 surveyed American parents, 63% acknowledged instances of verbal aggression directed at children within their households.⁷⁶ This can range from name-calling, shaming, and threats to more insidious forms of psychological manipulation.

While many argue that "words will never hurt me," the empirical evidence paints a different picture.

Data on verbal abuse against children is hard to come by – but an indirect way to measure it is the prevalence of verbal abuse between adults.

One study comprised 250 individuals, with an average age of 27 years. These participants were tasked with completing the Emotional Abuse Questionnaire.⁷⁷ Among the participants, emotional abuse displayed high prevalence rates, with approximately 80% being affected. Expressive aggression, characterized by name-calling, was reported by 40% of women and 32% of men, while coercive control was reported by 41% of women and 43% of men.

The 2011, the National Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence Survey revealed that nearly half of Americans had encountered lifelong emotional abuse from a partner.⁷⁸ The assessment of psychological aggression encompassed both expressive aggression and coercive control, with 48.4% of women and 48.8% of men disclosing experiences of such behavior by an intimate partner. As a result, emotional abuse emerges as the most prevalent type of intimate partner violence.

⁷⁶ (Vardigan, 2023)

⁷⁷ (Günnur Karakurt, 2013)

⁷⁸ (Black, 2010 Summary Report)

A 2014 study showed a significant link between parental psychological abuse and mental health issues in adolescents. Both mother and father abuse were correlated with mental health problems (with a less than 5% chance that the results occurred purely due to random variability). Adolescents who perceived more parental abuse experienced greater problems. The analysis also showed that expected factors of parental psychological abuse predicted adolescent mental health problems, explaining 10% to 49% of the variance.⁷⁹

Children are like sponges, absorbing not just the knowledge around them but also the emotional energies directed towards them. When they are consistently subjected to harmful words, they begin to internalize these messages. Children who are regularly told that they are "worthless" or "stupid" may grow into adults who genuinely believe these things about themselves.

The psychological consequences of childhood verbal abuse are numerous and multifaceted. Abused children often exhibit heightened levels of anxiety and are more susceptible to mood disorders, such as depression. Their cognitive function can be impacted, with some struggling academically due to a perpetual fear of criticism or ridicule.

A hostile, unsupportive, or abusive setting creates significant stress, negatively affecting brain development.

This concept finds support in the research paper titled 'Childhood maltreatment is associated with reduced volume in the hippocampal subfields CA3, dentate gyrus, and subiculum,' authored by Teicher et al. This study highlights the fact that stress resulting from verbal abuse during childhood can lead to a decrease in neuron count in the hippocampus, a brain region tied to emotional regulation. These findings suggest that verbal abuse inflicts structural changes on a child's brain.⁸⁰

From, 'Exposure to parental verbal abuse is associated with increased gray matter volume in superior temporal gyrus' – Three specific regions of white matter tracts displayed significantly lower fractional anisotropy (FA):⁸¹

- The arcuate fasciculus located in the left superior temporal gyrus.
- The cingulum bundle adjacent to the posterior tail of the left hippocampus.
- The left body of the fornix.

The degree of fractional anisotropy in these regions exhibited a substantial negative correlation with average Posttraumatic Verbal Abuse (PVA) scores (ranging from $r(s) = -.701$ to $-.801$) and levels of maternal verbal abuse. Across all participant groups, fractional anisotropy in region 1 was found to be linked to verbal IQ and verbal comprehension index. Furthermore, lower fractional anisotropy in region 2 was associated with higher ratings of depression, dissociation, and limbic irritability. Lastly, reduced fractional anisotropy in region 3 was correlated with elevated ratings of somatization and anxiety.

In common terms:

⁷⁹ (Syeda Fariha Iram Rizvi, 2014)

⁸⁰ (Martin H. Teicher martin, 2012)

⁸¹ (Akemi Tomoda 1, 2011)

These connections, known as fractional anisotropy, were found to be lower in three specific areas. These lower levels of fractional anisotropy were strongly connected to higher scores of posttraumatic verbal abuse, particularly from maternal figures.

Among all the people in the study, the strength of connections in the first brain area was connected to their ability to use words and understand language. In the second area, when the connections were weaker, individuals tended to report more feelings of depression, disconnection from themselves, and heightened emotional reactivity. Lastly, in the third area, when the connections were reduced, people were more likely to experience physical symptoms related to stress and increased feelings of unease.

Let us not forget the social aspect of this type of abuse. Continual verbal assault can make children more withdrawn, prone to fearing social interactions and perceiving potential threats even in benign situations. This can lead to isolation, difficulties in forming meaningful relationships, and an overriding sense of loneliness.

The health effects of loneliness will be discussed in further detail below.

The road to healing from verbal abuse is long and arduous. However, it's essential to recognize that words – especially the words of a parent – have great power, and their impact can be profoundly difficult to treat, as they are the foundations of our self-perceptions.

If someone mars the lens with which you see the world and yourself, it is that much harder to notice the threat they pose to you – as well as the damage itself. If someone compromises and corrupts the mechanism by which you form judgements, it is that much harder to hold them accountable. To truly foster a nurturing environment for children, it's crucial to be vigilant about not just our actions, but also our words.

[The Soul Denied and Rejected: The Insidious Trauma of Neglect](#)

If physical abuse is the storm that rages, shaking the foundations of a child's world, then neglect is the silent drought, slowly eroding the very soil from which they grow. It's not just the brutality done to the body, but the voids left in the soul that can cripple a child.

The rates of child maltreatment and neglect are deeply disturbing. The American Society for the Positive Care of Children has gathered some heart-breaking statistics for the US: ⁸²

- 4 million child maltreatment referral reports received in 2021.
- Child abuse reports involved 7.2 million children.
- 90.6% of victims are maltreated by one or both parents.
- Only 2.9 million children received prevention & post-response services.
- 156,576 children received foster care services.
- Neglect is by far the most common form of abuse. Three-fourths (76%) of victims are neglected, 16% are physically abused, 10% are sexually abused, and 0.2% are sex trafficked.
- Annual estimate: 1,820 children died from abuse and neglect in 2021.
- Five children die every day from child abuse.
- 66.2% percent of all child fatalities were younger than 3 years old.

⁸² (National Child Maltreatment Statistics, 2023)

- 80.3% of child fatalities involve at least one parent.
- Of the children who died, 77.7% suffered child neglect.
- Of the children who died, 42.8% suffered physical abuse either exclusively or in combination with another maltreatment type.
- Boys had a higher child fatality rate than girls (3.01 boys & 2.15 girls per 100,000)
- It is estimated that between 50-60% of maltreatment fatalities are not recorded on death certificates.
- The youngest children are most vulnerable. Children in the first year of their life are 15% of all victims, and more than a quarter (28%) of child maltreatment victims are no more than 2 years old.
- Child abuse crosses all socioeconomic and educational levels, religions, and ethnic and cultural groups.
- Girls are victimized at a higher rate than boys. American Indian or Alaska Native children have the highest rate of victimization in the population of the same race or ethnicity, while African American children have the second-highest rate of the same race or ethnicity.^{83 84}

A 2018 systematic review found that neglect was most commonly observed in Africa (girls: 41.8%, boys: 39.1%) and South America (girls: 54.8%, boys: 56.7%), but these rates were calculated from a limited number of studies. In the continents with more extensive research, the median rates varied between girls (40.5%) and boys (16.6%) in North America, while they were similar in Asia (girls: 26.3%, boys: 23.8%).⁸⁵

Neglect is a multifaceted beast. Emotional neglect, for example, refers to the absence of nurturing, affection, and comfort. A child growing up in such an environment learns to mute their emotional responses, often feeling invisible or unimportant.

Children are struggling, and almost no one is there to help them.

A recent study showed that individuals with a history of self-harm reported more childhood abuse and neglect (effect size = 139% with a 0.1% chance the results were due to random variation) and greater impairments in personality functioning (effect size = 164% with a 0.1% chance the results were due to random variation) than the rest of the population.⁸⁶

A 2023 article from usnews.com reports that suicides among the youngest teenagers had been rising for years before the pandemic.⁸⁷ From 2008 to 2018, the suicide rate among 13- and 14-year-olds across the country saw a significant increase, more than doubling. The rate rose from about two fatalities per 100,000 teenagers in 2008 to five per 100,000 a decade later. Furthermore, according to Dr. Sarah Wood, a senior researcher and pediatrics professor at Florida Atlantic University's Schmidt College of Medicine, suicide has emerged as the primary cause of mortality among 13- and 14-year-olds in the United States.

⁸³ <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/media-room/national-statistics-on-child-abuse/>

⁸⁴ (How many children are victims of abuse or neglect in the US?, 2022) <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-many-children-are-victims-of-abuse-or-neglect-in-the-us/>

⁸⁵ (Gwenllian Moody, 2018)

⁸⁶ (Mareike Ernst, 2022)

⁸⁷ (HealthDay, 2023)

Now, this is not research claiming that neglect is the cause or correlation of this increase in suicide, but I suspect that it certainly contributes.

A 2021 essay followed up and extended on earlier research and data on school and teen suicide. These reviews have consistently shown that during summer months – when children are not at school – youth suicide drops dramatically.⁸⁸

Why don't they have someone in their life they can trust to help? Someone who is connected with - and interested in - them? It is a parent's responsibility to know what is going on in a child's life. Where did they get the message that the world is better off without them or that life will only ever be net suffering?

A 2020 meta-analytic review of maltreatment and neglect found that they showed a significant relationship with decreased emotion regulation (correlation of approximately -24%) and increased emotion dysregulation (correlation of approximately 28%) at the domain level. At the strategy level, maltreatment was significantly associated with increased avoidance (correlation of approximately 25%), emotional suppression (correlation of approximately 24%), and emotional expression (correlation of approximately 25%).⁸⁹

Medical and educational neglect, on the other hand, have tangible and immediate consequences. Children denied access to medical care or education are stripped of their fundamental rights. They're held back, not by chains, but by circumstances and the choices of those meant to protect them.

A 2012 systematic review and meta-analysis of 124 studies found significant connections were observed between physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect and various negative health outcomes:⁹⁰

- **Depressive disorders:** Physical abuse (54% higher risk), emotional abuse (206% higher risk), neglect (111% higher risk).
- **Drug use:** Physical abuse (92% higher risk), emotional abuse (41% higher risk), neglect (36% higher risk).
- **Suicide attempts:** Physical abuse (240% higher risk), emotional abuse (237% higher risk), neglect (95% higher risk).
- **Sexually transmitted infections and risky sexual behavior:** Physical abuse (78% higher risk), emotional abuse (75% higher risk), neglect (57% higher risk).

But perhaps the most sinister form of neglect is the deprivation of basic care: food, shelter, and safety. Such a child grows up in an environment of perpetual scarcity, always waiting for the other shoe to drop.

What's central to the discourse and the understanding of neglect is that it's often the sins of omission, not just commission, that wreak the most havoc. By neglecting children's needs, we're not just depriving them of resources; we're denying them a sense of belonging, of safety, security, and of self-worth.

⁸⁸ (Halperin, 2021)

⁸⁹ (Meredith A. Gruhn, 2020)

⁹⁰ (Rosana E Norman, 2012)

We Cannot Survive Without Touch

Communication plays an integral role in our world, permeating every aspect of society. Our existence thrives in a web of rapidly exchanged information and incessant social connections. To emphasize this, consider the chilling account of an experiment conducted by Frederick II.⁹¹

The Experiment on Language Isolation

Frederick II, remembered as the "Holy Roman Emperor," reigned during the medieval period (1194-1250). His unintended revelation concerning the Language Isolation Experiment is profound in the annals of communication research.

In the 13th century, Frederick became curious about humanity's inherent language. To probe this, he orchestrated an experiment involving several infants. The objective was to raise these infants without any form of human interaction: no talking, touching, or emotional engagement. By ensuring such an isolated environment, Frederick aimed to uncover the primordial language he believed was bestowed upon humans by God.

These infants received basic care – they were nourished and cleaned. But their caregivers were strictly instructed to maintain emotional and verbal detachment. This isolation was a result of Frederick's quest to unearth the language of Adam and Eve.

However, the outcome of this three-year experiment was tragic. All the infants perished. Though Frederick embarked on this investigation with high hopes of revealing an innate language, the outcome underscored a profound realization.

Humans are not just biological entities; we are inherently social. The absence of social connections and interactions is detrimental to our survival. This harrowing experiment highlighted the paramount importance of communication. Without it, even the basic will to live can wane, as evidenced by the heartbreaking fate of the infants.

An Italian historian from 1248, Salimbene di Adam, noted with a sense of empirical curiosity, "They couldn't survive without affection." The lack of physical touch was lethal for these infants.⁹² Modern medicine calls this phenomenon, "failure to thrive."

Human babies sometimes die if they are not touched. In the 19th century, many institutionalized infants in the United States died of marasmus ("wasting away") due to the lack of touch and affection.

One study found that children who were raised in orphanages had much higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol – another found that infants deprived of touch have abnormal levels of hormones that regulate social behavior.

Another study showed that the amount a baby is held and touched "can leave lasting, measurable effects — not just on behavior or growth, but all the way down to the molecular level of the DNA. Those

⁹¹ (mounalasquale, 2019)

⁹² (FREDERICK'S EXPERIMENT, n.d.)

changes, the scientists speculate, could have negative effects on the way the child grows and develops.”⁹³

Infants who experience more physical contact with caregivers show increased mental development in the first six months of life compared to those who receive limited physical interaction. This improved cognitive development has been measured as lasting even after *eight years*.⁹⁴

The Gravest Evil: Confronting Child Sexual Abuse and Its Impact

The Unspoken Truth

Few topics are as appalling – and yet as important – as child sexual abuse. It is a scourge on humanity, hidden away in dark corners, whispered about but rarely confronted with the clarity and determination it so desperately needs. For those dedicated to the principles of peaceful parenting, addressing this is not just an option – it's an absolute responsibility.

Understanding the Prevalence

How common is the sexual abuse of children?

Let's look at US data.

- *There are more than 42 million survivors of sexual abuse in America.*
- *1 in 3 girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.*
- *1 in 5 boys are sexually abused before the age of 18.*
- *1 in 5 children are solicited sexually while on the Internet before the age of 18.*
- *30% of sexual abuse is never reported.*
- *Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults (including assaults on adults) occur to children age 17 and under.*
- *90% of child sexual abuse victims know the perpetrator in some way.*
- *Approximately 20% of the victims of sexual abuse are under age eight.*
- *95% of sexual abuse is preventable through education.*
- *38% of the sexual abusers of boys are female.*
- *There is worse lasting emotional damage when a child's sexual abuse started before the age of six, and lasted for several years. Among child and teen victims of sexual abuse there is a 42% increased chance of suicidal thoughts during adolescence.*
- *“More than 90% of individuals with a developmental delay or disability will be sexually assaulted at least once in their lifetime.”*
- *“There are nearly half a million registered sex offenders in the U.S. – 80,000 to 100,000 of them are missing.”*
- *“A typical pedophile will commit 117 sexual crimes in a lifetime.”⁹⁵*

⁹³ <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/national/article186889938.html>

⁹⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2865952/>

⁹⁵ <https://laurenskids.org/awareness/about-faqs/facts-and-stats/>

Sixty percent of Black women report having been sexually assaulted by a Black man before they turned 18.⁹⁶

Prevalence of Victims

One of the most horrifying aspects of this kind of abuse is how many victims the typical sexual abuser has molested.

From the book 'Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, And Other Sex Offenders' by Anna C Salter:

"Results stunned the professional community. Two hundred and thirty-two child molesters admitted attempting more than fifty-five thousand incidents of molestation. They claimed to have been successful in 38,000 incidents and reported they had more than 17,000 total victims. All this from only 232 men. Men who molested out-of-home female children averaged twenty victims. Although there were fewer of them, men who molested out-of-home male children were even more active than molesters of female children, averaging 150 Victims each."

"Despite the astounding figures, most of these offenses had never been detected. In fact, Abel computed the chances of being caught for a sexual offense at 3 percent. Crime pays, it seems, and sexual crime pays particularly well."

"Dr. Abel also analyzed the data for all kinds of sex offenses, including exhibitionism, voyeurism, and adult rape as well as child molestation. This larger sample of 561 offenders admitted to more than 291,000 sexual offenses of all kinds and more than 195,000 victims."

"But how do we know these men aren't lying? Bragging about things that never happened? Unfortunately, studies of victims confirm what offenders say. In a classic study of adult women in the general population, Dr. Diana Russel found—and later research by Dr. Gail Wyatt and others confirmed—that rates of child sexual abuse are extraordinarily high. Twenty-eight percent of Russell's sample of women had been molested as children under the age of fourteen, 38 percent if the fourteen- through seventeen-year-olds are included. These were physical contact offenses only—exhibitionism was not counted—and they excluded nonviolent sexual contact between peers. Nonetheless, only 5 percent of the child sexual abuse revealed to these researchers had ever been reported to the authorities."⁹⁷

Sexual Abuse: The Australian Data

To be effective in our fight against child sexual abuse, we must first recognize its prevalence. A 2023 Australian Maltreatment survey found that that child sexual abuse affected 28.5% of Australians. It was observed that girls faced twice the incidence rate of boys (37.3% compared to 18.8% for boys). Contrary to popular belief, this is not a rare event; it is alarmingly common. Surveys and research consistently highlight that a significant percentage of individuals experience some form of sexual abuse during their childhood.⁹⁸ The perpetrators, shockingly, are often those close to the child – family members, family friends, or those in positions of trust.

⁹⁶ <https://www.bet.com/article/cbtl2/study-60-percent-of-black-females-are-sexually-abused>

⁹⁷ (Salter, 2004)

⁹⁸ (Ben Mathews, 2023)

From Bravehearts, an Australian child protection organization dedicated to the prevention and treatment of child sexual abuse:⁹⁹

- ACMS (The Australian Child Maltreatment Study) revealed 23.7% experienced contact child sexual abuse, 18.1% experienced non-contact, and 8.7% endured forced sex.
- Survey: 12-15% of Australian women reported childhood sexual violence.
- Australian survey: 11% women, 5% men sexually abused before age 15.
- Australian birth cohort: 19.3% males, 30.6% females self-reported abuse at 21.
- Nordic countries review: Boys 3-23%, girls 11-36% child sexual abuse.
- Japanese study: Females 10.4-60.7% contact, 1.3-8.3% penetrative abuse.
- UK research: 7.2% 11-17 y/o, 18.6% 18-24 y/o females sexually victimized.
- Australian studies: 4-8% males, 7-12% females penetrative abuse; 12-16% males, 23-36% females non-penetrative abuse.
- Australian women: 45% experienced unwanted sexual incidents by age 16.
- Studies: Most men below 10%, women 10-20% child sexual abuse prevalence.
- International research: 5-10% girls, up to 5% boys experience penetrative abuse; more exposed to any type of abuse.
- Indigenous Australian children have higher child protection involvement and child sexual abuse rates.

From 'Darkness to Light' an organization dedicated to helping adults prevent, recognize, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse through awareness, education, and stigma reduction:^{100 101}

- As many as 25% of child sexual abuse incidents identified by professionals not working specifically in child protection services are not reported, despite a mandated reporting law that requires it.
- As adults, child sexual abuse victims were almost twice as likely to be arrested for a violent offense as the general population (20.4% versus 10.7%).
- 24 year-old women who were sexually abused as children were four times more likely than their non-abused peers to be diagnosed with an eating disorder.
- 45% of pregnant teens report a history of childhood sexual abuse.

The Grave Ramifications

Childhood sexual abuse is not just a traumatic event in a child's life. It's a seed that, when planted, can sprout into a multitude of psychological, emotional, and physical issues as the child grows. Here's the bitter pill of reality: children are not equipped to process, understand, or cope with such traumatic experiences. When they're exposed to such abuse, it disrupts their natural developmental process.

⁹⁹ (Prevalence of child sexual abuse, 2023)

¹⁰⁰ (PREVALENCE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE, 2023)

¹⁰¹ (CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE STATISTICS, 2015)

Emotional and Psychological Impact

Victims of child sexual abuse often grapple with feelings of guilt, shame, and confusion. They may develop depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. They can become withdrawn, fearful, and develop a distorted sense of self-worth.

From 'The National Center for Victims of Crime':¹⁰²

- In the U.S., 16% of 14-17-year-olds are sexually victimized within a given year.
- Lifetime: 28% of U.S. 14-17-year-olds experience sexual victimization.
- CSA vulnerability: ages 7 to 13.
- 3 out of 4 adolescents are sexually assaulted by familiar individuals (NIJ, 2003, p. 5).
- 63% of abused women report post-14 rape; consistent findings in 2000, 2002, 2005.
- Prolonged abuse yields low self-esteem, distrust, suicidal tendencies.
- Higher abuse risk: non-intact families, parental discord, divorce, domestic violence.
- 5-15% of children with evidence of penetration show genital injuries.
- Child sexual abuse includes noncontact forms (exposure, voyeurism, child porn).
- Abused males: 5x teen pregnancy likelihood, 3x multiple partners, 2x unprotected sex risk.

Longer-Term Impacts of Childhood Sexual Abuse

The immediate physical harm is evident, but the long-term impacts, such as the heightened risk for substance abuse, self-harming behaviors, and even suicidal tendencies, can't be ignored.

Increased drug and alcohol risk:¹⁰³

- ACMS reveals 2x higher cannabis dependence risk for child sexual abuse survivors.
- Systematic review of 47 articles establishes clear links between child sexual abuse and later substance use problems.
- Child sexual abuse associated with heavy drinking, hazardous drinking, marijuana use, illicit drugs, even when controlling for emotional factors.
- A New Zealand birth cohort study finds sexual abuse before 16 is linked to adverse outcomes at 30, including substance dependence, mental health issues, low self-esteem.
- Victims of childhood sexual abuse are more prone to accidental fatal overdoses – a significantly higher risk compared to the general population.
- A longitudinal study indicates a strong connection between childhood sexual abuse and various criminal behaviors, with revictimization increasing the likelihood of offending.
- A multi-country study identifies female childhood sexual abuse as the most influential predictor of criminal behavior in young adults; the link is less pronounced in males, possibly due to the severity of the abuse.

Relationship Difficulties: Trust, a foundational element in any relationship, becomes an elusive concept for many abuse survivors. Intimacy can be challenging, and interpersonal relationships can often be riddled with fear and insecurities.

¹⁰² (Child Sexual Abuse Statistics, 2023)

¹⁰³ (Prevalence of child sexual abuse, 2023)

Child Abuse and Early Onset Menstruation

After analyzing information on nearly 69,000 women, researchers from Boston University School of Medicine found those sexually abused during their childhoods were 49% more likely to have their first period before age 11 than women who were not abused. Women who suffered severe physical abuse had a 50 percent increased risk for starting their menstrual cycles late, or after age 15.¹⁰⁴

Girls raised without a father tend to menstruate earlier.¹⁰⁵

They also tend to be more promiscuous.¹⁰⁶

Father Absence and Earlier Menstruation

Do absent fathers really trigger earlier menstruation in women?

Here are the studies:

- Study involves 92,000 pregnant women and their children from the Danish National Birth Cohort.
- Investigated data from 16,000 children born between 2000-2003.
- Aim: Examine the relationship between father's absence during pregnancy and childhood on children's puberty onset.
 - Families with father as the primary caregiver were not included.
- Children were monitored from age 11 throughout their puberty to track developments like:
 - Menstruation
 - Breast and pubic hair development
- Key findings for girls:
 - Absence of the father during pregnancy and childhood linked with earlier pubertal development.
 - Girls entered puberty 3 months earlier when the mother didn't live with the father before birth.
 - Puberty started 2 months earlier if father left during early childhood (0-5 years).
 - Father's absence in late childhood led to puberty starting 1 month earlier.
 - Adjustments were made for factors like social status, mother's age at first menstruation, and other maternal lifestyle influences.
- Boys' findings:

¹⁰⁴ (Child Abuse Might Alter Onset of Menstruation in Girls, 2012)

¹⁰⁵ <https://news.berkeley.edu/2010/09/17/puberty/>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-truth-about-exercise-addiction/201711/how-having-absentee-father-can-affect-womans>

- Only a vague association found with father's absence in late childhood.
- Further research is needed due to limited existing studies on boys and father absence during puberty onset.
- Boys' pubertal development has traditionally been less researched, as they lack a clear pubertal marker like menstruation.
- Statement from co-author Cecilia Ramlau-Hansen, Professor, Department of Public Health, Aarhus University:
 - Limited studies focus on boys' pubertal development since there's no distinct marker like menstruation.

From: 'Absence of the father associated with earlier puberty among girls' – 2021¹⁰⁷

For more details on these and other effects, please review my presentations from 2010:

<https://freedomainplaylists.com/bib/>

Child Abuse and Criminality

We know that higher Adverse Childhood Experiences tend to increase criminality. How does this look from the inside of a prison cell?

Is there a relationship between being the victim of child abuse – especially sexual abuse – and ending up in prison?

A 2012 study on the ACEs of incarcerated individuals found:¹⁰⁸

Respondents' Trauma Experience

- Male trauma experience differs by trauma type and age of exposure.
- More physical trauma than sexual trauma was reported across age groups.
- Trauma exposure rates were highest before age 18.
- White and other racial groups experienced more trauma before age 18 compared to black inmates.
- Hispanic inmates:
 - Physical trauma rates were similar to black inmates.
 - Sexual trauma exposure rates were similar to white and other racial groups.

Table 1 Summary: Trauma Experienced by Incarcerated Men

¹⁰⁷ (CECILIA RAMLAU-HANSEN, 2021)

¹⁰⁸ (Nancy Wolff, 2012)

- Male (all):
 - Physical trauma (<18): 44.7%
 - Physical trauma (18+): 31.5%
 - Sexual trauma (<18): 10.9%
 - Sexual trauma (18+): 4.5%
- White:
 - Physical trauma (<18): 52.4%
 - Physical trauma (18+): 36.4%
 - Sexual trauma (<18): 14.5%
 - Sexual trauma (18+): 3.9%
- Black:
 - Physical trauma (<18): 43.6%
 - Physical trauma (18+): 31.0%
 - Sexual trauma (<18): 8.5%
 - Sexual trauma (18+): 3.8%
- Hispanic:
 - Physical trauma (<18): 40.0%
 - Physical trauma (18+): 28.1%
 - Sexual trauma (<18): 12.1%
 - Sexual trauma (18+): 5.4%
- Other:
 - Physical trauma (<18): 51.9%
 - Physical trauma (18+): 35.7%
 - Sexual trauma (<18): 15.9%
 - Sexual trauma (18+): 8.1%

We will talk in more detail later about the effects of child abuse on specific forms of criminality.

[Brain Alterations: How Child Abuse Reshapes Neural Pathways](#)

We often think of the brain as a static organ, solidified in its form and function after a certain age. However, as the science of neuroplasticity shows, our brains are dynamic and moldable throughout our lives. The environments we're exposed to, especially during our tender, formative years, can drastically

shape our neural structures and functions. Tragically, child abuse - of all forms - wields the power to deform these critical networks in young minds.

"For the infant and young child, attachment relationships are the major environmental factors that shape the development of the brain during its period of maximal growth... Attachment establishes an interpersonal relationship that helps the immature brain use the mature functions of the parent's brain to organize its own processes." – Dan Siegel, 'The Developing Mind'

The pursuit of intelligence, that evergreen aspiration of parents, remains intertwined with the choices we make in child-rearing. Murray Straus's groundbreaking research drives this point home,¹⁰⁹ underscoring a sobering truth: children who experience spanking in the US are left to grapple with the cognitive repercussions, reflecting lower IQs four years on. Indeed, a child aged between 2 to 4 who avoids the hand of corporal punishment may reap an intellectual advantage of 5 IQ points over their spanked counterparts. This gap narrows to 2.8 points for children aged 5 to 9, but the message remains clear. As Straus asserts, it's crucial, now more than ever, for professionals in the realm of psychology to champion the eradication of spanking from our parenting arsenal. Moreover, this isn't just about individual households, but should stimulate a larger movement, prompting the United States to prioritize this issue as a public health concern and to seriously contemplate federal no-spanking legislation. The future intelligence and wellbeing of our children, our most treasured assets, hangs in the balance.

Maternal adverse childhood experiences and infant subcortical brain volume – 2022¹¹⁰

- **Research Background:**

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have negative impacts on health and disease susceptibility.
- ACEs may have intergenerational effects from mother to child, but the exact mechanisms remain unclear.
- The study looked at the relationship between maternal ACEs, neonatal brain development (particularly the amygdala and hippocampus), and infant negative emotionality at six months of age.

- **Methods:**

- Involved 85 mother-infant pairs (44 female infants) in a longitudinal study.
- Maternal ACEs were evaluated using the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q).
- Neonatal hippocampal and amygdala volume was measured using a structural MRI.
- Infant negative emotionality was determined at 6 months with the Infant Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ).

- **Results:**

¹⁰⁹ (Murray A Straus, 2008)

¹¹⁰ (MADELON M. E. RIEM, 2015)

- Maternal ACEs had a significant relation with bilateral amygdala volume.
 - Higher maternal ACEs correlated with smaller:
 - Left amygdala volume ($\beta = -0.220$, $p = .009$, $R^2 = 0.494$).
 - For every standard unit increase in maternal ACEs, the left amygdala volume decreases by 22% of its standard deviation.
 - Right amygdala volume ($\beta = -0.167$, $p = .044$, $R^2 = 0.501$).
 - For every standard unit increase in maternal ACEs, the right amygdala volume decreases by 16.7% of its standard deviation.
- No significant link was found between maternal ACEs and bilateral hippocampal volume.
- Both high maternal ACEs and smaller left amygdala volume were associated with increased infant negative emotionality at six months:
 - Maternal ACEs effect ($\beta = .232$, $p = .040$, $R^2 = 0.094$).
 - For every standard deviation increase in maternal ACEs, there was a 23.2% standard deviation increase in infant negative emotionality at six months.
 - Left amygdala volume effect ($\beta = -0.337$, $p = .022$, $R^2 = 0.16$).
 - For every standard deviation decrease in the left amygdala volume, there was a 33.7% standard deviation increase in infant negative emotionality at six months.
- However, there was no statistically significant mediation of this effect (Indirect effect = 0.0187, 95% CI [-0.0016-0.0557]).

In simpler terms, both high maternal childhood adversities and smaller left amygdala volume are linked to more negative emotions in infants. However, the left amygdala's volume doesn't act as a “middle-man” explaining the effect of maternal adversities on the infant's emotions.

The amygdala, often termed the 'emotion center' of the brain, is particularly sensitive to traumatic experiences in childhood. Children who've experienced abuse tend to have an overactive and enlarged amygdala, making them hyper-responsive to threats, real or perceived. This heightened state of alertness and sensitivity is a defense mechanism, an adaptation to their abusive environment where they had to be constantly on guard. But, while it might be a survival tool in a harmful environment, it becomes a curse in a normal one, rendering them more susceptible to anxiety disorders and irrational fears. We delve into this in a later chapter.

Damage to the brain inhibits moral reasoning and development.

“The long-term consequences of early prefrontal cortex lesions occurring before 16 months were investigated in two adults. As is the case when such damage occurs in adulthood, the two early-onset patients had severely impaired social behavior despite normal basic cognitive abilities, and showed

insensitivity to future consequences of decisions, defective autonomic responses to punishment contingencies and failure to respond to behavioral interventions. Unlike adult-onset patients, however, the two patients had defective social and moral reasoning, suggesting that the acquisition of complex social conventions and moral rules had been impaired. Thus early-onset prefrontal damage resulted in a syndrome resembling psychopathy.”

From: ‘Impairment of Social and Moral Behavior Related to Early Damage in Human Prefrontal Cortex’ 2004 – Steven W. Anderson, Antoine Bechara, Hanna Damasio, Daniel Tranel, Antonio R. Damasio. ¹¹¹

Within the context of adverse childhood experiences, a 2019 study delved into the intricate interplay between brain regions central to emotion regulation—the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC) and the amygdala.¹¹² This neural network holds significant implications for emotional processing in individuals across the lifespan. The investigation focused on adolescents, where they conducted functional magnetic resonance imaging during an emotion regulation task involving negative and neutral image viewing. Notably, they uncovered that a more negative functional connectivity between the vmPFC and amygdala emerged during the observation of negative images as opposed to neutral ones. Interestingly, adolescents with histories of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse demonstrated even more negative functional connectivity between these regions, correlating with the severity of the abuse experienced.

This distinctive neural pattern was further linked to higher levels of concurrent and future externalizing psychopathology. This increased negative connectivity in the vmPFC-amygdala network during passive exposure to negative stimuli could signify a disengagement of regulatory processes from the vmPFC when confronted with intense amygdala reactivity. This phenomenon might stem from heightened threat assessments in children exposed to early hostile environments. Although potentially adaptive in the short term, this pattern could predispose adolescents to heightened psychopathology risk in later stages of life.

From the study:

- Affect Ratings:
 - Negative images were rated as more emotionally intense than neutral images.
 - Adolescents exposed to child abuse reported an average affect 26% higher than controls across conditions.
- BOLD Response:
 - The BOLD response is utilized to map brain activity by detecting these changes in blood oxygenation.
 - In the look negative versus look neutral contrast, several regions in the salience network (bilateral amygdala, thalamus, anterior insula, putamen, and vmPFC) showed greater

¹¹¹ (S W Anderson 1, 1999)

¹¹² (Matthew Peverill, 2019)

activity, with a specific focus on the bilateral putamen, thalamus, amygdala, and anterior insula.

- Maltreated adolescents exhibited greater activation than controls in several of these areas during the negative versus neutral contrast.
- Task-Related Functional Connectivity During Emotional Processing:
 - Task-Related Functional Connectivity During Emotional Processing refers to a specific aspect of the study's findings that involve analyzing how different brain regions communicate and coordinate their activity when individuals are processing emotional stimuli.
 - Task-related functional connectivity to the left amygdala was more strongly negative during trials involving negative stimuli compared to neutral stimuli in the right vmPFC, including mOFC and sgACC.
 - There were no significant clusters of task-related functional connectivity to the right amygdala.
 - Abuse exposure was associated with more negative task-related functional connectivity of the left amygdala with both vmPFC clusters (mOFC and sgACC) compared to control participants.
- Task-Related Functional Connectivity and Psychopathology:
 - Exposure to abuse and abuse severity were associated with increased internalizing and externalizing psychopathology both concurrently and 2 years after the scan.
 - More negative task-related functional connectivity of the left amygdala with both mOFC and sgACC was associated with higher levels of concurrent externalizing psychopathology.
 - Functional connectivity between the left amygdala and mOFC was associated with concurrent internalizing symptoms.
 - Functional connectivity between the left amygdala and sgACC predicted externalizing psychopathology 2 years later, after controlling for baseline externalizing symptoms.

But the repercussions don't stop there. The prefrontal cortex, the region responsible for decision-making, impulse control, and reasoning, also bears the brunt of abuse. In abused children, this region tends to be underdeveloped, making them less capable of regulating their emotions or responding rationally to challenging situations.

Abuse and the Prefrontal Cortex

Research from 2016 showed that children exposed to abuse had a reduction in the thickness of their prefrontal cortex, along with much, much more.¹¹³

¹¹³ (Andrea L. Gold, 2016)

Cortical Thickness and Child Abuse Associations:

- Abuse exposure was associated with reduced cortical thickness in various regions, including:
 - Ventromedial PFC: 48% reduction
 - Bilateral orbitofrontal cortex (OFC): 36% reduction
 - Right inferior frontal gyrus (IFG): 51% reduction
 - Left temporal pole: 35% reduction
 - Bilateral parahippocampal gyrus (PHG): 33% reduction (left), 44% reduction (right)
 - Bilateral inferior temporal gyrus: 38% reduction (left), 43% reduction (right)
 - Right middle temporal gyrus: 41% reduction
 - Right superior temporal gyrus: 32% reduction
- Abuse severity was inversely related to cortical thickness in these regions except the left lateral OFC.

Cortical Thickness and Psychopathology

In one study:

- Cortical thickness in regions differing between abused and non-abused adolescents was examined for associations with internalizing and externalizing psychopathology.
- Cortical thickness was not associated with internalizing symptoms in these regions.
- Cortical thickness in the left PHG was inversely related to externalizing symptoms with a significance of 36% reduction. Similarly, right PHG thickness had a 35% reduction.
- Follow-up analyses suggested that abuse was mediating the relationship between PHG thickness and externalizing psychopathology.

This neural alteration can lead to impulsive behaviors, difficulty in concentrating, and challenges in forming stable relationships.

Abuse and the Hippocampus

Another significant area of concern is the hippocampus, vital for memory formation and spatial orientation. Abused children often show reduced hippocampal volume, which translates into difficulties with memory retention and learning capabilities.

'Beating the brain about abuse: Empirical and meta-analytic studies of the association between maltreatment and hippocampal volume' 2015: ¹¹⁴

The study's scope involves investigating the connection between childhood maltreatment and decreased hippocampal volume. In Study 1, maltreatment's impact was explored through the experiences reported during the Adult Attachment Interview in female twin pairs. Findings revealed a link between reduced hippocampal volume and childhood maltreatment, with more pronounced volume reduction in individuals experiencing maltreatment at older ages compared to early childhood. In Study 2, a meta-analysis of 49 studies involving 2,720 participants was conducted. This meta-analysis reaffirmed the connection between childhood maltreatment and diminished hippocampal volume. It also explored factors like maltreatment timing, severity, and exposure time. The results indicated that maltreatment's effects on hippocampal volume are more significant during middle childhood than in early childhood or adolescence.

In Study 1, the results showed:

1. **Left Hippocampal Volume:** Maltreatment scores were associated with a reduction of 2.01% in left hippocampal volume.
2. **Right Hippocampal Volume:** PDS scores were linked to a reduction of 2.51% in right hippocampal volume.
3. **Age at Maltreatment:** Each year of older age at the time of maltreatment was connected to a reduction of 0.58% in left hippocampal volume and a reduction of 0.73% in right hippocampal volume.

In Study 2, the results of a meta-analysis involving 49 studies (2,720 participants) revealed:

1. **Hippocampal Volume Association:** Childhood maltreatment was confirmed to be linked to a reduction in hippocampal volume.
2. **Timing of Maltreatment:** The impact of maltreatment was found to be more pronounced in middle childhood compared to early childhood or adolescence.
3. **Moderating Factors:** The study explored factors like severity of maltreatment, timing of maltreatment, and time after exposure. However, specific percentage changes were not provided in this context.

Child abuse isn't just an emotional or psychological scar; it's a physiological one. These neural alterations underscore the profound, long-lasting repercussions of abuse. When we talk about child protection, it's not just safeguarding their immediate well-being, but also their future mental health, cognitive abilities, and overall potential. The stakes couldn't be higher.

¹¹⁴ (MADELON M. E. RIEM, 2015)

The Effects of Child Abuse on Genes

Peace and violence are woven into the very substrate of life – our most basic building blocks. It's a profound and almost surreal reality that our very genes – the building blocks of who we are – can be influenced by our life experiences. The science of epigenetics, which studies changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself, presents us with a new layer of understanding when it comes to child abuse. When we talk about child abuse, we are not merely addressing a transient moment of trauma; we are discussing a calamity that imprints itself on the very DNA of the victim, leaving traces that can last a lifetime and even possibly across generations.

A 2023 study including 13,988 children, found that exposure to adversity was associated with differences in DNA methylation at 41 specific loci. Among these, 20 were associated with adversities occurring between age 3 and 5 years.¹¹⁵

Child abuse does not just harm memories; it scars genes. Epigenetic changes, influenced by traumatic experiences, can alter the way genes are expressed without changing the underlying DNA sequence.

From a 2023 systemic review of 54 studies, representing a sample size of 17,184 participants:¹¹⁶

- These studies used different approaches to study DNAm changes related to childhood maltreatment.
- Different genes were studied, including NR3C1, FKBP5, SLC6A4, OXTR, and others. For NR3C1, there were 18 studies, of which 11 found hypermethylation, 3 found no association, and 4 showed varied results.
- Childhood maltreatment subtypes, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, were explored in the analysis. These subtypes often had varying effects on DNAm patterns within different genes.
- The age of exposure to childhood maltreatment was found to have an impact on DNAm patterns. Some studies suggested sensitive periods during which exposure to maltreatment was more strongly associated with DNAm changes.
 - One study suggested that there might be a sensitive period between the ages of 5 to 8 years, during which experiencing childhood maltreatment was more strongly associated with DNAm changes. In this age range, exposure to maltreatment was more strongly linked to hypermethylation at a specific gene (OXT) compared to exposures outside of this window.
 - Another study (Dunn et al., 2019) found that exposure to childhood maltreatment during infancy and toddlerhood (birth to three years) explained a greater variability in DNA methylation patterns compared to exposure between 3 and 7 years. This suggests that early childhood might be a sensitive period when the effects of maltreatment on DNA methylation are more pronounced.

¹¹⁵ (Alexandre A Lussier, 2023)

¹¹⁶ (Mackenzie Rubens, 2023)

These modifications can result in an over-reactive stress response system, making these individuals more susceptible to anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders. The lasting nature of these epigenetic alterations means that they can be passed down to the next generation, essentially creating a domino effect where the repercussions of abuse manifest in the genes and health of descendants. Studies have found that children of parents who were abused carry specific epigenetic marks that make them more vulnerable to stress and its associated illnesses.

A 2013 study on maltreatment and distinct genomic and epigenetic profiles in posttraumatic stress disorder studied and compared three different groups; Controls (individuals without child abuse or PTSD), Individuals with a history of PTSD + Childhood Abuse and a group with PTSD but without Childhood Abuse. The study found:

- **Distinct Gene Expression Changes:**
 - While both groups of individuals with PTSD had significant gene expression differences compared to the trauma-absent control group, the specific gene expression changes were largely distinct between the two PTSD groups. Only a small overlap (2%) of differentially expressed genes was observed between the two PTSD groups.
- **DNA Methylation Differences:**
 - The study also examined DNA methylation profiles in the same individuals and found that DNA methylation changes were more pronounced in individuals with PTSD and a history of childhood maltreatment. Up to 12 times as many differentially expressed genes were associated with differential DNA methylation in the childhood maltreatment group compared to the group without childhood abuse.
- **Biological Pathways:**
 - The study identified that certain biological pathways were enriched in each PTSD group. For instance, central nervous system development and tolerance induction pathways were enriched in the PTSD group with childhood maltreatment, while apoptosis and growth rate networks were enriched in the PTSD group without childhood abuse.
- **Complex Relationships:**
 - The relationship between gene expression and DNA methylation was complex. While DNA methylation changes were relatively small, they were correlated with gene expression changes. This suggests that even modest DNA methylation differences could have functional implications.
- **Implications for Biomarker Research:**
 - The findings suggest that exposure to childhood maltreatment can lead to distinct gene expression and DNA methylation changes in individuals with PTSD. This indicates that the type of trauma experienced, particularly childhood maltreatment, can influence the biological mechanisms underlying PTSD and related disorders. This insight has

implications for biomarker research, as well as understanding the pathophysiology of stress-related disorders.

Now, imagine the magnitude of this revelation. Our actions, particularly those rooted in violence and neglect, are not just leaving emotional and psychological scars, but they are rewriting the very code that dictates our biological being. This underpins the critical importance of peaceful parenting. By understanding and respecting the epigenetic implications of our actions, we can work towards a future where the genetic echoes of trauma are minimized, and where we prioritize nurturing, understanding, and love over punitive measures.

There is evidence that abuse can have intergenerational genetic effects. In a groundbreaking 2022 study exploring the lasting impacts of neglect, researchers discovered remarkable epigenetic similarities between affected mothers and their children.¹¹⁷ Specifically, both groups exhibited shared changes in their DNA methylation patterns across nine distinct regions. These regions predominantly lie in pivotal regulatory areas of the DNA that play a role in gene expression. Astoundingly, three of these genes, namely PM20D1, SLC17A3, and AURKC, already known to be linked with life adversities, showed significant methylation discrepancies in 13% of mothers and 21.4% of children examined. Furthermore, mothers subjected to neglect recounted more profound adverse life events, underscoring a notable correlation between these events and methylation levels in certain genes. This compelling evidence underscores the profound and intergenerational epigenetic repercussions of neglect.

The weight of responsibility that comes with understanding the epigenetic impact of child abuse cannot be overstated. But therein lies our power. We have the knowledge and the capacity to break the cycle. With every act of peaceful parenting, we are not just healing a child's mind and soul, but we're also setting the stage for a healthier, more resilient genetic legacy.

Obesity and Health: The Physical Consequences of Emotional Wounds

Childhood trauma has a perilous way of manifesting itself not just mentally, but physically. The correlation between early abuse and long-term health complications is profound, and among one of the most alarming of these outcomes is obesity. At first glance, the connection between emotional suffering and excessive weight gain might seem tenuous. But when you delve deeper into the psyche of an abused child, the link becomes painfully apparent.

From a 2020 systematic review of 24 studies on the link between ACEs and obesity:¹¹⁸

- Key findings:
 - ACEs correlate with childhood obesity.
 - Girls might have higher sensitivity to ACE-induced obesity than boys.
 - Sexual abuse has a stronger link to childhood obesity than other ACEs.
 - Higher obesity risk was associated with the occurrence of multiple ACEs.
 - ACEs' impact on childhood obesity might emerge in 2–5 years.

¹¹⁷ (Inmaculada León, 2022)

¹¹⁸ (Krista Schroeder, 2020)

- Overall implication: Greater focus needed on ACEs for preventing and treating childhood obesity.

A comprehensive study conducted in 2014 elucidated that individuals exposed to childhood abuse were 45% more likely to struggle with obesity in adulthood than their non-abused counterparts. This isn't just a mere statistical anomaly; it's a damning testament as to how profound and far-reaching the impacts of early trauma can be.

From 'Effects of childhood abuse on adult obesity: a systematic review and meta-analysis':¹¹⁹

- Meta-analysis conducted on childhood abuse and adult obesity.
- 23 cohort studies examined:
- Total participants: 112,708
- Key findings:
 - Adults with reported childhood abuse had a 34% increased likelihood of obesity.
 - Associations with adult obesity by abuse type:
 - Physical: 28% increased risk
 - Emotional: 36% increased risk
 - Sexual: 31% increased risk
 - General abuse: 45% increased risk
 - Severe abuse resulted in a 50% increased risk vs. light/moderate abuse at 13% increased risk.
 - No significant effects found related to:
 - Study design (prospective vs. retrospective)
 - Age
 - Gender
- Conclusion: Childhood abuse is strongly linked with adult obesity, suggesting a major role in its development. Potential mechanisms include emotional disturbances, stress, and metabolic changes.

From a 2019 study investigating the relationship between ACEs and weight gain in adolescents.¹²⁰

- Study Design

¹¹⁹ (E Hemmingsson, 2014)

¹²⁰ (Laurel Davis, 2018)

- Source: Minnesota Student Survey.
- Sample size: 105,759 students.
- Grades: Eighth, ninth, and eleventh.
- Measurement: Self-reported height and weight to determine body mass index.
- Controlled for: Sociodemographic characteristics.
- Results
 - Positive correlation between ACEs and weight status.
 - Adolescents with ACEs had a higher likelihood of:
 - Overweight: 1.2 times more likely.
 - Obesity: 1.4 times more likely.
 - Severe obesity: 1.5 times more likely.
 - No link found between ACEs and being underweight.
- Conclusions
 - Strong association between ACEs and obesity in adolescents.
 - Direction of the relationship needs further exploration.

Why would abuse lead to obesity, you might ask? The reasons are multi-faceted. For many victims, especially those who have suffered sexual abuse, food becomes more than just nourishment; it morphs into a shield. Some survivors unconsciously put on weight as a defense mechanism, seeking to make themselves less “desirable” – or less noticeable – in an attempt to avoid unwanted sexual attention.

For others, food becomes a solace, a coping mechanism to numb the overwhelming pain and anxiety that arise from their traumatic experiences. Overeating, especially foods rich in sugar and fat, triggers the release of endorphins – the body's natural painkillers. For a child who has endured abuse, this temporary relief, this fleeting moment of joy amidst a sea of pain, often becomes a lifeline, leading him into a vicious cycle of emotional eating.¹²¹

Additionally, cortisol, a stress hormone, plays a pivotal role in this equation. Chronic exposure to stress, as is often the case with abused children, leads to a consistent elevation in cortisol levels.¹²² Elevated cortisol has been linked to increased appetite and fat storage, especially in the abdominal region. It's a biological response that, when combined with emotional eating, sets the stage for obesity.¹²³

¹²¹ (Paul G Koenders, 2011)

¹²² (Michael D. De Bellis, 2014)

¹²³ (Mary F. Dallman, 2005)

A 2021 twin study showed that ACEs were associated with higher instances of depressive symptoms during early adulthood, partially due to reduced cortisol levels in early adolescence. These connections remained significant regardless of potential genetic influences.¹²⁴

Obesity, as we know, isn't just about aesthetics. It paves the way for a slew of health complications, from cardiovascular diseases and diabetes to joint issues and respiratory problems. When we discuss the ramifications of child abuse, we're not just talking about psychological scars; we're talking about reduced life expectancy, compromised quality of life, and a myriad of physical health ailments.

To treat and prevent obesity in abuse victims, we must address the root causes: the emotional wounds. By understanding this intricate web of cause and effect, we can better support survivors in their journey towards healing.

Of course, obesity is not the only increased health risk due to ACEs, with a greater number of ACEs there is also an increased risk of heart disease, cancer, auto-immune disease, diabetes, hypertension, disability, and liver disease.

Child Abuse and Cancer

People who have experienced significant child abuse have a 49% greater chance of contracting cancer.¹²⁵

From a study in investigating the association between childhood physical abuse and cancer while controlling for 3 clusters of risk factors: childhood stressors, adult health behaviors, and adult socioeconomic status:¹²⁶

Increased odds of cancer for men:

Maltreatment Type	Odds Ratio (Age)	Odds Ratio (Age+Factors)
CPA	1.0	1.0
Severe and frequent CPA	1.3	1.4
Frequent CPA	1.1	1.0
CPA (excluding frequent)	0.9	0.9
CSA	1.0	1.0
Severe and frequent CSA	0.8	0.8
Severe CSA	1.3	1.2

¹²⁴ (Eleonora Iob, 2021)

¹²⁵ (Esme Fuller-Thomson, Making a link between childhood physical abuse and cancer: results from a regional representative survey, 2009)

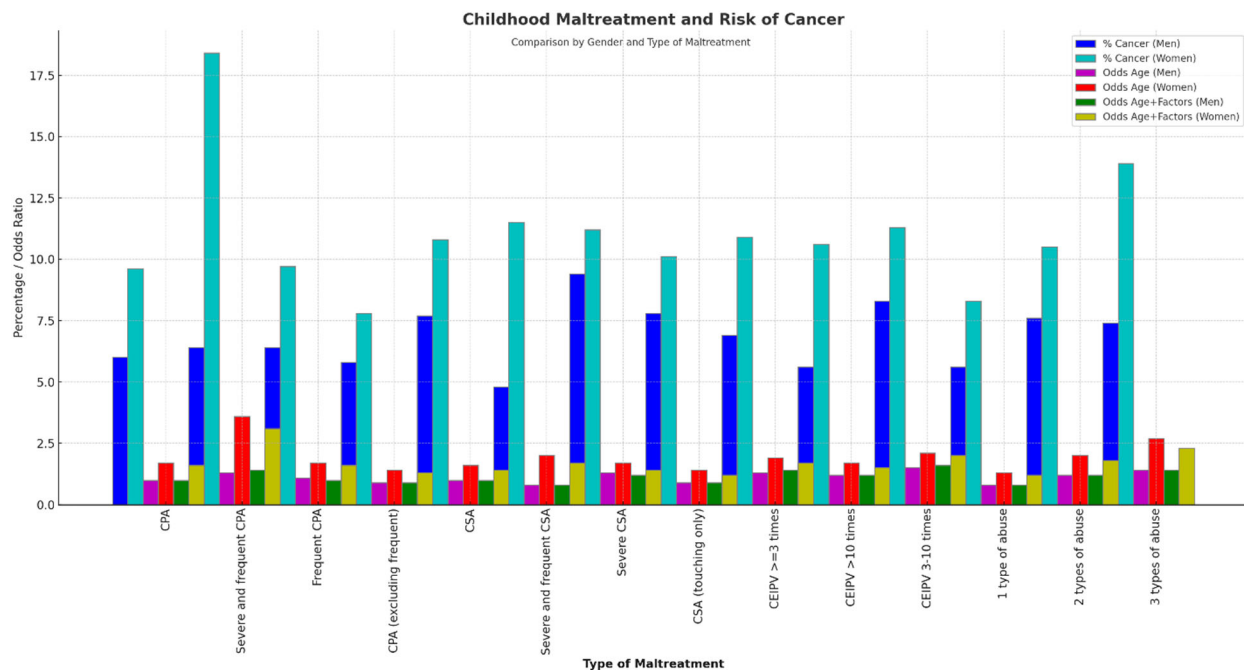
¹²⁶ (Esme Fuller-Thomson, Making a link between childhood physical abuse and cancer: results from a regional representative survey, 2009)

Maltreatment Type	Odds Ratio (Age)	Odds Ratio (Age+Factors)
CSA (touching only)	0.9	0.9
CEIPV >=3 times	1.3	1.4
CEIPV >10 times	1.2	1.2
CEIPV 3-10 times	1.5	1.6
1 type of abuse	0.8	0.8
2 types of abuse	1.2	1.2
3 types of abuse	1.4	1.4

Increased odds of cancer for women:

Maltreatment Type	Odds Ratio (Age)	Odds Ratio (Age+Factors)
CPA	1.7	1.6
Severe and frequent CPA	3.6	3.1
Frequent CPA	1.7	1.6
CPA (excluding frequent)	1.4	1.3
CSA	1.6	1.4
Severe and frequent CSA	2.0	1.7
Severe CSA	1.7	1.4
CSA (touching only)	1.4	1.2
CEIPV >=3 times	1.9	1.7
CEIPV >10 times	1.7	1.5
CEIPV 3-10 times	2.1	2.0
1 type of abuse	1.3	1.2

Maltreatment Type	Odds Ratio (Age)	Odds Ratio (Age+Factors)
2 types of abuse	2.0	1.8
3 types of abuse	2.7	2.3



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In the graph above:

- **CPA (Childhood Physical Abuse):** This refers to the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in, or has the potential to result in, physical injury. This can include hitting, beating, shaking, pushing, or other similar forms of physical aggression.
- **CSA (Childhood Sexual Abuse):** This encompasses any form of sexual activity between an adult and a child where the child is used for the sexual gratification of the adult or of a third party. It can involve a range of actions, from exposure to explicit actions.
- **CEIPV (Childhood Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence):** This refers to situations where a child witnesses or is aware of violence between their caregivers, typically in the home setting. It doesn't necessarily mean the child was the direct victim of physical abuse, but they were exposed to the violence, which can have its own traumatic effects.

¹²⁷ (Esme Fuller-Thomson, Making a link between childhood physical abuse and cancer: results from a regional representative survey, 2009)

- Blue and Cyan bars represent the percentage of men and women, respectively, reporting cancer for each maltreatment type. These give the actual prevalence of reported cancer for each maltreatment group.
- Magenta and Red bars represent the odds ratios controlling for age for men and women, respectively. These odds ratios compare the cancer risk of the maltreated groups to the baseline (people without maltreatment).
- Green and Yellow bars represent the odds ratios controlling for age and other socio-demographic factors for men and women, respectively. These odds ratios adjust for potential confounders and again compare the risk to the baseline.
- Simply put, we would compare the blue and cyan bars to the others to get an estimate of relative, increased cancer risk.

Twin Differences in Harsh Parenting Predict Youth's Antisocial Behavior

Antisocial behavior has strong environmental triggers.

From one study:

"Results revealed that, regardless of zygosity, the twin experiencing harsher parenting exhibited more antisocial behavior. These effects were robust across multiple operationalizations and informant reports of both harsh parenting and antisocial behavior with only a few exceptions. Results indicate that the association between harsh parenting and children's antisocial behavior is, to a large degree, environmental in origin."¹²⁸

The enduring effect of maltreatment on antisocial behavior

These negative effects do not generally fade over time:

"A total of 14 studies including 18 independent samples and 20,946 individuals were considered. Our results revealed that maltreated youth are nearly two times as likely to engage in antisocial behaviors in adulthood compared with their non-maltreated peers (OR = 1.96; CI[1.42, 2.71]). The relation between maltreatment and antisocial behavior was stronger when less covariates or the bivariate associations between them were considered, and maltreatment assessed in both childhood and adolescent years was more strongly related to the antisocial outcome."¹²⁹

Childhood Trauma and Biological Disruption¹³⁰

What effects does childhood trauma have on our biological systems?

Sadly, the effects are deep and widespread.

First, some definitions.

¹²⁸ From: 'Twin Differences in Harsh Parenting Predict Youth's Antisocial Behavior' 2021 – S. Alexandra Burt, D. Angus Clark, Elizabeth T. Gershoff, Kelly L. Klump, Luke W. Hyde.

¹²⁹ From: 'The enduring effect of maltreatment on antisocial behavior: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies' 2018 – Teresa Braga, Olga Cunha, Ângela Maia.

¹³⁰ (Michael D. De Bellis, 2014)

- The definition of childhood trauma based on the DSM-IV and DSM-V: exposure to life-threatening events, severe injury, or sexual violence. This includes:
 - Direct trauma exposure.
 - Witnessing trauma.
 - Learning about trauma inflicted on close relatives or friends.
- Common childhood traumas:
 - Motor vehicle accidents.
 - Bullying.
 - Terrorism.
 - Exposure to war.
 - Child maltreatment.
 - Domestic and community violence.
- Resulting issues:
 - Distress.
 - PTSD.
 - PTSS.

Key Findings

- Childhood trauma is a significant medical and societal issue.
- Chronic interpersonal violence in children is prevalent globally.
- Developmental traumatology studies the impact of persistent stress on child development, using a neurobiological lens.
- Knowledge gap: More about trauma's biological effects in adults than children; need for understanding pediatric mechanisms.
- Childhood trauma effects:
 - Increased rates of PTSD, PTSS, depression, anxiety, antisocial behaviors.
 - Higher risk for alcohol and substance use disorders.
- PTSD diagnosis involves symptom clusters related to brain structure, function, and stress symptoms.
- PTSD is viewed as a spectrum of reactions to stress.
- PTSD diagnostic criteria from the DSM-IV involves trauma experience and symptom clusters over a month.

Biological Insights

- Traumatic events activate biological stress response systems.
 - Causes changes like increased heart rate, blood pressure, and metabolic rate.
 - Affects amygdala, PFC, hypothalamus, hippocampus.
 - Activates various stress systems in the body.
- Focus areas for literature review:
 - LHPA axis.
 - LC-norepinephrine/SNS system.
 - Serotonin system.
 - Oxytocin system.
 - Immune system.
 - Genetic and epigenetic factors.
- Trauma impacts brain development.
- Gender plays a role in trauma experiences.
- Research gaps: We need more longitudinal research on children exposed to trauma.

Childhood abuse truly does rewire the brain and the body – sometimes permanently – and can even reach its bloody claws deep into the next generation.

We must stop it all.

Now.

The Hitting Comes First

Do children get spanked because they misbehave, or does the parental aggression come first?

In other words, are children spanked because they are “bad” – or do they become “bad” *because* they are spanked?

We have the answer.

It’s not good.

Study on Spanking by Parents

According to a 2014 study, parents spank their children far more often than they admit – and for utterly trivial “misbehaviors.”

Parents tend to strike their children out of anger – and almost immediately after the children displeased them – in other words, *not* as last resort, and *not* after verbal admonishment.

Parents of course claim that they use spanking to make their children “better.” However, this study proves that spanking doesn’t work. Children hit or slapped by their parents misbehaved again – typically within 10 minutes.

Study Methodology

- Real-time audio recordings used for data collection.
- Participants: 35 mothers, average age of 34.
 - 82% married.
 - 61% white.
 - 61% had a college degree.
 - 60% worked outside the home.
- Mothers recorded evenings for six days.
 - About 62% kept the recording on for the entire evening.
- Spanking incidents ranged from 1-10 per family.
- Spanking was inflicted by 12 mothers, 5 fathers, and 1 grandmother.
 - Received by 18 children aged 7 months to 6 years.
 - Median age of children: 4 years.

Spanking “Best” Practices

Did the parents follow these best practices for spanking?

1. Use infrequently.
2. Only for serious misbehaviors.
3. Not in anger.
4. As a last resort.
5. On the buttocks.
6. No more than two hits in a row.

Spanking Statistics and Implications

- 12 mothers in the study spanked once every 6.3 hours of interaction.
- Most spankings were for minor offenses.
- Previous 1999 study: Parents claimed to spank 2-year-olds 18 times/year.
- Current study: Median rate is 18 times/week or 936 times/year.

From: 'Parents often spank out of anger and for trivial reasons, real-time study finds' – 2014¹³¹

Physical Punishment as a Predictor of Early Cognitive Development¹³²

One essential finding from the scientific literature is that the physical punishment of children harms the physical and mental development of children's brains.

For example:

"This study estimates the effect of physical punishment on the cognitive development of 1,167 low-income Colombian children (Mage = 17.8 months old) using 3 analytic strategies: lagged-dependent variables, a difference-in-differences-like approach (DD), and a novel strategy combining matching with a DD-like approach. Across approaches, physical punishment at ages 9–26 months predicted reductions in children's cognitive development of 0.08–0.21 SD at ages 27–46 months."

"These results, plus null results of falsification tests, strengthen the argument that physical punishment leads to slower cognitive growth and illustrate the utility of alternative statistical methods to reduce problems of selection bias in developmental research." From; 'Physical punishment as a predictor of early cognitive development: Evidence from econometric approaches' 2020 – Jorge Cuartas, Elizabeth Gershoff Et Al.

Issues with Spanking

The overwhelming evidence indicates that spanking is harmful to child development.

- Spanking:
 - Doesn't reduce aggressive behavior.
 - Increases child aggression over time.
 - Is linked to:
 - Poor parent-child relationships.
 - Mental health problems.
 - Delinquent behavior.
 - Greater risk of physical abuse.
- Many medical and children's advocacy groups discourage spanking.
- 37 countries have banned all forms of corporal punishment for children.

Spanking and Dating Violence

A 2018 study found that spanking increased the risk of physical dating violence.¹³³ Young adults (n = 758; 61% female; mean age of 20 years), originally recruited for a longitudinal study as 9th- and 10th-grade Texas high school students, were asked about their childhood experiences with corporal punishment and

¹³¹ (Perry, 2014)

¹³² (Jorge Cuartas D. C.-K., 2020)

¹³³ (Jeff R. Temple, 2018)

physical abuse, as well as current experiences with dating violence. Those who were spanked showed a 30% increase in the odds of perpetrating physical dating violence.

From Professor Elizabeth Gershoff's 2016 meta-analysis on spanking and childhood outcomes: ¹³⁴

"Around the world, most children (80%) are spanked or otherwise physically punished by their parents (UNICEF, 2014)... Several hundred studies have been conducted on the associations between parents' use of spanking or physical punishment and children's behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and physical outcomes, making spanking one of the most studied aspects of parenting."

Meta-analyses focused specifically on spanking were conducted on a total of 111 unique effect sizes representing 160,927 children. An "effect size" is a quantitative measure of the magnitude of an observed effect or relationship. It allows researchers to understand how meaningful or impactful an effect is. The outcomes across the studies were notably consistent.

Of the 111 individual effect sizes:

- 102 pointed towards a detrimental outcome with 78 being statistically significant.
- Only 9 effect sizes indicated a beneficial outcome, with just one of these statistically significant.
- Hence, 99% of the 79 statistically significant effect sizes indicated that spanking was associated with a detrimental child outcome.

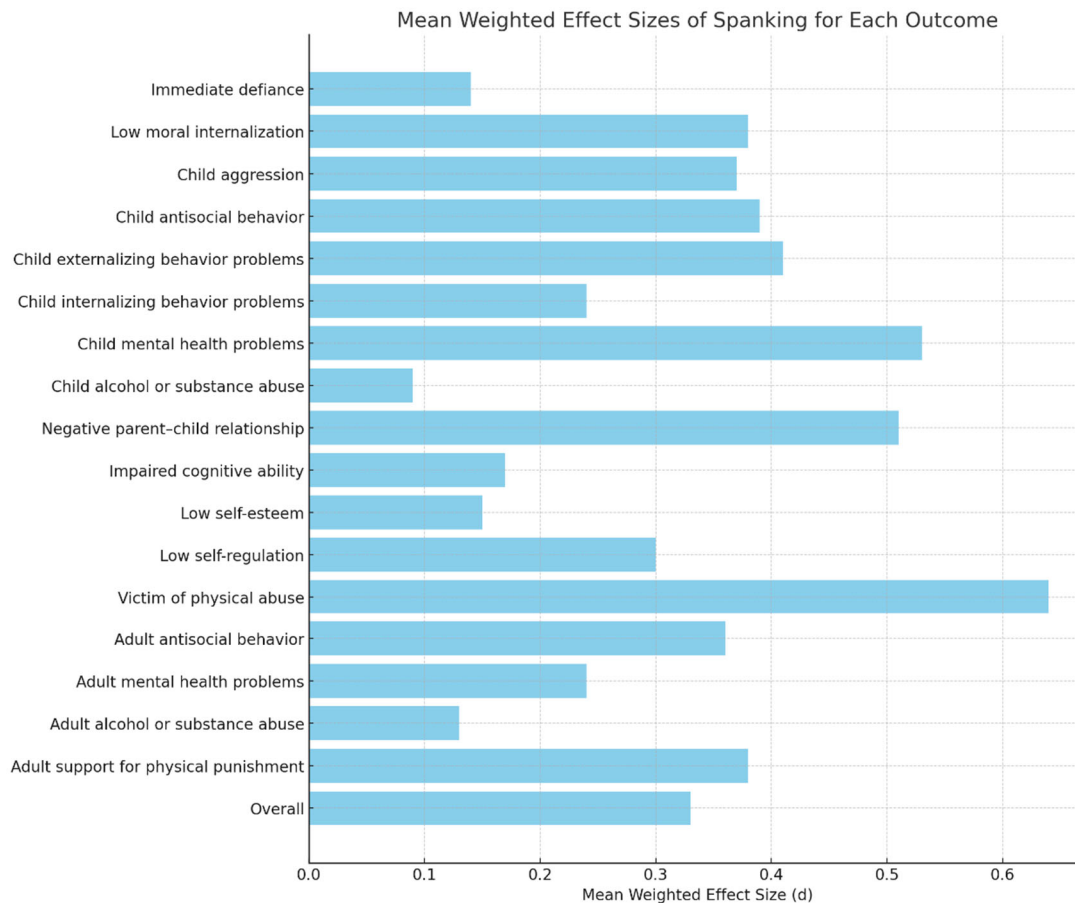
In this study, spanking refers to the act of intentionally hitting a child on the buttocks or extremities with an open hand, whereas physical abuse involves intentionally causing bodily harm to a child through actions that go beyond spanking. Physical abuse can include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, using objects to inflict pain, or any other form of physical aggression that leads to harm or injury.

The authors found the outcomes linked with spanking included:

- In childhood:
 - Low moral internalization
 - Aggression
 - Antisocial behavior
 - Externalizing behavior problems
 - Internalizing behavior problems
 - Mental health problems
 - Negative parent-child relationships
 - Impaired cognitive ability
 - Low self-esteem
 - Risk of physical abuse from parents
 - Immediate defiance
 - Child alcohol and substance abuse
- In adulthood
 - Antisocial behavior
 - Mental health problems

¹³⁴ (Elizabeth T. Gershoff A. G.-K., 2016)

- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Positive attitudes about spanking (i.e., adult support for physical punishment)



This graph shows the mean weighted effect sizes (d) for each outcome of spanking. Higher values (d) indicate stronger associations between spanking and the respective outcome.¹³⁵

In our exploration of the complex landscape of corporal punishment, racial differences in attitudes cannot be ignored. Whites – inclusive of Hispanics – are 11% less likely than African-Americans to favor spanking. Intriguingly, when examining other racial groups, such as Asians and Native Americans, we find them, on average, 5 percentage points less likely than whites to endorse the act.¹³⁶

The immediate physical injuries that result from being hit are only the tip of the iceberg. Beyond the immediate pain, the physical aftermath might heal, but the psychological scars can last a lifetime. Victims often internalize the abuse, leading to profound feelings of worthlessness, shame, and guilt. Such emotional turmoil during formative years can severely impede a child's overall development, from forming healthy relationships to excelling academically.

¹³⁵ (Elizabeth T. Gershoff A. G.-K., 2016)

¹³⁶ (Enten, 2014)

We want to raise independent children who think for themselves. Spanking, however, has been shown to set children down the path of deferring to the more powerful, as well as the mindless masses. A 2022 study found that participants who were frequently or harshly spanked had a higher dependence on positive feedback from partners and authority figures with a 95% confidence in the results.¹³⁷

Professor Gershoff's 2017 study 'Strengthening Causal Estimates for Links Between Spanking and Children's Externalizing Behavior Problems' found that children spanked by age 5 had, on average, a 6% increase in externalizing behavior problems by age 6, and were about 7% more likely to have behavior problems by age 8, compared to those who were never spanked.

Children who were spanked specifically in the previous week at age 5 were about 9% more likely to have behavior problems by age 8, which is statistically significant. However, there wasn't a significant increase in behavior problems observed for age 6.¹³⁸

Children's externalizing behavior problems include behaviors such as aggression and conduct disorder. Teachers rated children's externalizing behavior problems based on the frequency with which children argued, fought, got angry, acted impulsively, and disturbed ongoing activities.

Physical Abuse and Stress Responses

One of the less discussed, but profoundly impactful, consequences of physical abuse is the alteration in a child's stress response. Repeated exposure to abuse can disrupt a child's stress-regulation mechanism, leading them to either become hypersensitive to potential threats or, conversely, numb and detached.

Recent neuroscientific research has delved deep into this phenomenon. A brain imaging study from 2021 shows that children with a history of physical abuse have altered brain activity in regions linked to emotion regulation and impulse control. This makes them more susceptible to emotional outbursts, aggressive behaviors, and challenges in social interactions.¹³⁹

The study 'Corporal Punishment and Elevated Neural Response to Threat in Children' investigated if children who were spanked show different neural responses to stimuli suggesting an environmental threat (e.g., fearful faces) compared to children who were never spanked and were not exposed to other forms of abuse.

Key findings from this study:

- Spanking was associated with increased activation in response to fearful faces (as opposed to neutral faces) in several areas of the prefrontal cortex (PFC). The PFC, especially its ventromedial and dorsolateral parts, plays a crucial role in executive functions such as impulse control, decision making, and emotion regulation.
 - Notably, there was elevated response in the dACC, which is a part of the salience network, in spanked children compared to those who were never spanked. This is similar to what's observed in children exposed to abuse and domestic violence.
 - Located within the PFC, the dACC is believed to be involved in the detection of errors or conflicts and plays a role in the regulation of emotional responses. It's

¹³⁷ (Sanyang, 2022)

¹³⁸ (Elizabeth T. Gershoff K. M., 2017)

¹³⁹ (Jorge Cuartas D. G., 2021)

part of the salience network, which identifies and focuses attention on the most relevant stimuli in the environment.

- Activation in the left middle frontal gyrus (MFG) was also observed. Spanked children showed primarily lower activation to neutral faces. This region is engaged during emotional regulation attempts.
 - This is a part of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (dlPFC). It's involved in working memory, decision making, and emotion regulation. Its activation during tasks of cognitive reappraisal (a key emotion regulation strategy) highlights its role in controlling and modulating emotional responses.
- Spanked children might be less likely to use effortful regulation strategies in response to ambiguous neutral faces than their non-spanked peers.
- There were heightened activations in parts of the dorsomedial PFC and bilateral frontal pole in spanked children. These areas are related to social-cognitive processes. This suggests that spanked children might be more attentive to understanding the mental states of others showing fear, possibly as a way to recognize potential threats.
- The regions showing increased activation in spanked children when viewing fearful faces are the same areas where reductions in gray matter volume have been seen in young adults exposed to corporal punishment.
- Spanking may affect children's neural response to emotional cues similarly to how more severe forms of violence do. The study found no differences between children who were spanked and those who were more severely abused, but this finding is to be taken with caution due to the small sample size of abused children.
- Spanking was not linked to increased reactivity in the amygdala or anterior insula, which contrasts some previous studies on violence exposure or childhood maltreatment.

Spanking and IQ

A 2009 study showed that children who are spanked tend to have lower IQs:¹⁴⁰

- The research encompassed 806 children (ages 2-4) and 704 children (ages 5-9)
- Children spanked in the US had lower IQs after 4 years compared to non-spanked children
- Both groups were retested after 4 years:
 - Children ages 2-4 not spanked had 5-point higher IQs after 4 years
 - Children ages 5-9 not spanked had 2.8-point higher IQs after 4 years

School Corporal Punishment and Its Associations with Achievement and Adjustment

From the study: 'RUNNING HEAD: School Corporal Punishment'¹⁴¹

"Corporal punishment in public schools is legal in nineteen states in the U.S. Over 100,000 students are disciplined with corporal punishment in public schools each year."

"This study reports results from an anonymous online survey of emerging adults (ages 18 to 23) in the 19 states where school corporal punishment is legal. Of the more than 800 participants, 16% revealed that

¹⁴⁰ (Murray A. Straus, 2009)

they experienced school corporal punishment. Propensity score matching was used to equate those who had experienced school corporal punishment and those who had not on a range of covariates. In regression models, having ever experienced school corporal punishment was linked with lower high school GPA, higher current depressive symptoms, and greater likelihood of spanking their own children in the future.”¹⁴²

Risky Business: Promiscuity and Drug Abuse

In our journey towards understanding the cataclysmic effects of child abuse, we must confront some of the most self-destructive activities that victims often indulge in. High-risk behaviors such as promiscuity, and drug abuse (including Alcohol) are not merely choices made in a vacuum. They are often cries for help, desperate attempts to silence the overwhelming cacophony of pain and anguish that these individuals carry with them every day.

Too often, those bearing the invisible scars of abuse embark on a treacherous path of self-medication, seeking solace in the ephemeral comforts of promiscuity and drug use. These aren't mere 'bad choices'; they're desperate cries for respite from deep-seated emotional wounds. It's as if the psychological tapestry of these individuals, woven with the threads of neglect and abuse, propels them towards a cyclical pattern of self-destruction. It's a cruel irony—those who've been harmed become adept at harming themselves further. Whether it's the intoxicating allure of drugs offering momentary escape from their haunting past or the fleeting affirmation from casual encounters masking a deeply learned self-loathing, the core remains the same: a tragically misguided quest for relief. Recognizing this not as rebellion or waywardness but as the heartbreaking consequence of unhealed trauma is the first step towards understanding, empathy, and ultimately, intervention.

Promiscuity

The intimate realm is where most humans find comfort, connection, and affirmation. For victims of childhood abuse, however, this very realm becomes a convoluted maze. A profound need to feel wanted, to experience even a transient connection, can push many into a whirlwind of risky sexual behaviors.

Our genes only want to make more genes - if they know we are at risk, the impulse to do so begins all the earlier and with less consideration for an uncertain future: “Our argument is grounded in Life History Theory (LHT), an evolutionary-developmental theory that predicts that individuals exposed to early adversity show a coordinated set of behavioral, physiological, and psychological adaptations that foster survival and reproductive success in harsh and unpredictable environments (collectively known as a fast life history strategy), including earlier sexual maturation, earlier sexual debut, and greater numbers of sexual partners.”¹⁴³

From ‘Early childhood adversity and Women’s sexual behavior: The role of sensitivity to sexual reward.’

From a 2012 study that explored the effects of growing up in harsh vs. unpredictable environments on sexual life history strategies:¹⁴⁴

- Age Groups Studied:
 - Early childhood (age 0–5).

¹⁴² (Gershoff, 2019)

¹⁴³ (Jenna Alley, 2021)

¹⁴⁴ (Jeffry A. Simpson, 2012)

- Later childhood (age 6–16).
- Findings:
 - Primary predictor of sexual and risky behavior: unpredictable environment from age 0-5.
 - Results for those exposed from age 0-5:
 - Faster life history strategy at age 23.
 - Higher percentage having more sexual partners.
 - Increased aggressive and delinquent behaviors.
 - Greater likelihood of association with criminal activities.
 - Effects of harsh environments or unpredictability during age 6-16:
 - Mostly not significant in predicting outcomes at age 23.
- Overall Conclusion:
 - Unpredictable environments during early childhood (rather than just harshness) have unique and significant impacts on risky behavior in adulthood.
 - The first 5 years of life appear as a critical period for assessing the impact of environmental unpredictability.

A 2001 study on adverse childhood experiences and sexual risk behaviors in women:

- Adverse childhood experiences correlate with:
 - Increased likelihood of intercourse by age 15: 60% to 160% increase in odds.
 - Increased perception of AIDS risk: 50% to 160% increase in odds.
 - Having 30 or more partners: 60% to 280% increase in odds.
- Adjusting for age and race, women with more types of adverse experiences:
 - 1 experience: 20% increase in seeing themselves at AIDS risk.
 - 4-5 experiences: 80% increase in odds.
 - 6-7 experiences: 390% increase in odds.
- Number of adverse experiences linked with having 30 or more partners:
 - 1 experience: 60% increase in odds.
 - 2 experiences: 90% increase in odds.
 - 6-7 experiences: 720% increase in odds.
- Likelihood of intercourse by age 15 with adverse experiences:
 - 1 experience: 80% increase in odds.
 - 6-7 experiences: 600% increase in odds.

The psychological rationales behind such behavior is multifaceted. For some, it's an attempt to reclaim control over their bodies, a response to the powerlessness they felt during their traumatic experiences. For others, it's a search for validation, a misguided attempt to equate physical intimacy with emotional connection. For girls, it might be a desperate attempt to escape a violent household by bonding with a "savior" boyfriend.

Drug Abuse (Including Alcohol)

"Far more than a quest for pleasure, chronic substance use is the addict's attempt to escape distress. From a medical point of view, addicts are self-medicating conditions like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, or even attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

“Addictions always originate in pain, whether felt openly or hidden in the unconscious. They are emotional anesthetics. Heroin and cocaine, both powerful physical painkillers, also ease psychological discomfort. Infant animals separated from their mothers can be soothed readily by low doses of narcotics; just as if it were actual physical pain they were enduring.” – Dr Gabor Maté, ‘In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts’

In the war against the demons of the past, many turn to alcohol and drugs, not realizing that they're only amplifying the chaos within. These substances offer a fleeting escape, a brief hiatus from the haunting memories and the suffocating weight of trauma.

Data from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions - a study that included 43,093 adults - found that:¹⁴⁵

Adjusted Odds Ratios (AOR) after controlling for demographics and other variables:

- Early onset drinking was about 50% more likely among individuals with 1 or 2+ childhood adverse events.
- Frequent binge drinking was also more likely among those with 1 or 2+ adverse childhood events.
- Individuals with 1 or 2+ adverse childhood events were more likely to have a family history of alcohol problems.
- No individual childhood adverse events were significantly linked with alcohol dependence after full adjustments.
- Adjustments considered included demographics and other potential confounders like early drinking onset, family history, and binge drinking.

Experiencing ACEs leads to a *five times higher* likelihood of starting to smoke at an early age and nearly triples the chances of heavy smoking. All types of ACEs also raise the probability of both binge drinking and excessive alcohol consumption, and as the ACE scores rise, the risk of substance abuse disorders also amplifies.¹⁴⁶

Why this alarming correlation? The brain's reward pathways, altered by the trauma, become susceptible. Drugs and alcohol artificially stimulate these pathways, providing a temporary feeling of euphoria, a short-lived relief from the relentless pain. But like treacherous quicksand, the more one leans on these substances, the deeper they get pulled into the abyss of addiction.

Alcohol and drugs are not just coping mechanisms; they're chains that bind the victim to their traumatic past, preventing genuine healing and growth. The immediate relief they offer is nothing but a mirage, leading the individual further away from true solace and understanding.

¹⁴⁵ (Daniel J. Pilowsky, 2009)

¹⁴⁶ (Lucas C. Godoy, Claudia Frankfurter, & Matthew Cooper, 2020)

Data on Marijuana use among school students:¹⁴⁷

- In 2019, 6.6% of 8th graders, 18.4% of 10th graders, and 22.5% of 12th graders reported 30-day marijuana use.
- Between 2018 and 2019, the occurrence of frequent marijuana use (20+ times in the past 30 days) surged by 85.7% among 8th graders and 41.2% among 10th graders.
- Starting to use marijuana during adolescence elevates the likelihood of developing a substance use disorder, especially when the usage is more frequent.
- An increasing body of research indicates that being exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) plays a role in marijuana use during adolescence.
- A cross-sectional study involving 126,868 students in grades 8 to 11 revealed a graded correlation between the quantity of ACEs encountered by students and marijuana use, even after accounting for demographic and contextual variables.
- A nationwide prospective study demonstrated that when comparing young individuals with no ACEs, the likelihood of experiencing lifetime marijuana use during adolescence rose by about 60% for each additional ACE.

“The research literature is unequivocal: most hard-core substance abusers come from abusive homes; The majority of my skid row patients suffered severe neglect and maltreatment early in life. Almost all the addicted women inhabiting the Downtown Eastside were sexually assaulted in childhood, as were many of the men. The autobiographical accounts and case files of Portland residents tell stories of pain upon pain: rape, beatings, humiliation, rejection, abandonment, relentless character assassination. As children they were obliged to witness the violent relationships, self-harming life patterns, or suicidal addictions of their parents—and often had to take care of them. Or they had to look after younger siblings and defend them from being abused even as they themselves endured the daily violation of their own bodies and souls. One man grew up in a hotel room where his prostitute mother hosted a nightly procession of men as her child slept, or tried to, on his cot on the floor.”

From a study on marijuana use and ACEs among school students:¹⁴⁸

- Hispanic students: 44.9% marijuana use (middle school), 42.9% (high school)
- Non-Hispanic white students: 29.5% marijuana use (middle school), 32.0% (high school)
- Students qualifying for free or reduced lunch: 42% for both samples
- Students with at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): 55.5% (middle school), 64.1% (high school)
- Students with high ACE exposure (4+ ACEs): 6.8% (middle school), 9.9% (high school)
- Past 30-day marijuana use: 7.9% (middle school), 18.5% (high school)
- As ACE exposure increased, scores for family communication and school connectedness decreased.
- Middle school marijuana users were more likely to be: female, Hispanic, in 8th grade, on free/reduced lunch
- High school marijuana users more likely to be: non-Hispanic black, in higher grades, on free/reduced lunch
- Strong association between ACEs and past 30-day marijuana use in both samples.

¹⁴⁷ (Kristen D. Clements-Nolle, 2022)

¹⁴⁸ (Kristen D. Clements-Nolle, 2022)

- Graded relationship observed between ACEs and marijuana use.
- Middle school students with varying ACE exposure had increased prevalence of past 30-day marijuana use, ranging from 2.37 to 7.86 times depending on ACE count.
- Family communication and school connectedness have protective associations with past 30-day marijuana use.
- Each one-unit increase in family communication score led to a 10% lower prevalence of past 30-day marijuana use for both school levels.
- A one-unit increase in school connectedness led to 24%-28% lower prevalence of past 30-day marijuana use for both school levels.
- No evidence that family communication or school connectedness buffered the relationship between ACEs and past 30-day marijuana use.
- Study aimed to understand the relationship between ACE exposure, past 30-day marijuana use, and the potential protective roles of family communication and school connectedness.
- A strong relationship was found between ACE exposure and past 30-day marijuana use, especially among middle school students.
- Family communication provided direct protection against marijuana use.

In our pursuit of a better world, one free from the shackles of childhood trauma, understanding these behaviors is paramount. It's not about judgment; it's about empathy. By acknowledging the pain behind these actions, we can begin the journey of healing, support, and transformation.

The Incline towards Risky Behaviors and Criminality

The traumas of childhood don't merely shape personalities; they also influence choices and decisions made in adulthood. One of the most alarming manifestations of this influence is the inclination towards risky behaviors and criminality among those who've experienced ACEs.

Children exposed to abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction grow up in environments where boundaries are either non-existent or constantly violated. This blurred understanding of right and wrong, combined with suppressed anger and the need for self-expression, can push an individual into a world of high-risk behaviors. These behaviors are not merely acts of rebellion; they're desperate calls for help, recognition, or even a way to reclaim lost control.

Studies have consistently shown a strong correlation between high ACE scores and increased risky behaviors. For instance, individuals with ACEs are more likely to engage in substance abuse and attempt suicide.

ACEs and Suicide:¹⁴⁹

- **General Findings:**
 - ACEs (like emotional, physical, sexual abuse, parental pathology or loss, substance abuse or incarceration) increase the risk of suicidal ideation and attempts throughout life in general and clinical samples.
- **Quantitative Findings:**

¹⁴⁹ (Natalie J. Sachs-Ericssona, 2015)

- Among women, ACEs predicted:
 - 16% variance in suicidal ideation.
 - 50% variance in suicidal attempts.
- Among men, ACEs predicted:
 - 21% variance in suicidal ideation.
 - 33% variance in suicidal attempts.
- Population-attributable risk fractions for one or more ACE were:
 - 67% for lifetime suicide attempts.
 - 64% for adult suicide attempts.
 - 80% for childhood/adolescent suicide attempts.
- Odds ratios (ORs) for new onset suicidal ideation due to childhood neglect, psychological, and physical abuse ranged from 180% to 366% more likely.
- For new onset suicide attempts, ORs ranged from 260% to 443% more likely.
- **Specific Types of ACEs and Their Impact:**
 - Strongest associations to suicidal behaviors were seen with childhood sexual and physical abuse.
 - A history of any childhood abuse, especially sexual abuse, heightens vulnerability to suicidal behavior in adulthood.
 - Meta-analysis findings:
 - Relationship between sexual abuse and suicidality had ORs of 2.43 and 2.65.
 - ACEs resulted in increased odds of a suicide attempt (30% to 470%) and ideation (20% to 240%). Physical and sexual abuse had the highest odds for both.
- **Effect Over the Life Span:**
 - ACEs influence suicidality throughout life.
 - Childhood: 280% more likely.
 - Teen years: 150% more likely.
 - Young adulthood: 100% more likely.
 - Later adulthood: 130% more likely.
 - In older adults:

- Exposure to childhood sexual abuse was associated with serious suicidal behavior.
- Those with a history of physical or sexual abuse were 720% more likely to attempt suicide in their lifetime (Odds ratio of 8.2). Those experiencing both types of abuses were 1,060% more likely to attempt suicide in their lifetime (Odds ratio of 11.6).
- **Additional Considerations:**
 - Childhood abuse can impact core constructs of Interpersonal Theory of Suicide, including feelings of social alienation and pain tolerance.
 - More painful experiences, like violent physical or sexual abuse, have stronger effects on lifetime suicide attempts.

ACEs and Criminality

The realm of criminality, though varied, is also closely tied to adverse childhood experiences. Individuals with a history of childhood trauma are disproportionately represented in juvenile and adult correctional facilities. The connection is undeniable: children who've faced neglect or abuse are more likely to be arrested as juveniles, and this probability increases with the number of ACEs they've encountered.

From 'ACEs and Juvenile Justice' 2019: ¹⁵⁰

- Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Among Juvenile Offenders:
 - Before encountering the criminal justice system, a majority of children have already undergone traumatic experiences.
 - Roughly 90% of young individuals within the juvenile justice system have faced at least one significant source of stress.
 - A study in Florida found that juvenile offenders displayed higher instances of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) compared to the general population.
 - The research involved a survey of 64,329 juvenile offenders:
 - Only a mere 2.8% reported no childhood adversities, a notable contrast to the 34% in the original CDC study.
 - A substantial 97% reported experiencing at least one ACE.
 - About 50% reported encountering four or more ACEs, a stark contrast to the 13% noted in the original CDC study.
- Characteristics of These Minors:
 - All the minors in question are below the age of 18.
 - The offenses they commit range from minor acts like vandalism to more severe crimes such as murder.
 - Juvenile theft stands out as the most prevalent offense.
 - While historically predominantly male, girls now constitute around one-third of all juvenile arrests.

¹⁵⁰ (Jamieson, 2019)

- These minors' ACEs are products of circumstances beyond their control, endured since birth.
- Many of them originate from troubled backgrounds, having witnessed violence, endured abuse, or gone through family separations.
- Although their actions are their own responsibility, it's crucial to consider their behavior within the framework of their traumatic experiences and the ongoing development of their brains.
- The Current State of Affairs:
 - Annually, the United States incarcerates over 130,000 individuals under 18, incurring a cost of \$6 billion.
 - On average, each inmate costs \$88,000.
 - At present, approximately 70,000 juveniles reside in correctional facilities.
 - According to an MIT study:
 - Juveniles subjected to incarceration are 23% more likely to find themselves in adult penitentiaries compared to those receiving alternative sentencing.
 - Around 40% of those in juvenile detention eventually end up in adult prisons by the age of 25.
 - The practice of incarcerating young individuals often contributes to the creation of future adult offenders.
 - Despite its complexities, the juvenile justice system persists, underscoring the necessity for an approach that takes into account the impact of trauma.

Understanding the psychology behind this inclination towards criminality is crucial. Many of these individuals have grown up in chaotic environments, where violence or deceit was the norm. They've adapted behaviors essential for survival in their childhood settings. However, these very behaviors, which might have been protective mechanisms at one point, become maladaptive in the outside world. The coping strategies, once vital for their survival, now lead them further down a spiral of self-destruction and societal conflict.

Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach. On one hand, there's an urgent need for interventions, therapies, and support systems for affected individuals. On the other, society at large must be educated about the long-term implications of ACEs, ensuring prevention, early detection, and appropriate intervention.

To truly break the cycle, it's imperative to remember that behind every statistic, every "criminal," is a story – often a story of a child crying out for help. By understanding their histories, offering support, and creating preventive measures, we can hope to guide these individuals towards a path of healing, integration, and a positive contribution to society.

[Beneath the Surface: Children Navigating the Treacherous Waters of Parental Divorce](#)

In every parenting choice, the child's well-being should always come first.

Parental separation and divorce are ubiquitous topics. They're touted in celebrity gossip columns and sometimes even celebrated in movies as a necessary step towards personal growth.

As reported in 2022, about 50% of children witness their parents' marriage end in divorce.¹⁵¹ They witness their parents break trust with one of the greatest commitments and promises they can make in their life. What's often buried underneath the guise of adult fulfillment is the profound impact such events have on the most innocent bystanders.

Some facts on divorce and separation:

- According to the 2016 U.S. Census data, the majority of the roughly 74 million children aged 18 and below live in households with two parents, regardless of marital status. Additionally, approximately 25 percent of children in the United States reside with a single parent, primarily their mother.¹⁵²
- Nearly 50% of marriages are a remarriage for at least one partner. About 75% of divorced women remarry within ten years. However, the likelihood of remarrying is reduced for those caring for children from a previous marriage, especially for women.¹⁵³
- Research indicates that from a statistical perspective, children with divorced parents:¹⁵⁴
 - Exhibit a 25% higher likelihood of engaging in drug abuse by the age of 14, often attributed to self-medication tendencies and reduced supervision.
 - Their academic performance tends to be less successful, and their college enrollment rates are lower, partly due to the absence of a parent's financial support.
 - They are twice as likely to get divorced.
 - In new parental relationships, these children face up to a 40-fold higher risk of experiencing sexual or physical abuse than those with biological parents.¹⁵⁵

The Disruption of Stability

At its very foundation, peaceful parenting emphasizes creating a stable, secure, and nurturing environment for children. Yet, divorce disrupts this environment, shattering the foundational understanding of security and stability a child has developed. When the two most significant anchors of a child's life decide to part ways, the immediate question that arises in the young mind is, "Where do I stand amidst this chaos?"

Loss of Trust

Children model their understanding of relationships and trust based on their immediate caregivers. A tumultuous divorce can erode their innate trust in relationships. If their primary role models couldn't make it work, how can they?

The 2019 study 'Long-term effects of parental divorce on mental health – A meta-analysis' conducted a comprehensive literature search on several databases covering articles published between 1990 and March 2018. The result was a collection of 54 studies, which cumulatively offered 117 effect sizes and involved 506,299 participants. It found:¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ (Lazic, 2023)

¹⁵² (GLENN, 2019)

¹⁵³ (Stepfamilies in the United States: A Fact Sheet, 2008)

¹⁵⁴ (Markham, n.d.)

¹⁵⁵ (Martin Daly, 1985)

¹⁵⁶ (Felicita Auersperg, 2019)

- A significant connection was identified between parental divorce and various mental health outcomes:
 - Depression: 1.29 times higher risk
 - Anxiety: 1.12 times higher risk
 - Suicide Attempt: 1.35 times higher risk
 - Suicidal Ideation: 1.48 times higher risk
 - Distress: 1.48 times higher risk
- Parental divorce was also linked with increased substance use:
 - Alcohol: 1.43 times higher risk
 - Smoking: 1.64 times higher risk
 - Drug Use: 1.45 times higher risk

Often, children become the rope in the tug-of-war of parental disputes. They're exposed to the emotional bitterness and anger that comes with most divorces. This exposure not only generates feelings of guilt, thinking they might be a contributing factor to the separation, but also instills a deep-rooted sense of resentment and confusion. The conflicting loyalties to each parent can cause an internal conflict that's challenging to navigate.

Divorce: Educational and Social Impacts

It's not uncommon for children of divorced parents to experience academic difficulties. The emotional upheaval can hinder concentration, leading to a decline in academic performance. Furthermore, children might also feel isolated from their peers, fearing judgment or pity, leading to potential social withdrawal. A 2020 study found that adolescents with divorced parents had an average GPA score that was 0.30 points lower than those with non-divorced parents.¹⁵⁷

Divorce and Premature Death

Parents who divorce are not acting in the best interests of their children.

A study of gifted children than ran from 1922 to 1986 found that the children of divorced parents were "...44% more apt to die early, a lifespan shortened by an average of 4.5 years."

"In fact, parental divorce during childhood was the single strongest social predictor of early death, many years into the future."

"U.S. children of divorce and non-marriage are three times more likely to be expelled from school or to have a child as a teenager as are children from intact homes, are five times more apt to live in poverty, six times more likely to commit suicide and twelve times more likely to be incarcerated, reports a Heritage study by Patrick Fagan and Robert Rector."

From: '[Children Are Hurt by Marriage Failure](#)' 2016 – Mike McManus.

"A comprehensive review of research from several disciplines regarding the effects of divorce on children yields a growing consensus that significant numbers of children suffer for many years from psychological and social difficulties associated with continuing and/or new stresses within the post divorce family and

¹⁵⁷ (Sondre Aasen, 2020)

experience heightened anxiety in forming enduring attachments at later developmental stages including young adulthood.”

From: ‘Review on the Effects of Divorce on Children’ 2020 – Douglas, V. I.

Divorce and Low Social Well-Being

“We defined a historic cohort study of 219,226 children and adolescents aged 9–16 years and combined demographic registry data of family structure with questionnaire data on social well-being based on the Danish National Well-being Questionnaire completed in 2015.”

“A total of 5% of the children had a low social well-being at school. Among the 31% who lived in dissolved families, we found more children with a low level of social well-being at school (adjusted OR 1.41, 95% CI 1.36;1.47) than those in intact families; especially among those who at the time of family dissolution were in the preschool age (1.55, 95% CI 1.47;1.64).”

“Children from dissolved families had higher odds for low social well-being at school compared with children from intact families, especially those who experienced family dissolution in the preschool age. The school may be an important setting for identifying and providing help and support in children experiencing family dissolution.”

An odds ratio of 1.41 suggests that children with a low level of social well-being at school were 41% more likely to be from non-intact families compared to those from intact families. For those children who were of preschool age at the time of family dissolution, they were 55% more likely to have a low level of social well-being at school compared to those from intact families.

From: ‘Family dissolution and children’s social well-being at school: a historic cohort study’ 2019 – LL Laursen, KB Madsen, C Obel, L Hohwü.¹⁵⁸

Childhood Abuse, Heart Disease and Cancer

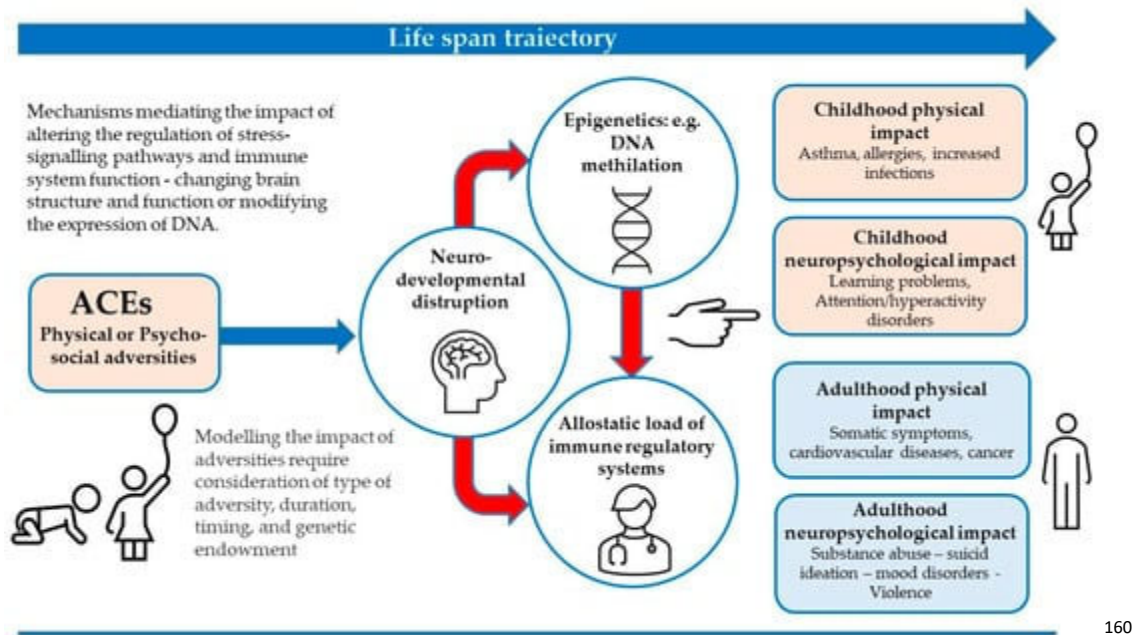
A 2021 meta-analysis of 18 studies which had data from 406,210 people found:¹⁵⁹

- People with 2 or 3 types of ACEs are 1.35 (CI = 1.12 to 1.62) times more likely to get cancer compared to those with no ACEs (‘CI’ is confidence interval, or a 95% certainty that a true value falls within a certain range).
- If a person has 4 or more ACEs, they are 2.17 (CI = 1.76 to 2,68) times more likely to get cancer than someone with no ACEs.
- Now, when looking at specific ACEs:
 - Physical Abuse: Those who experienced this are 1.23 (CI = 1.05 to 1.43) times more likely to get cancer.
 - Sexual Abuse: People with this experience have a 1.26 (CI = 1.02 and 1.56) times higher chance of getting cancer.

¹⁵⁸ (Line Lund Laursen, 2019)

¹⁵⁹ (Zhao Hu, 2021)

- Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence: Those exposed to this are 1.26 (CI = 1.12 and 1.41) times more at risk for cancer.
- Financial Difficulties in the Family: People from families with financial struggles are 1.16 (CI = 1.00 and 1.33) times more likely to get cancer.



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The Journal of the American Medical Associations 2020 review on the association between ACEs and cardiovascular disease later in life gathered the findings of over a decade of research. From the review:

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- Individuals with 4 or more ACEs faced:
 - 2.2 times the risk of ischemic heart disease (95% CI: 1.3-3.7).
 - 2.4 times the risk of stroke (95% CI: 1.3-4.3).
- A study with 18,303 adults across 10 countries linked parental mental disorders, substance use, physical or sexual abuse, and parental loss to cardiovascular disease.

¹⁶⁰ (Olimpia Pino RCID, 2022)

¹⁶¹ (Lucas C. Godoy, Claudia Frankfurter, & Matthew Cooper, 2020)

- The Nurses' Health Study II showed that women with severe physical and sexual abuse had higher chances of cardiovascular disease events. However, after adjusting for factors like obesity, smoking, and depression, the significance disappeared.
- The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study found maltreated or socially isolated individuals had a 60% higher risk of inflammation at age 32. Those from low socioeconomic backgrounds or who were socially isolated had double the risk of metabolic dysfunctions.
- The CARDIA study observed a trend between higher ACEs and cardiovascular disease events in 3,646 young adults from 1985 to 2018.
- A meta-analysis found that individuals with 4 or more ACEs had higher odds of:
 - Sedentarism (25%).
 - Being overweight/obese (39%).
 - Diabetes (52%).
 - Smoking (182%).
 - Cardiovascular disease (107%).

Sleep Disruptions: The Overlooked Consequence of Child Abuse

One of the less frequently discussed ramifications of adverse childhood experiences is the profound effect on sleep quality in later life. Sleep isn't just a rest phase; it's a fundamental aspect of our daily lives, pivotal for mental rejuvenation, cognitive function, and emotional balance. Regrettably, the ghosts of childhood traumas often don't rest, even when their victims desperately seek respite in the arms of sleep.

For those subjected to abuse in their formative years, the sanctuary of slumber can become an arena of distress. Many report consistent disturbances in their sleep patterns. Psychology Today reports that individuals who have faced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) often undergo frequent occurrences of nightmares, sometimes on a weekly basis or even more frequently. Several research studies suggest that a substantial proportion, potentially as high as 80%, of individuals dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) describe enduring nightmares that persist over several months or even years subsequent to a traumatic event.¹⁶²

The question then arises: why does childhood abuse have such lasting and significant impacts on sleep? The answer lies in the realm of neurobiology. Traumatic events in childhood can result in persistent alterations in the body's stress response systems.

Moreover, psychological distress further compounds the issue. Anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression – all common in those who've experienced childhood abuse – are known perpetrators of sleep disturbances. Nightmares or flashbacks stemming from these conditions can jolt individuals awake, infusing their nights with dread.

¹⁶² (Ph.D., 2022)

A 2015 systemic review on ACEs and adult sleep disorders found:

- Key Findings:
 - The majority of retrospective studies (25 out of 28) showed significant associations between ACEs and sleep disorders like sleep apnea, narcolepsy, nightmare distress, sleep paralysis, and psychiatric sleep disorders.
 - Strength of associations often increased with the number and severity of ACEs.
 - Two prospective studies corroborated these findings.
 - Significant relationship found between family conflict at age 7-15 and insomnia at age 18 (40% higher chance).
 - Childhood sexual abuse linked with sleep disturbances in adult women 10 years later ($\beta = 0.24, p < 0.05$).
- Conclusion and Recommendations:
 - Growing evidence suggests an association between ACEs and various sleep disorders in adulthood.
 - Need for trauma-informed care for abuse survivors with sleep disturbances.
 - More longitudinal studies are required to understand this association better, particularly regarding potential gender and racial/ethnic disparities.

It's essential to underscore the vast implications of poor sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation or disturbed sleep can pave the way for a plethora of health issues, including cardiovascular diseases, weakened immune function, and cognitive impairments. Additionally, the philosophical and psychological toll is equally significant. The fog of fatigue can cloud judgment, hinder introspection, and obstruct one's quest for truth and self-understanding.

In essence, the tendrils of childhood abuse extend far and wide, reaching into the very tranquility of one's nights. Addressing sleep disturbances isn't merely about ensuring physical well-being but about restoring a sense of peace, of granting solace to souls that have known too much pain.

To genuinely heal, it's crucial that we recognize the vast scope of childhood trauma's consequences. In doing so, we not only extend compassion but also arm ourselves with the knowledge to forge paths of true recovery.

General Mental Disorders

The data regarding childhood abuse and mental illness is stark and dark.

“Results revealed a significant association between the following childhood exposures and adult mental disorder: bullying (victimhood, perpetration and frequency); emotional abuse; physical neglect; parental loss; and general maltreatment (unspecified and/or multiple trauma exposure). There was some evidence of a dose-response relationship with those exposed to multiple forms of maltreatment having

more than three times the odds of developing a mental disorder (Odds ratio = 3.11, 95% CI = 1.36–7.14).“

“There is strong evidence of an association between childhood trauma and later mental illness. This association is particularly evident for exposure to bullying, emotional abuse, maltreatment and parental loss. The evidence suggests that childhood and adolescence are an important time for risk for later mental illness, and an important period in which to focus intervention strategies.”

From: ‘Childhood trauma and adult mental disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal cohort studies’ 2021 – Michael T. McKay, Mary Cannon, Derek Chambers, Ronán M. Conroy, Helen Coughlan, Philip Dodd, Colm Healy, Laurie O’Donnell, Mary C. Clarke.

Root Causes of Adult Dysfunction

While the world focuses on treating symptoms – whether they be drug addiction, alcohol abuse, or depression – the root cause remains neglected. From the propensity for drug abuse to the risk of heart disease and mental illness, from the struggle with obesity to the battles with depression, the dark shadows of childhood traumas loom large.

In the subsequent sections, we'll continue to unmask the various forms of child abuse, one by one, holding them up to the harsh light of reason and evidence, in a bid to underscore just how vital it is for us, as a society, to address them head-on.

Mother's Weight and its Link to Diabetes

- A mother's obesity can amplify her risk of having both existing and gestational diabetes (GDM).
 - GDM risk based on weight:
 - Slightly overweight: OR 2.14
 - Obese: OR 3.56
 - Extremely obese: OR 8.56
- Gaining weight in the years leading up to pregnancy escalates the threat of GDM, particularly in women who were previously of average weight.
- Aspects influencing GDM rates include being older than 35, belonging to Hispanic or Asian groups, having an education of 12 years or fewer, and having given birth two or more times previously.
- Obese pregnant women commonly exhibit elevated insulin resistance, leading to increased fat accessibility for the fetus.
- Studies on obese mothers with GDM have found heightened activity of genes tied to fat processing in their placentae.
- Mothers with GDM can expect complications such as raised blood sugar, higher chances of cesarean sections, and a likelihood of developing diabetes in the future.

- For babies born to mothers with GDM, there's an elevated risk of mortality around birth, higher weight at birth, a predisposition to obesity during their younger and older years, and potential type 2 diabetes.

From: 'The Impact of Maternal Obesity on Maternal and Fetal Health' 2008¹⁶³

The Life Cut Short

The aftershocks of Adverse Childhood Experiences are both wide-ranging and long-lasting. Perhaps one of the most startling revelations from decades of research is the undeniable link between high ACE scores and a significantly reduced lifespan. The trauma experienced during formative years not only haunts individuals psychologically but also manifests in physical deterioration over time, shortening the length and quality of life.

Individuals who have experienced significant childhood trauma face a reduction of 20 years in their life expectancy and are at a threefold increased risk of developing heart disease and lung cancer.¹⁶⁴

An analysis of various studies reveals a grim correlation between ACEs and life expectancy. Children subjected to consistent traumatic experiences have, on average, a life expectancy that's significantly shorter than those with little to no ACEs. Individuals with 6+ ACEs had an average lifespan reduced by nearly 20 years (60.6 vs. 79.1 years). In the UK, individuals with 4+ ACEs had nearly double the risk of premature death.¹⁶⁵

Why does this happen? The body's response to prolonged stress, such as that experienced through consistent trauma, involves the continuous release of stress hormones like cortisol. Over time, this chronic state of stress begins to wear on the body's vital systems. The immune system becomes compromised, making individuals more susceptible to illnesses. Additionally, a higher likelihood of adopting unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and drug abuse, further exacerbates the health risks.

As we covered earlier, individuals with high ACE scores tend to have a higher risk of developing chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory problems. Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) has been linked to several negative health habits. Victims of child abuse also tend to consume fewer healthy foods, favoring comfort foods instead, and are more prone to leading an inactive lifestyle. The mind-body connection is evident here, as the emotional scars of abuse and neglect translate into tangible physical risks.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ (Meaghan A Leddy, 2008)

¹⁶⁴ (Keebler, 2017)

¹⁶⁵ (Lucas C. Godoy, Claudia Frankfurter, & Matthew Cooper, 2020)

¹⁶⁶ (Lucas C. Godoy, Claudia Frankfurter, & Matthew Cooper, 2020)

In conclusion, the shadow of abuse looms large over an individual's entire life span. From the mental struggles they grapple with to the physical ailments they are predisposed to, the effects of childhood trauma are profound and far-reaching. As society gains a deeper understanding of these consequences, it becomes paramount to invest in early interventions, trauma-informed care, and most crucially, efforts to prevent ACEs in the first place.

Yet, the world often remains willfully oblivious, choosing to treat the symptoms rather than addressing the cause. We attempt to fix broken adults without recognizing that these fractures started as weeping wounds in childhood, growing and expanding with every episode of abuse or neglect.

If there's one message to take away, it's this: to heal the world, we must first heal the child. Through introspection and self-awareness, by becoming better parents and caregivers, by educating ourselves and others on the impacts of child abuse, we can hope to see a world where children grow up in nurturing environments, free from trauma and full of potential.

For further exploration on this critical topic, consider delving into my Bomb in the Brain series. By spreading awareness and knowledge, we take a collective step towards a brighter, safer future for our children. Remember, every child deserves love, understanding, and protection. Together, we can make a difference.

"In the heart of every abused child lies a ticking bomb, but the hands of loving caregivers have the power to defuse it."

Peaceful Parenting vs the Bomb in the Brain

ACEs and child abuse in general is the actual pandemic, overshadowing anything else. While other crises make headlines and command our attention, this insidious plague—rooted in the darkest recesses of our homes and societies—marches on, its devastation echoing in silent screams and haunting the hallways of countless lives. The enduring ramifications of such experiences aren't mere ripples; they're tsunamis that capsize the vessel of potential in our youth, leaving us stranded in tumultuous seas of trauma.

If we're to speak of monstrous evils in our world, then child abuse and the scars left by ACEs must top that list. This isn't just a domestic issue or a concern relegated to specific socioeconomic tiers—it's a universal atrocity that every society which truly rejects evil, must confront with unwavering resolve. The future of humanity rests on how we treat, protect, and nurture our most vulnerable.

However, it's not all bleak. The brain, while susceptible to damage, is also incredibly resilient. Through awareness, therapy, and introspection, the damage can be mitigated. Healing begins with understanding, acknowledging the trauma, and seeking help.

Peaceful parenting is the antithesis of child abuse. It's about understanding that children are not our property but individuals with their own emotions, thoughts, and needs. By being present, emotionally available, and empathetic, parents can nurture their children and create strong, positive neural pathways.

From Shadows to Sunlight: Dialogues that Mend the Soul

It's pivotal that we comprehend this – that our childhood experiences, be they vibrant sunrises of joy or tempestuous storms of distress, etch profound marks upon the canvas of our psyche. These experiences - especially ACEs - can often become spectral chains that bind, influencing our thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and interpersonal dynamics.

It's both fascinating and terrifying how events from years past – perhaps even decades – can still exert such commanding forces in our present. The child within us, hurt and silenced, still yearns for validation, understanding, and healing. But here's the marvel of human resilience – we possess an inherent capacity for recovery, for rediscovery, for reconnection.

Talk Therapy: A Beacon in the Dark

Enter talk therapy, specifically cognitive behavioral therapy. An intimate dialogue, a soulful conversation where the wounded self is laid bare, acknowledged, and rejuvenated. It's not about rehashing or dwelling in the past, but rather about understanding and transforming it. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy that combines cognitive therapy with behavior therapy by identifying faulty or maladaptive patterns of thinking, emotional responses, or behaviors and substituting them with desirable patterns of thinking, emotional responses, or behaviors.

The 2021 study 'Interventions to support people exposed to adverse childhood experiences: systematic review of systematic reviews' reports: "Twenty-five reviews were included. Most reviews focus on psychological interventions and mental health outcomes. The strongest evidence is for cognitive-behavioural therapy for people exposed to abuse."¹⁶⁷

Some findings on the efficacy of CBT:¹⁶⁸

- One randomized controlled trial (RCT) assigned sexually abused children to either child-alone CBTs, family CBTs, or waitlist control. Children allocated to treatment groups showed decreased self-reported levels of PTSD symptoms, fear, and anxiety, along with improved overall functioning as reported by parents. Importantly, the presence of caregivers did not influence this outcome.
- TF-CBT (Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) has demonstrated that this approach is effective in addressing individual traumatic incidents in young individuals, including occurrences like natural disasters and car accidents. In fact, as many as 92% of participants no longer met the criteria for PTSD after completing 10 sessions, and this positive outcome was maintained even at a 6-month follow-up.
- The psychoeducational aspect of TF-CBT has shown effectiveness in enhancing understanding of healthy sexuality and body safety among children aged 2–8 who have experienced sexual abuse.
- TF-CBT is also applicable in group settings, with shorter duration, cross-culturally, and across wide arrays of trauma. TF-CBT effectively reduced PTSD symptoms and increased psychosocial functioning in:
 - Children in protection agencies in Jordan.
 - Child soldiers and other war-affected youth in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

¹⁶⁷ (Theo Lorenc, 2020)

¹⁶⁸ (Namik Kirlic, 2020)

- ...and sexually exploited girls in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- In Zambia, orphans and vulnerable children randomized to TF-CBT saw significantly reduced trauma and stress-related symptoms.
- PTSD-diagnosed adolescents, four years post-2004 Thai tsunami, received a brief 6-hour CBT treatment across 3 days, leading to an immediate reduction in symptoms.
- Furthermore, street children in Mexico randomized to receive 12 sessions of individual CBTs reported lower levels of depression, anxiety, and anger when compared with the waitlist condition, with results maintained three months post-treatment.

Let's break this down.

1. **The Power of Validation:** One of the most profound impacts of ACEs is the feeling of isolation – a notion that one's suffering is singular, invalid, or inconsequential. Through talk therapy, individuals can find validation. To be told, "I believe you," or "It wasn't your fault," can be incredibly liberating.
2. **Reframing Core Beliefs:** Childhood trauma often imprints negative core beliefs. "I'm not worthy," "I'm unlovable," "The world is a dangerous place." Or "I am not resourceful enough to navigate the challenges of life." Talk therapy helps dissect these fallacies, replacing them with healthier, constructive beliefs.
3. **Emotional Processing:** Many survivors of trauma have suppressed or disconnected from their emotions as a defense mechanism. In the safe harbor of therapy, these emotions can be identified, understood, and expressed. This process can be challenging, undoubtedly, but immensely cathartic.
4. **Mastery Over Memories:** Rather than being trapped in the loop of traumatic memories, talk therapy allows individuals to revisit those memories in a controlled environment, slowly desensitizing and gaining mastery over them.
5. **Skills and Strategies:** Apart from emotional processing, talk therapy provides practical tools and strategies to manage anxiety, depression, and other associated symptoms. It's not merely about delving into the past but equipping for the present and future.

A 2004 Australian study explored the cost effectiveness of CBT and SSRIs on treating major depressive disorder in children:

- **Method:**
 - Health benefits measured as a reduction in DALYs.
 - This stands for "Disability-Adjusted Life Years." It is a measure used in public health to quantify the overall burden of disease.
 - Effect size sourced from meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials.
 - Financial figures are in Australian Dollars.
 - Analysis focused on new major depressive disorder (MDD) episodes in Australian children (age 6–17) from the year 2000.
- **Results:**
 - CBT by public psychologists is most cost-effective at \$9,000 per DALY saved (95% UI A\$3,900 to A\$24,000).
 - SSRIs & CBT by other providers likely under \$50,000 per DALY saved (< 80% chance).

- CBT is more effective than SSRIs in this age group.
- CBT leads to a higher total health benefit (DALYs saved) than SSRIs.
- Conclusions:
 - CBT by public psychologists is the top cost-effective first-line treatment for MDD in this age group.

In another study, research showed that CBT therapy offers a cost-effectiveness that is approximately 32 *times* greater than that of financial compensation. The findings of the study:¹⁶⁹

- Money and Life Events Valuation
 - Money is frequently used to value life events.
 - Several areas of life have been monetarily valued: marriage, social relationships, fear of crime, noise, health, disabilities.
 - Marriage value, as an example, is equivalent to an extra \$100,000 (£70,000) annually.
 - These values derive from subjective well-being data.
 - Typically, a 1 standard deviation increase in income boosts well-being by 0.17 to 0.21 standard deviations.
- Compensation for Injustices
 - Judges often award monetary compensation for psychological distress.
 - Some suggest that traumatic events can be monetarily evaluated.
 - Research suggests using monetary figures for compensation in court cases, e.g., losing family members or disabilities.
 - Recommended compensation figures:
 - Losing a partner: £114,000–£206,000 annually.
 - Losing a child: £89,000–£140,000.
 - In contrast, the UK's Fatal Accidents Act 1976 recommends £10,000.
 - Unemployment's psychological distress: £34,000–£59,000 annually.
- Effectiveness of Psychological Therapy
 - Studies have examined the clinical and cost effectiveness of treatments for depression.
 - Treatments compared include general practitioner care, cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT), and non-directive counselling.
 - All treatments reduced depression by at least 1.5 standard deviations in 12 months.
 - Average treatment cost, inclusive of indirect costs, was less than £1,500.
 Notably, CBT and counselling showed results within 4 months at less than £800.
- Comparison: Therapy vs. Financial Compensation
 - The cost effectiveness of psychotherapy vs. financial compensation hasn't been extensively studied.
 - Monetary compensation for the loss of a partner is about £114,000, but therapy might cost under £600 for equivalent relief.
 - For unemployment-related psychological distress, therapy costs between £100–£200, contrasting starkly with monetary compensation.
 - Therapy's effects can be valued between £179,000–£292,000 of extra annual income, making it much more cost-effective than monetary compensation.

¹⁶⁹ (Christopher J. Boyce, 2009)

- Income's Limited Effectiveness
 - Income's capability to boost mental health appears limited.
 - Research on lottery wins revealed a £4,300 win improves mental health by about a quarter of a standard deviation two years post-win.
 - Psychological therapy is around 32 times more cost-effective than financial compensation.
- Discussion & Limitations
 - It's challenging to draw direct inferences across studies.
 - The efficacy of psychological therapy isn't solely based on people experiencing significant life losses.
 - People adapt over time to life events, but this doesn't negate the benefits of therapy or compensation.
 - It's hypothesized that therapy might speed up adaptation.
- Implications for Judges
 - Tort law seeks to restore victims to their pre-wronged position.
 - Current compensation values in courts are arbitrary.
 - Monetary compensation might not effectively alleviate psychological distress post-trauma.
 - Therapy offers a more direct, personalized, and cost-effective solution.
- Implications for Policy Makers & Society
 - High suggested compensation values highlight money's inefficiency in improving well-being.
 - Despite increased income in developed societies, happiness hasn't grown proportionally.
 - Depression's prevalence is expected to rise, indicating a need for improved mental health care access.
 - The value of mental health should be prioritized alongside economic progress.
 - Improved mental health care access is essential for national well-being.

It's important to remember that talk therapy, though potent, is not a magic bullet. Recovery is a journey, often nonlinear, filled with peaks of insight and valleys of challenge. Yet, it is a journey worth undertaking.

To those bearing the burdens of ACEs, I implore – consider the power of talk. Reach out. Seek therapy. Engage in this soulful conversation. Your past might be written, but the future, ah, the future is yet a blank page. And you hold the pen.

To close, it's worth reflecting on a thought – our childhood may shape us, but it doesn't define us. Through endeavors like talk therapy and the acquisition of self-knowledge we can reclaim our lives and stand strong against the momentum of history.

Therapy 32 Times Better Than More Money

To summarize, research from the University of Warwick has shown that talk therapy can be as much as 32 times more cost-effective at improving well-being than getting more money.

After researching data on thousands of people who provided information about their mental well-being, the study authors found that the increase in happiness from a course of therapy that cost only a \$1,329 was so significant that it would take a pay increase of more than \$41,542 to achieve a similar boost in well-being.¹⁷⁰

For my 2009 interview with the author, please visit:

<https://odysee.com/@freedomain:b/the-benefits-of-therapy-dr-chris-boyce:2>

How Peaceful Parenting Protects Children

You might wonder, how does peaceful parenting protect children from abuse even outside the home? The philosophy of peaceful parenting, at its core, emphasizes the creation of a safe, nurturing, and open environment for a child. In such an environment:

- **Open Communication is Encouraged:** Children are more likely to disclose any inappropriate behavior or actions they may have encountered.
- **Awareness is Heightened:** Parents are more in tune with any changes in their child's behavior or demeanor, enabling early intervention.
- **Protection is Prioritized:** A peaceful parent is vigilant, ensuring their child's safety not just within the home, but even when interacting with the world at large.

Predators: How They Operate

In order to better understand how to protect our children, let us look at how predators choose their victims.¹⁷¹

It is essential to understand the risk that a pedophile is taking when selecting his or her victim. If the predator chooses wrong, and the child reports him to the parents, legal proceedings might ensue that could very well end up putting the pedophile in prison.

Child molesters are often assaulted and murdered in prisons – largely because so many convicted criminals were sexually abused as children – and so every time a predator targets a child, he is literally taking his life into his hands.

Pedophiles who prey on dozens or hundreds of children – as so many of them do – have to be right every single time.

And – so often – they are.

So – what are they looking for?

Let's analyze.

Basic Information on Offenders

- Age range: 19 to 74, with an average age of 41.

¹⁷⁰ <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/Healthday/psychotherapy-boost-happiness-money-study/story?id=9196854>

¹⁷¹ (MICHELE ELLIOTT, 1995)

- Predominantly between ages 30-42.
- Occupations: 35% professional, 31% skilled/semi-skilled, 44% unskilled or soldiers.
- Marital status: 48% had been or are married, 52% were single.
- Victim preferences: 58% targeted girls, 14% boys, and 28% targeted both.
- Age range of victims: 1 to 18.
- Most offenders had multiple victims, with a concerning number having victimized a large number of children.
- 70% of offending sexual predators have between 1 and 9 victims, while 20% have 10 to 40 victims.¹⁷²
- 66% of the offenders knew their victims; 32% were parents or stepparents who abused their own children.
- When females offend, they are much more likely to go for much younger children.
- Age 0–6 years: Younger offenders (age < 12 years) had 57.1% of their victims in this age group, while older offenders (age ≥ 12 years) had only 21.0%.
- Age 7–10 years: For younger offenders, 31.2% of victims were in this age group, compared to 15.5% for older offenders.

Female sexual offenders offend against both males and females; they are more likely than male offenders to offend against same-gender victims.

Yet, female sex offenders are more likely than men to have victims of both genders.

Male and female sex offenders have commonalities. They are demographically similar, although women are more likely to offend at a school, hospital, or jail.

Women were more likely to report having been raped during their lifetime, however. Although only 1.7 percent of men reported being raped in their lifetime, the CDC's limited definition of rape requires the penetration of the victim. But 6.7 percent of men had reported that they were “made to penetrate” someone during their lifetime.

Those who had been “made to penetrate” reported female perpetrators in 79 percent of cases. Analysis of a national household survey of both rape and sexual assault found that 28 percent of male victims and four percent of female victims reported female perpetrators acting alone.

When men and boys were incarcerated, staff perpetrators of sexual violence were overwhelmingly female. When inmate-on-inmate sexual assault occurs, women prisoners are more likely to be victimized by female inmates than male prisoners victimized by male inmates.¹⁷³

¹⁷² (CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE STATISTICS, 2015)

¹⁷³ <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/227763.pdf>

Also:

“Six offenders (6.6%) also sexually assaulted victims aged 19 to 45; one offender abused a 65-year-old victim. The number of victims was alarming; 70% of the men had committed offenses against 1 to 9 victims, 23% had committed offenses against 10 to 40 children, 7% had committed offenses against 41 to 450 children.”

Selection of Victims

- Factors:
 - Child's appearance (42%)
 - Being “pretty”
 - Clothing (27%)
 - Tights and miniskirts are mentioned.
 - Age or size (18%)
 - Young / small were significant factors.
 - Behavior (13%)
 - 1 in 8 targeted naïve, trusting or unsuspecting kids.
 - Lack of confidence or low self-esteem (49%).
 - “...you can spot the child who is unsure of himself and target him with compliments and positive attention.”
 - Offenders share that they look for passive, quiet, troubled, lonely children from single parent or broken homes.
- The "most vulnerable" child was described as having family issues, being alone, lacking confidence, being curious, being attractively dressed, being trusting, and being young or small.
- 57% selected based on the child being young or small.
- 46% influenced by a "special relationship" with the victim.

Recruitment of Victims (Outside of Immediate Families)

- Offenders frequented child-populated areas, worked on building trust in a child's home, took chances when children approached them, and used victims to recruit others.
- 35% of men visited locations children commonly visit including:
 - Schools
 - Shopping centers
 - Arcades
 - Theme parks

- Playgrounds
- Parks
- Beaches
- Swimming areas
- Fairs
- 33% aimed to gain acceptance into the child's household.
- 14% responded when a child initiated contact, possibly for an inquiry.
- 18% of men attempted to involve more kids.
 - These men used their victims to attract additional children.
 - “They did this by offering incentives to or by threatening the victim and by giving bribes and gifts to the children recruited.”

Location of Abuse

- Predominantly in the offender's or child's home but also included public places.
- 61% were abused in the offender's home.
- 49% in the child's home.
- 44% said they abused in public places.
 - Toilets, tents, parks, woodlands, places with outdoor activities.
- 13% in the homes of friends.
- 6% in proximity of the offender's home.
- 4% in a car.
- 51% abused in the vicinity of the offender's home.

Strategies Used

- 53% Frequently, they proposed engaging in games with the kids, coaching them in sports, or instructing them in playing a musical instrument.
- 46% of individuals also provided bribes, offered them an outing, or gave them a ride home.
- 30% of individuals utilized sentiments of affection, comprehension, and love.
- 14% of the narratives recounted were centered around falsehoods, enchantment, or quests for hidden riches.
- 9% of the perpetrators merely requested assistance from a child.
 - “One man, for example, used his disability to ask children for help and gain their sympathy before going on to sexually abuse them.”

- 20% of the offenders asserted that they had managed to establish the trust of the entire victim's family as a means to exploit the child.
- 48% of the perpetrators utilized babysitting as a means to isolate their victims, a fact of considerable importance.
- "On these occasions, the offenders started by talking about sex (27%), offering to bath or dress the child (20%), and/or using coercion by misrepresenting the abuse as having a different purpose (21%), such as "it would be good for you to do this for your education" or "this is what people do who love each other."
- 84% of the participants indicated that after devising a set of effective tactics, they consistently employed the same approach when engaging with children, while 16% displayed variability in their methods and altered their strategies periodically.
- 56% of the offenders were unsure about the factors that had impacted their strategy selection, while 30% had derived their approaches from personal experiences, and 14% attributed their choices, at least in part, to influences like pornography, TV shows, movies, and other forms of media.

First Move Made

- "28% slowly desensitized the child into sexual activities, and 32% asked the child to do something that would help the offender, such as undressing or lying down. During the first sexual contact some men tried other methods or a combination of methods: 19% used physical force with the child, 44% of the men used coercion and persuasion, 49% talked about sexual matters, 47% used accidental touch as a ploy, and 46% used bribery and gifts in exchange for sexual touches."
- "If the child resisted or was fearful, 39% of the offenders were prepared to use threats or violence to control the child as a way of overcoming the child's anxieties. The other offenders (61%) used passive methods of control such as stopping the abuse and then coercing and persuading once again. Therefore, the majority of offenders coerced children by carefully testing the child's reaction to sex, by bringing up sexual matters or having sexual materials around, and by subtly increasing sexual touching."

During First Sexual Contact

- 49% continued to talk about sex.
- 19% used physical force straight away.

Maintenance of Victims

- "One-third of the offenders abused a child on only one occasion and then moved on to another victim; two-thirds of the offenders encouraged the child's compliance and maintained the abusive relationship by using a variety and combination of methods."
- "Thirty-three percent specifically told the child not to tell; 42% portrayed the abuse as education or as a game, 24% used threats of dire consequences, 24% used anger and the threat of physical force, 20% threatened loss of love or said that the child was to blame."
- "One man said he told children that they would both be in trouble if the child told."

Offenders Preparation for The Abuse Immediately Prior to Offending

- “22% of the men used drugs or alcohol, 21% used pornography, and 49% used fantasies about previous victims to disinhibit themselves. The other 8% contacted and talked to other offenders. One in five offenders knew where to obtain child prostitutes and illegal child pornography (videos and magazines).”
- Roughly 8% kept in contact with other child predators.

“Two-thirds of offenders claimed that stress of some sort precipitated their offenses. The stress was related to work, sexual or domestic problems, or to psychological problems, but one-third indicated no such stress.”

Offenders Feelings and Concerns About the Abuse from The Offender's POV

- “41% had found sex with children less threatening than sex with an adult.”
- “25% felt that sex with children gave them a new and positive experience.”
- “39% felt nothing or couldn't express what they felt, and 17% justified their actions to themselves. What kept them from seeking help was the realization that there was no help available (46%), or that whatever they had tried hadn't helped (17%)”

Offender's Own History

- 67% admitted to negative sexual experiences as a child or adolescent.
 - The mean age for this negative experience was 12.5 years.
- “A third of the men were under the age of 16 when first attracted sexually to children”
 - “All of these men committed their first offense as juveniles, 1 to 3 years after becoming sexually attracted to children.”
 - “The mean age of first conviction, however, was 31 years. Fifty-five percent of the abusers said that their offenses became more serious over time.”
- 68% were victims of sexual abuse as a child.
- “The mean age of their own sexual abuse was 9.75 years.”

From: ‘Powerful perpetrators, hidden in plain sight: an international analysis of organisational child sexual abuse cases’ – 2019.¹⁷⁴

Eleven Major Grooming Categories

- **Definition of Grooming**
 - A process where a person prepares a child, significant adults, and the environment for child abuse.
 - Goals include gaining child access, compliance, and ensuring the child's secrecy.

¹⁷⁴ (Marcus Eroogaa, 2019)

- **Grooming organizations/staff:** Tactics for gaining trust within organizations, often leveraging positions of power.
- **Grooming parents or guardians:** Techniques to gain trust from potential victims' parents, such as doing favors for family members.
- **Accessing victims:** Ways to reach potential victims, like volunteering at youth organizations or overseeing children's field trips.
- **Grooming victims:** Strategies for gaining a child's trust before abuse, like befriending or giving gifts.
- **Luring victims:** Tempting a child into a location by offering rewards or through deceit.
- **Getting the child alone for abuse:** Tactics to isolate a child, such as sneaking into their room.
- **Efforts to minimize detection:** Techniques to avoid being detected, like testing victims' silence or denying abusive behavior.
- **Bribes and Enticements for cooperation:** Offering victims tangible benefits or normalizing inappropriate behavior to gain their cooperation.
- **Threats and coercion for cooperation:** Instilling fear in victims to ensure their participation in abusive acts.
- **Bribes and enticements to maintain silence:** Offering benefits to victims to keep them silent after the abuse.
- **Threats and coercion to maintain silence:** Threatening victims to ensure they don't disclose the abuse.

From the 2021 MSU article 'Keeping Our Kids Safe':¹⁷⁵

- **Introduction**
 - Aim: Educate parents/caregivers on ways to protect children/teens from sexual abuse.
 - Focus: Understanding the grooming process by child sexual predators.
- **Understanding Grooming**
 - Definition: Deliberate actions by sexual predators to gain access to potential child victims.
 - Misconception: Predators randomly pick children or only focus on strangers.
 - Reality: Most predators know their victims and have some relationship with them.
 - Goals of grooming:
 - Access potential child victims.
 - Conceal their actions.
 - Minimize chances of being caught.
- **Grooming Tactics**

¹⁷⁵ (Rymanowicz, 2021)

- Predators often follow a five-step process:
 - Identify vulnerable children.
 - Engage in peer-like activities with them.
 - Desensitize them to physical touch.
 - Isolate them emotionally and physically.
 - Make them feel responsible for any abuse.
- Steps may not always be linear; predators can skip or combine steps.
- **Identifying Vulnerable Children**
 - Predators target:
 - Children seeking attention.
 - Children with low self-esteem.
 - Socially struggling children.
 - Children with weak boundaries.
 - Kids in difficult family situations.
 - Kids eager to please adults.
 - Disabled children, especially with communication issues.
- **Engaging in Peer-Like Involvement**
 - Predators:
 - Engage in child-friendly activities, like online games.
 - Struggle with appropriate boundaries.
 - Adopt hobbies to appeal to children.
 - Show more interest in children than adults.
 - Fail to act like adults when needed.
- **Desensitizing Children to Touch**
 - Gradual process:
 - Begin with innocuous touches (tickling, roughhousing).
 - Escalate the level of touch if unreported.
 - Pose intimate questions to desensitize further.
- **Isolating Children Emotionally & Physically**

- Tactics include:
 - Keeping secrets with the child.
 - Providing material or emotional support.
 - Exaggerating family issues.
 - Seeking opportunities to be alone with the child.
- **Making Children Feel Responsible for Abuse**
 - Predators:
 - Make victims feel they "asked for" or "tempted" them.
 - Manipulate victims into feeling responsible.

Peaceful Parenting vs Predation

Peaceful parenting first sets up a paradigm of open, curious and moral behavior. The children of peaceful parents trust their parents, are open in their communication and are so emotionally connected that the children cannot hide any sudden dysfunctions and/or mood swings caused by external abuse.

Predators scan for children emotionally isolated from their parents, looking for those kids without close and loving connections to those around them. If they see a daughter in close loving contact with her strong and devoted father, they will move on to other prey.

Predators also look for children whose parents are “stressed” and “overwhelmed” – often single mothers emotionally hanging by a thread. The reason for this is that the children of a stressed parent will not want to bring additional stresses into the parent’s life, and so will tend to hide external abuse.

Also, children with punitive parents will often hide external grooming and/or abuse because they know that their parents will likely punish the children, not the predators.

Abuse and Single Mothers

Earlier, we talked about significant child abuse being twice as deadly as smoking.

That is two *times*.

What if there was a factor which raised the chance of childhood sexual and physical abuse *FORTY TIMES*?

Surely, as a society, we would be trumpeting this danger from the rooftops.

For a comparison, if you had long-term concentrated exposure to asbestos, the increased risks of developing cancer from asbestos was 500% - five times!

Have you heard of the risks of asbestos?

Of course you have!

Smokers are 10 times more likely to develop certain cancers than nonsmokers.

You know how dangerous smoking is, right?

Five times.

Ten times.

What about a risk that increased the physical and sexual abuse against children by FORTY TIMES?

Have you ever heard of that?

It's single mothers with new partners.

In the article "Child Abuse and Other Risks of Not Living with both Parents," published in *Ethology and Sociobiology*, Martin Daly and Margo Wilson write: "If their parents find new partners, children are 40 times more likely than those who live with biological parents to be sexually or physically abused."

According to a Missouri-based study of children living in homes with non-related adults, children are "nearly 50 times as likely to die of inflicted injuries as children living with two biological parents."¹⁷⁶

Ah, but single mothers usually vote for bigger government, so to heck with the children if it helps the power junkies, right?

Conclusion

In conclusion, childhood sexual abuse is a grave violation, a cruel theft of innocence. As advocates of peaceful parenting, it is our duty to shine a light on this dark corner of childhood. By understanding its prevalence and grave harm, and by employing the principles of peaceful parenting, we can strive to protect our children, support survivors, and work towards a world where the innocence of childhood remains untainted.

Parental Excuses

Excuses for aggressive parenting are fascinating.

They tend to fall into three categories:

1. It wasn't that bad;
2. I had understandable reasons;
3. I'm proud of my parenting.

General Principles for Excuses

Parental excuses can be potentially reasonable *if the same standards were applicable to the child in the past*.

For instance, if a child was easily forgiven for failing to study for a test, then parents can later claim as a defense the general principle that people should not be punished for failing to prepare for a test.

If the child was never punished for using violence, then the parents can claim that they should also be excused for using violence.

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.phillyvoice.com/child-abuse-single-parenting-divorce-marriage-new-partners-advice/>

If the child was never punished for failing to do chores, then the parents can potentially never be criticized for mess, chaos, financial hardships, inadequate food and so on. If the child was never criticized or punished for failing to do his work, then the parents can – at least to some degree – claim consistency in principle for excusing their own failures to do their work.

If the child was never punished for “talking back,” then parents can claim that they should not be thought of negatively for being argumentative with their adult children.

Do you see this pattern?

In general, the argument against this universalization is this:

*You cannot hold parents to the same moral standards to which you hold children, because the parents are **adults**, with fully-formed brains – while children are still developing, and so cannot be held to the same standards. Saying that adults and children should have the same moral standards is like saying that both adults and children should be able to drive, or sign contracts, or serve in the military, or get tattoos! We have different standards for adults and children for very good reasons!*

Okay, I accept that.

So – let’s look at these different standards.

What makes them different?

Parents work, children have chores.

These are not opposite standards.

Parents do *more* work than children – but children still *work*!

A mother might do four hours of chores a day – a child might be responsible for 15 to 30 minutes of chores.

A father might spend two hours mowing the backyard – a child might be responsible for half an hour of pulling weeds or raking the cut grass.

Do you see?

This is all a difference of *degree*, not of *kind*.

A child who goes running with her father will probably not be able to run as far, or as fast – but they’re both still *running*.

A boy who wants to help his mother wrap presents will not wrap as efficiently or neatly, but they’re both still fundamentally doing the same thing – just to differing degrees.

Parents have to plan for upcoming events and requirements – and children have to plan for tests and essays.

When you teach your child words, her vocabulary is less than yours – but you are both still speaking a language.

Do you see?

Children have the same responsibilities as parents – just fewer of them, and to a lesser degree.

It's not *opposite*.

Of course, there are some parenting situations where absolutes are involved – parents may drive a car, while children absolutely cannot.

But this is not an opposite rule.

Parents have a responsibility to keep their children safe, and children cannot drive safely.

A parent who does not know how to drive is also not allowed to drive a car – these are not opposite rules for adults and children.

Any parental excuses that involve opposite morals are fundamentally immoral.

Some examples...

[“It Wasn't That Bad”](#)

Sally was beaten as a child. As an adult, she confronts her father, Dave. Dave tells Sally that her memory is faulty, that it wasn't that bad, and/or didn't happen that often.

So – what is the principle here?

The principle is that it is perfectly valid for one person to tell another person that her memory is faulty, and thus she is wrong in her recollection.

Okay – let us universalize that!

Can Sally tell her father that *his* memory is faulty, and thus that *he* is wrong in his recollection?

Of course not!

That would be “disrespectful.”

So – it really is a one-way street.

Dave can tell Sally that her memory is faulty.

Sally can never tell Dave that his memory is faulty.

Of course, Dave will tell Sally that her memory is inaccurate because she was a child, and her brain was still forming.

Very well.

If that is the case, then – why was Sally beaten?

Well, Dave will tell Sally that she was beaten – he will say “spanked” or “disciplined” of course – because she didn't listen, or was disrespectful, or forgot something, or was defiant, or broke something – or something like that!

Very well.

If a child is hard of hearing, is it fair for her parents to punish her for “not listening”?

Of course not.

We don’t punish deficiencies.

Dave punished Sally as child because she was perfectly capable of understanding and following abstract moral rules.

She *could* be good, but she failed to be good – so she was punished!

In other words, her brain was *not deficient* in its capacity to understand, process and follow abstract moral rules.

However, now, suddenly, as an adult, her brain was *so deficient* that she can’t accurately recall important traumatic events from her youth.

So – which is it?

Was she punished because her brain was competent, and she failed to do what was right?

Or, is her father excused because her brain was incompetent, and therefore cannot remember what actually happened?

Let us go further.

If Sally’s brain is so deficient that she cannot remember what happened in her childhood – then why was she punished *during* her childhood for failing to do the right thing?

She was beaten so that she would remember to do the right thing – but now, her father is telling her that her brain is so deficient that she cannot remember basic facts – let alone follow abstract moral principles.

In the past, when she was a child, her father said: “I’m going to beat you so that you remember to follow abstract moral principles!”

Later on, he says: “Your brain – even as an adult – is so incompetent that it deceives you about the basic facts of your life.”

But – if Sally’s adult brain is incompetent, then she should never have been beaten for deficiencies in her childhood brain – which surely was even *less* competent!

If Sally’s childhood brain was competent enough to be punished, then her memories of childhood should be accepted as factual.

If children are beaten so that they remember to be good – then the entire purpose of beating them is to ensure *that they accurately remember being beaten!*

There’s no point punishing a child if she forgets the punishment five minutes afterwards.

Beating a child is designed to deeply impress the importance of following moral rules – if the child later on has no accurate memory of the beatings, then the beatings served no moral purpose, and so were mere abuse, not moral instruction.

“If I could go back, I would do it better, but I can't, so let's just move forward.”

This is another common excuse from parents.

Very well.

What is the principle here?

Surely the principle is that no one should ever be criticized or punished, because all misdeeds occurred in the past, and it is impossible to change the past, so it is better to forgive and forget.

Was that principle applied to the child, in the past?

If the child did something “wrong,” was the child allowed to say: “Hey – if I could go back, I would do it better, but I can't, so let's just move forward.”

Surely the parents would've been outraged at such a statement!

No, when the parents perceive that the child has done something wrong, the child is allowed no excuses, and is soundly punished!

But when the child grows up, and criticizes the parents – ah, now all misdeeds are just lost to the past, and should never be discussed or criticized.

“It was in the past” is no excuse for the child – but apparently a perfectly reasonable excuse for adults!

In other words, children, who have far less ability to accurately process cause and effect, are never allowed the excuse called “it was in the past” – but full-grown adults can happily use this excuse to get out of any misdeeds!

Vile.

“I brought you into this world and I can take you out!”

Well, this is just a straight up death threat.

Can you imagine an adult child with an elderly parent in the hospital, threatening to unplug the life-support if the parent does not sign a will gifting everything to the child?

That would be illegal.

“How was I supposed to know...”

Adult child: I had a really hard time in school socializing with my peers – and got bullied.

Dad: How was I supposed to know you were having a hard time if you didn't tell me?

Ah, the parents who claim to have no knowledge of their children's problems...

What does this mean?

If your father thought that you had stolen something from him, would he not sit you down for hours, cross-examining and grilling you, in order to find out what he wanted to know?

If you and your siblings were playing, and broke a lamp, would your mother insistently demand to know who was responsible? Would she rest or let it go before she found out?

Of course not.

You see how this works?

When your parents want to know something, they will stop at nothing to get the information out of you.

When you are suffering for years – right under their noses – they apparently have no idea, no curiosity, no sense of any mood changes on your part – and you are *fully responsible* for their lack of knowledge.

“Wait until college to date?... You knew I was joking.”

Mom all my life: “Wait until you get to college to start dating girls.”

Me: “Why did you always tell me to wait to date until college?”

Mom: “You knew I was just joking.”

“Just joking” is another cowardly excuse – it is the same excuse used by parents who insult you. They call you names, and you justly take offense – and then they claim that you have no sense of humour, that they were just joking, and that you take things *far* too seriously!

Does this street go both ways?

At extended family gatherings, can you call your parents “selfish pigs” – and then just laugh off their outrage by saying that you were only joking, that they should just learn to get some kind of a sense of humour?

Of course not.

“You don’t listen anyway....”

Mom: “It doesn’t matter that I gave you wrong information because you don’t listen anyway.”

Again, is this a two-way street?

If you give the wrong directions to your mother, and she gets lost, can you tell her that it doesn’t matter, because she never listens anyway?

It doesn’t even make any logical sense – why would you give any information to someone who never listens? That would be like lecturing someone in a language she does not understand.

“As long as you live under my roof, I make the rules!”

This is a truly tragic excuse – or rationale, to be more precise.

Children are born into a household – they do not choose it.

They are owed resources within that household – that is the deal that parents make when they choose to have and keep children.

Once people become parents, their resources no longer belong to them alone.

Their resources are shared with their children – the children have direct property rights over parental resources – *especially* the home.

If I find a stranger lurking in my living room, I can hurl him out of my house – even into a blizzard!

No parent has the right to do that to her children!

Children have a *right* to live in the house – without paying a penny, without doing any chores!

If you throw your five-year-old child out into a blizzard because he didn't do his chores, you will get thrown in prison – because everyone understands that children have an absolute right to live in the home – which means that the home belongs to them even more than it does to their parents.

Wait – *why more?*

Because the children are not there by choice.

If you lock a woman in your basement, she has the first right to food, because she is not there by choice, and has no other way to get food.

Children do not live with their parents by choice, and have no other way to obtain food and shelter.

We would not view a parent as very noble if he stuffed his own face with food, while leaving his children to starve.

We all understand that in a situation where food is scarce, the children get fed first.

The children have a greater right to food than their parents do.

The children have a greater right to the *home* than their parents do.

Also, when we stay at a hotel, we understand that the hotel owns the property, and therefore makes the rules – but we also understand that the hotel makes rules that are designed to be pleasant and convenient for the guests.

The hotel manager doesn't barge into our suite at 2 o'clock in the morning, saying that: "Hey, I own the hotel, so I make the rules!"

We hope that parents can provide at least as much care and affection to their children as a hotel manager can to his come-and-go guests.

“Do as I Say, Not as I Do!”

If parents do not follow the moral rules they inflict on their children, then the parents are saying that children should be able to achieve an ethical consistency that the parents are utterly unwilling – or unable – to model.

In other words, it should be infinitely easier for children to lift a weight that the parents cannot even get off the ground.

This is morally insane.

“You had a better childhood than I did.”

Some parents like to use their abusive childhoods as a comparison to what they provided for their children. A mother would say she did better than her own mother by not abandoning her own kids – and she didn't physically assault them like her mom did her. However, when confronted about how verbally abusive she was, this mother says her children are just ungrateful for how much she sacrificed for them and that they are “cold-hearted, selfish people.”

So basically, her bad parenting was because her children were bad people.

Parents who use the excuse called “You had a better childhood than I did” are manifesting a fundamental contradiction.

In this view, parenting can only improve incrementally – parents can be, say, 25% better than their own parents – but no more!

Okay, so if parents – with the full knowledge and maturity of adulthood – can only do slightly better than their own parents, then clearly their children can only do slightly better than themselves.

If the grandmother was only 25% good, and the mother gets to 50%, then clearly the daughter can only get to 75% as an adult, since the mother only got to 50% goodness as an adult.

Given that the child can only achieve 75% goodness as an adult, the child should never be punished for any badness during childhood, because clearly the child will be bad at least one time out of four – 25% – and so when the child is bad, they're just conforming to the imperfections fully accepted by the mother.

But of course that forgiveness doesn't happen – the mother endlessly excuses her own imperfections, while punishing her child for any of the child's imperfections.

The mother is doing the best she can, but would always punish her son for doing the best *he* can – thus inflicting infinitely higher moral standards on children than she accepts herself as a parent.

Let's change the math up a bit – it doesn't matter.

In this view, parents who have, say, 10% better childhoods than their own parents did – are only allowed to improve their own children's lives by about 10%.

Let's refer to these as grandparents, parents and children.

The grandparents had childhoods that were 20% good – the parents have 30%, and therefore the children get 40% – and demanding any more than 40%, or complaining about the 60% bad that remains, is unjust and immoral, because the grandchildren are better off than the parents, who in turn were better off than the grandparents.

Incremental change is all that is allowed – expecting more is being greedy and ungrateful!

And that's fine, in a way – as long as it is honestly spoken of.

You can enact incremental improvements all you want – as long as you never refer to any general principle.

If your father was a compulsive liar – he lied about just about everything – then – is lying wrong?

If lying is not wrong, then you can just lie all you want, and there is no problem, right?

If lying *is* wrong, then the solution is not to lie less – but to commit to telling the truth as a moral standard, on principle.

However, the moment you punish your children for deviating from some moral principle, you no longer get to claim that incremental improvements are the best that can be hoped for.

For instance, if your father lied 80% of the time, and you only lie 60% of the time – then you can only reasonably expect your children to tell the truth 60% of the time – because they are allowed to lie 40% of the time.

If, however, you punish your children even *once* for lying – because lying is wrong, and you shouldn't lie at all – then you have lost the entire moral right to defend your own improvements according to incrementalism.

If lying is wrong, then you shouldn't lie.

If incremental improvements in intergenerational lying is okay, then you shouldn't ever punish your children on principle – and you should fully accept and welcome the improvement of them telling the truth 60% of the time, since you only tell the truth 40% of the time, and your father lied 80% of the time.

So which is it – incrementalism, or principles?

If it is incrementalism, then you cannot punish your children on principles – if it is principles, then you cannot claim to be virtuous based on incrementalism.

“This hurts me more than it hurts you!”

This excuse – often trotted out for spanking – is utterly unverifiable! (And, even if it could be verified, the parent could be a masochist who enjoys being hurt, and thus punishes his child in order to feel delightfully bad himself!)

Of course, we all know the pattern by now – how do we deal with this excuse?

We know!

Is the child allowed to steal candy bars from a store, if the child says: "This hurts me more than it hurts the store owner!"

Is the child allowed to hit a cat if the child says that it hurts the cat less than it hurts him?

Is a child forgiven for not doing her homework if she claims that she is more upset about it than her teacher will be?

Of course not!

Children are *never* allowed to use these magic words to escape negative consequences – but parents always are!

Christians and Proverbs 13:24

Christians often revert to The Book of Proverbs 13:24 saying the Bible commands us to beat our kids (it doesn't) and then when confronted with studies that show spanking is bad, they say they trust the infallible Word of God over easily corruptible man-made studies.

This excuse is not specific to Christianity, but to religious fundamentalism in general.

The Bible is full of commandments that – if practiced consistently – would land parents in jail!

For example:

1. **Stoning disobedient children:** Deuteronomy 21:18-21 prescribes a punishment for a rebellious son. The elders of the city are to stone him to death. In today's society, this would be considered a horrific act of child abuse and murder.
2. **Selling a daughter:** In Exodus 21:7, there's a provision that allows a father to sell his daughter as a maidservant. Human trafficking and selling individuals is illegal and morally reprehensible in modern societies.
3. **Marrying captives:** Deuteronomy 21:10-14 gives instructions on how Israelite men can take women from conquered peoples as wives. By today's standards, this would be viewed as a serious violation of human rights, involving forced marriage and possible sexual assault.
4. **Blood vengeance:** The concept of "an eye for an eye" from Leviticus 24:19-20 has been taken to justify personal revenge. Most modern legal systems prohibit vigilante justice and emphasize due process.
5. **Forcing a woman to marry her rapist:** Deuteronomy 22:28-29 says that if a man rapes an unmarried virgin, he must pay her father fifty shekels of silver and then marry the girl. He cannot divorce her for the rest of his life. In modern society, this would be considered compounding the trauma of the victim, and the rapist would face criminal charges.

It is interesting how parents pick and choose from the Bible only those commandments that they want to follow – never those that are inconvenient, bizarre, immoral or illegal!

It is also interesting to see how parents do a lot of research on new phones, new computers, new houses and neighbourhoods – but never look up the actual original text of biblical commandments about hitting children.

It's an excuse, not a justification.

"Other kids have it a lot worse than you..."

All right – so if you criticize your parents as an adult, and they complain, can you tell them that other parents have it a lot worse?

I'm thinking of the parents of the Menendez brothers...

"You don't know how difficult it is... You'll understand when *you* become a parent!"

This is also interesting – these parents are saying that parenting is incredibly difficult – which must mean that they must have read a *lot* of books on how to parent, consulted experts, taken classes – you name it!

I mean, I don't just climb into the cockpit of an airplane and start pushing buttons and yanking the joystick – because it is very difficult to fly a plane, and I know that.

If I want to fly a plane – if they want to become parents – they need to take their training ahead of time.

If I want to become a scuba diver, I need to take some training. I don't just get tangled in kelp, run out of air, and then claim: "Hey man, it's really *difficult* to be a scuba diver, you have no idea until you're actually doing it!"

If my father was a pilot, and I watched him for 25 years having constant challenges flying planes, I don't get to just crash a plane, and only claim that I figured out that it was difficult *after* I was in the air.

No – I spent 25 years watching my father wrestle with flying – so of course I know exactly how challenging it is, so I am all the more responsible for getting training.

"You and your siblings fought all the time!"

"You all drove us crazy!"

"We didn't know what else to do!"

This is another fascinating excuse.

Parents whose children fight all the time have been either unable or unwilling to teach their children productive ways to resolve conflicts.

It does seem strange to me to punish children for lessons that the parents have failed to teach.

If I never teach my child how to swim, or ride a bike, is it fair and reasonable for me to punish my child for not having these skills?

If your children are fighting all the time, what kind of example are you setting as a parent?

If you and your spouse fight all the time, it's kind of hard to attack your children for fighting all the time – because you are demanding that they exercise a skill – conflict negotiation and resolution – that you don't have the first clue how to perform!

As far as “we didn't know what else to do” – well, that just fits into the general pattern. Were you allowed to shove your sister, and then claim that you didn't know how else to handle conflict? Was that excuse accepted by your parents?

If you wanted a candy bar at the store, but your mother would not buy it for you, were you allowed to steal it, and then claim that you didn't know how else to get a hold of the candy bar?

Once a parent admits a deficiency of knowledge, then the parent is responsible for getting a hold of that knowledge!

Saying that you didn't know how to handle your children is not an excuse – it condemns you even more, because even at the time you were aware that you lacked certain knowledge or skills – which means that you were 100% responsible for failing to learn whatever you needed to learn to do better.

“That's how I was raised!”

All right – these parents operate on the argument that it is impossible for them to upgrade their skills from when they themselves were children.

Fair enough – then clearly, they have no idea how to use a tablet, a cell phone, a modern car – or any other pieces of technology or products that were invented *after* they were children.

Oh wait, what?

They *do* know how to use a cell phone?

But they didn't *have* cell phones when they were children – that's not how *they* were raised!

Oh, I see...

They *can* learn new things, despite how they were raised.

Here's another question – is the school curriculum exactly the same as it was when your parents were in school, as children?

I guess not.

Did they pull you out of school and homeschool you according to the curriculum of decades ago, because they wanted you to be raised in the same way that they were raised?

Oh, no?

Okay.

So they perfectly accept that it is essential to learn skills that are new and different from what they learned as children.

They have learned new technology, new products and procedures – new ways of doing business, new standards in the workplace – and countless other improvements over the years and decades.

So, they are very happy – eager even – to learn new skills in the present, regardless of how they were raised in the past.

It might be nice for children to feel at least as important to their parents as a new cell phone.

The parents upgraded their knowledge regarding phones – why didn't they upgrade their knowledge regarding parenting?

The answer is clear I'm sure.

"The Bible instructs parents to spank their kids, this is for your own good" my parents would say.

Beating children is NOT biblically based whatsoever!

The Bible says in Proverbs 13:24:

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

The 'rod' has nothing to do with beating children and everything to do with guidance and discipline.

Like the rod of a shepherd, Jesus is considered the good shepherd, and his "sheep" are not beaten with rods – they are guided by them.

Even in the literal context of herding sheep, a rod isn't used for beating, but for guiding and defending them from predators.

One of the greatest predictors of future criminality is a son whose mother never corrects him or teaches him self-restraint.¹⁷⁷

"Well so-and-so was disciplined and turned out just fine!"

Ah yes – the mythical child who was beaten, and turned out *just fine!*

I have heard variations of this idea about me over the years – "Well, your mother must have done *something* right, because *you* turned out okay!"

I wonder...

Only about half of smokers die from smoking – which means that there are hundreds of millions of people around who smoked, and turned out just fine!

Does that mean that you should smoke?

There are some people who fall out of planes without parachutes, and survive.

¹⁷⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2794135/>

Does that mean that you should jump out of a plane without a parachute?

It is true that there are some children who appear to be virtually indestructible – just as there are some people who can smoke a pack of cigarettes a day and live to a ripe old age.

The problem is – *you don't know who is who ahead of time!*

And, even if children are beaten and seem to turn out “fine” – who knows how well they *could* have turned out if they had *not* been beaten?

Maybe a child was half-starved to death, and ended up with an average height – imagine how tall he could have been if he had proper nourishment while growing up!

Also, you can find children who were not abused who turned out fine as well – why not use *those* children as the example, and parent peacefully instead?

“If we didn't beat you, you would have done ‘xyz’ immoral or illegal thing!”

Imaginary disaster scenarios can always be invented to justify immoral actions.

You can steal from a store owner, and then claim that he would've had a heart attack standing behind the counter, if you hadn't lured him out to deal with your shoplifting,

You weren't stealing – you were helping him!

You can throw your aging parents into a nursing home, and then claim that you are protecting them from dying due to potential black mold in their former house.

You can punch a guy in the face, and then claim that he would've been kidnapped if he wasn't safe in a hospital, getting his jaw rewired.

This is all made up, devilish nonsense.

Also – were *you* allowed this excuse as a child?

If you skipped school, did you get to say that, if you had gone to school, you would've been bullied, startled, and fallen down a set of stairs, thus dying?

If you failed to show up for a test, did you get to say that, if you *had* shown up, you would certainly have gotten a paper cut, which would've gotten infected, and cost you your entire arm?

If you snuck candy in the middle of the night, and your parents found out, did you say that you were fattening yourself up, just in case you got abducted by space aliens, and weren't able to eat for a week or two?

They would have just laughed at you, for inventing madcap scenarios to justify your questionable deeds.

No excuse for the child – no excuse for the parent!

“This person turned out badly because he was not spanked enough as a child!”

It is amazing how much parents know about the secret lives of other families! A teenager acts poorly, and magical footage of their entire childhood springs unbidden into the minds of your parents!

Perhaps that child wasn't spanked – but perhaps she was dumped in daycare, bullied, confined to her room, starved, verbally abused – sexually molested, who knows?

Perhaps that child was bored in school, acted out in frustration, and was drugged into a half-zombie state.

Perhaps her parents fought incessantly, and the child went through the terrible trauma of a brutal divorce.

*Oh no, say your parents, all children who act badly who don't **seem** to be spanked only act badly for the single and sole reason that they were not spanked!*

This is truly amazing!

Can you imagine the amount of research that parents would have to undertake – not only in the abstract, but in terms of somehow digging out the entirety of facts and history in another family – in order to find a single and sole cause for adult dysfunction?

Esteemed social scientists with decades of detailed experience have had almost no luck determining a single and sole cause for any kind of dysfunction, across the world, over the past century or more – but your parents have distilled the entirety of adult problems down to *one singular variable!*

Honestly, you should tell them to write up their understanding and research, and submit it to psychology and social science journals – they are absolutely guaranteed to win a Nobel Prize, at the very least!

Psychologists, psychiatrists and social scientists – and billions of parents, the whole world over – will kneel before them in awe and worship at this massive step forward in the science of the mind!

One variable – and one variable only – predicts negative outcomes for 100% of the children!

It is truly incredible!

Of course, on the other hand, it does *utterly destroy* the concept of free will.

If not spanking children produces bad adults – then those adults never had any chance at all! They had no free will, no moral responsibility...

But wait...

If refusing to spank children produces bad adults, then children are *not morally responsible for becoming bad adults*.

We understand this, right?

Children merely respond to their environment – they do not possess a moral free will of their own!

However, children are spanked because they are morally bad, right?

So – which is it?

Are children 100% determined by their environment, or do they have moral responsibility for their choices?

If children are 100% determined by their environment, then the thesis that not spanking children produces dysfunctional adults can be sustained – but only at the cost of entirely destroying the concept of moral free will.

If children have moral responsibility, then you can – at least in theory – punish them for their immoral choices – but then you cannot say that *not* spanking children inevitably produces dysfunctional adults!

“It’s hard to be a peaceful parent when they’re not being peaceful kids!”

This argument that you can hit people who are not being “reasonable” seems to apply only specifically to children.

Would you accept this as an excuse from a wife beater: “It’s hard to not smack her when she’s being aggressive herself!”

The idea that the parent is acting in self-defense by being aggressive towards her children – that her children initiate her aggression by being aggressive themselves – is quite remarkable!

Let us ask such parents a simple question:

“Is it hard to be a peaceful citizen when pulled over by a policeman?”

I mean, a policeman can be quite aggressive – he orders you to pull over with his sirens, orders you to turn off your engine, put your hands on the wheel, produce your license and registration, and comply with and answer all of his questions!

Hmmm...

Did your parents peacefully comply with the policeman?

What about when your father was very angry with you, but then there was a knock at the front door?

Did he yank open the door and yell at whoever was knocking?

Of course not.

He instantly switched to his “reasonable” mode in order to deal with the stranger.

If your parents were fighting ferociously, and then people started showing up for a dinner party, did they continue screaming at each other in front of their guests?

Of course not. At least – I hope not!

They might have been a bit tightlipped, but they got through the evening without yelling, right?

If your mother was yelling at you in the car, and a security guard tapped on her window with his nightstick, did she stop yelling?

Of course she did.

So – what does this mean?

If parents say that their own aggression arises in response to the aggression of their children, then clearly they must be unable to *stop being aggressive in the moment*.

I mean, if I say that I am bleeding because you stabbed me, I don't stop bleeding when the phone rings, or guests come over, or a security guard knocks on my window with his nightstick.

If a father is yelling at his children, then immediately becomes peaceful when guests arrive, then he cannot claim that he was yelling at his children *because* his children were aggressive.

In other words, if you can instantly stop a particular effect, then that effect is caused by something within you – not any kind of external cause.

Do you see what I mean?

If I say that a sunburn is caused by excessive exposure to sunlight, then that is a truly external cause – I cannot alter that cause and effect in my mind.

However, if I say that my aggression is caused by my children – but I can instantly turn off my own aggression – then my aggression is *not* caused by my children!

If I say that I am angry because my child broke the lamp – but I am able to turn off all signs of that anger the moment the phone rings – well, the lamp remains broken, and my child is still responsible for breaking it – but I am magically now no longer angry!

So...

If I can instantly control the *effect*, the *cause* is within myself.

Do you understand?

My own mother could be screaming at me, but if the phone rang, and she thought it might be some man she wanted to date, she would become instantly sweet and submissive.

If you say: "I am yelling because you did X" – but you can instantly stop yelling – even though X remains a constant factor – then you are lying.

If you can choose to *not* be angry, then clearly you are also choosing to *be* angry.

It is a lie to say that you are angry because your child broke the lamp.

You are angry because you *choose* to be angry – your child breaking the lamp is just an excuse.

We know that you are angry because you choose to be angry – because when someone knocks on the door, you choose to not be angry – your anger effectively disappears.

Whatever you can will into nonexistence, you have previously willed into existence.

I cannot will gravity into nonexistence – I don't magically gain the ability to fly when someone knocks on my front door.

If my anger disappears with a door knock, it is not caused by any external event.

To put it another way: if you are yelling at your son, and then you become nice because the phone rings, you are not angry because your son did something, but rather because you can get away with being angry – your anger makes you feel powerful and good, and that is why you are angry.

On the other hand, you *don't* yell at whoever is calling you on the phone, because that could be risky – it could be your boss, or someone else who has authority over you, an innocent neighbour – you could lose status, and thus feel *less* powerful and good, if you yell at whoever is on the phone.

You yell at your son to feel powerful – you are nice to whoever is on the phone so that you don't lose status, and thus lose power.

You yell at your son to feel better – you are nice to strangers so you don't feel worse.

“I was spanked – and I turned out fine!”

This is also a remarkable statement, when you think about it.

Everyone thinks from time to time about the road not travelled – the path not taken.

What if I had never moved to Canada?

What if I had never met my wife?

What if I hadn't dropped out of university?

What if I had taken that job overseas?

We have no certain way of knowing, of course, how our lives would have turned out if we had made different choices, been exposed to different experiences – or been born in a different household.

However, these time and space travelling parents have clearly gone down every possible path of their life – good, bad and indifferent – and seen every possible outcome, and realized that they have turned out the *very best*, because of *exactly what happened to them*.

They have swallowed some red pill, and travelled down the highways and byways of other possible lives, and seen *exactly* what would have happened to them if they had not been spanked.

Of course, this also negates free will and moral responsibility – which is exactly the basis *for* spanking children – but so what?

These parents have deeply examined every possible life they could have ever lived – seen deeply into every conceivable future – and returned from this infinite journey fully content with the absolute certainty that being spanked was a central factor that made their lives wonderful.

Now, a sane person would never think of claiming to be in possession of such godlike knowledge.

I, for instance, could never imagine claiming that I know that I am living my best conceivable life, better than any other alternatives – because I am not a madman.

The amount of vanity required to make such a statement is utterly beyond the conception of any rational person.

If a parent says that he turned out fine even though he was spanked – or *because* he was spanked – the only sensible question to ask is: “*How do you know?*”

Spoiler: there is no way to know.

Claiming otherwise is a pathetic coping mechanism.

“Kids need to learn to respect and obey their parents!”

Well – this is a basic maturity test.

If a man has a disagreement with a woman, do we respect him if he beats her up?

Don’t we consider it the mark of a better person to resolve conflicts with words, not fists?

Don’t we constantly tell our children to use their words, not their fists?

Don’t we dislike bullies who use violence to get their way?

If it is possible to resolve conflicts with your children through language, rather than beatings, wouldn’t we respect that far more?

Can we truly respect someone we are forced to obey?

If a man kidnaps a woman’s children, and forces her to have sex with him, will she respect him?

Love him?

Be loyal to him?

Of course not.

She obeys him only because he can cause her children great harm.

She will hate and resent him for forcing her to obey him.

“I didn’t want to only be a parent. I wanted to have a career too!”

One doesn’t have to be a massive fan of the old Harry Chapin song “The Cats in the Cradle” to know where *this* one leads.

It takes an extraordinary lack of empathy to mentally erase the world of the child – not least because we have all been children in the past!

For little children, the world outside the home and family is a fuzzy kind of nothing – a fog bank that regularly swallows up parents, then spits them back after a while.

In our evolution as hunter-gatherers – and later, farmers – children spent very little time away from their parents. Mothers breast-fed and played with their children, fathers hunted or farmed, but were available every day. In colder climates, families spent winters huddled under blankets, playing games and telling stories, because there was precious little work to be done in the snow.

One simple way to understand how little time parents spent away in the past is how dependent and helpless babies and toddlers are.

In biology, that which ends up the most complex tends to develop the most slowly – horses can walk within a few days of being born – human beings take about a year, but then we get to do gymnastics as well!

Our brain is able to become so complex because we are so helpless during the first year of life – which has been referred to as the *fourth trimester*. Basically, we get born about eight seconds before our heads get too big to pass through the birth canal – and then, the further development that in every other species occurs within the womb, actually occurs outside the mother. This is why babies are so helpless and dependent, and so incredibly strongly bonded to their parents – particularly their mothers.

It takes a year to learn how to walk, five years to develop a fairly fixed personality, ten years for good language skills, and fifteen years for sexual maturity – this used to be eighteen years or so, before the trauma and parent-absence of the Industrial Revolution.

For the human male, it takes a quarter of a century for the brain to fully mature – a few years less for females.

Twenty-five years!

If parents had a habit of abandoning their babies, we would *never* have developed the brain complexity we currently enjoy.

You only have the brains to pursue a career because your ancestors – mothers in particular – *never pursued careers*.

Human babies are among the loudest offspring in nature – babies left alone would simply be calling out for predators, and not last very long.

Of course, it is quite natural for human beings to have contradictory desires – some men who get married miss dating around. Some mothers miss the endless male attention they got when they were single. Children often can't wait to grow up – adults then look back with great fondness and nostalgia on their own childhoods. When you're young, you want to be older – when you are older, you want to be younger – it's the same pattern everywhere. People think they will be happy when they achieve a certain goal – after they achieve it, they look back on their striving with great fondness, and miss having that central and defining purpose.

Everyone dreams of becoming wealthy – but people who win the lottery very often destroy their lives.

Contradictory desires are natural in such a complex brain as we possess – but we do have to make decisions about priorities.

What would we say to a man who got married to a beautiful woman, and then tried to seduce every other woman he came across?

We would view him as dangerously foolish, and take great pity on his wife.

We would say: "Why bother getting married, if you don't have any plans to be monogamous?"

Right.

There is nothing wrong with women having careers, of course – just not when they have young children at home who depend on them.

If you want to sleep around, don't get married.

If you want to have a continuous career, don't have a child!

If you have a child, don't have a career for a while.

You see – children don't know anything about your deep feminist desires to make a mark on the world – all they know, all they understand, all they experience, is that mommy doesn't love them enough to stay home.

Ladies – if your husband vanishes every night and weekend, claiming to be in hot pursuit of some engaging hobby – how would you experience that?

Surely you would say: "Well, I don't know exactly what he *does* want – but I *do* know that he doesn't want to spend time with *me!*"

Children experience their mothers working as maternal abandonment.

This is not a theory.

The studies are very clear – women who put their children in daycare for twenty hours or more a week – well, those children experience *similar symptoms as children who are completely abandoned by their mothers*.

How are children supposed to love themselves if they feel unloved by their mothers?

How are children supposed to feel important if they feel unimportant to their mothers?

How are children supposed to develop the capacity to pair-bond if the maternal bond is shattered by shallow materialistic ideological greed?

When children grow up, it is not hard for them to do the basic math, and realize that they were abandoned in the crib for a few pathetic dollars an hour.

Ladies – imagine if your husband decides to play golf instead of taking you out for your wedding anniversary.

Wouldn't you feel rejected, abandoned, desolate, lonely – appalled?

Wouldn't you feel bottomless wells of hurt and anger?

Wouldn't you question the entire basis of your supposed relationship?

Of course you would!

Ditto for your children.

"I'm not a perfect parent, but (s)he's not a perfect kid either!"

Ah, the great tit-for-tat argument.

Look – children are largely soft clay molded by their parents.

Can you imagine how insane it would be for a sculptor to rage against the ugliness of his sculpture, and tell everyone who would listen that the sculpture is just disobedient, willful, rebellious – that its ugliness is its own fault, or at least it shares equal fault with the sculptor!

How would you view a painter who punched his own painting, yelling that the colours and perspective were just not doing the right thing, and that he was helpless to convince his painting to look good?

Would he not be a candidate for an insane asylum?

Of course he would be!

Can you imagine how sadistic a parent would have to be to teach swear words to a toddler, and then punish the toddler for swearing?

Wouldn't that be – appalling?

Children inevitably absorb the ideas, arguments, words and actions of their parents.

When you look back at movies and interviews from the 1950s, the men and women have particular ways of speaking, which don't exist at all anymore.

Why did they speak that way?

Because their parents did.

When you think of cultures that have survived for thousands of years, how were they maintained?

Prior to the communist revolution, Chinese culture had been largely continuous for 6,000 years.

How is that possible?

Some languages can trace their lineage back thousands – or tens of thousands – of years.

How are they maintained?

Through the parents, of course.

When you think of national characteristics – the cold politeness of the British, the passionate intensity of the Italians, the rigid efficiency of the Germans – these are all emotional and intellectual habits that have been passed down generation after generation.

There is no such thing as culture without children absorbing parental habits.

Your children are the shadows cast by your actions.

Can you imagine yelling your own shadow, because it slouched, or looked fat?

Again – you would be a candidate for a mental asylum!

Attacking your children is attacking yourself.

Hitting your children is hitting yourself.

A family is one blood, one flesh.

If your shadow looks fat, you need to diet.

If your sculpture is ugly – well, you held the chisel my friend.

If your children misbehave, *you* need to improve.

"Kids are resilient. They'll survive."

Ah yes – the endless imaginary robustness of children.

Of *course* children are resilient, and will most likely survive – but so what?

If you eat a piece of moldy bread, are you likely to die?

No – your immune system is resilient, and you will survive.

Does that mean that it is okay to serve you a piece of moldy bread?

Most people survive car crashes – does that mean that car crashes are okay?

Your face is resilient, and you will almost certainly survive being punched in the mouth – does that mean that it is okay to punch you in the mouth?

Women rarely die from being raped – does that mean that rape is okay? Do we excuse the rapist by saying that women are resilient, and that they will survive?

Of course not – that would be morally abhorrent!

Fragile parents lose their temper and scream at their children over the most minor and inconsequential transgressions – and then say that their children are robust, resilient, and will survive!

If your kid carelessly breaks a lamp – well, as a parent, you are resilient, and you will survive the breaking of the lamp, right?

So there's no need to lose your temper and yell at your child, right?

No – this forgiveness rarely happens. The parent – whose survival is in no way threatened by the broken lamp – yells at the child, then later claims that children are resilient, and will survive.

If children can be yelled at because they are resilient, and will survive – then why are the parents who were yelled at as children so fragile and volatile?

Yeah – we all know the answer to that one.

"I didn't know you were unhappy!"

There are two responses to this defense – the first is that it is the parent's job to *know* when the child is unhappy – and the second is that a parent who has no idea that the child is unhappy – who cannot at all tell the difference between a happy child and an unhappy child – is so emotionally distant from the child that they cannot be considered capable of parenting at all!

Let us take a medical analogy.

We can assume that a competent doctor would know the difference between a man who is sleeping, and a man who is unconscious because he has been beaten half to death.

If a doctor cannot tell the difference between a sleeping man, and a bruised and beaten man, then the doctor is not a doctor at all, but some bizarre person posing as a doctor – because even people who *aren't* doctors can tell the difference between sleeping and being horribly injured.

Can the doctor claim as his defense that neither the sleeping nor the beaten person *told* the doctor anything?

Of course not – it is the doctor's *job* to tell the difference between a healthy person and beaten person.

If your wife is in a terrible car accident, and is bruised and bleeding all over the place, and you take her to the emergency room, and she passes out, and then you fall asleep because you have been waiting for so long – and you wake up with the doctor standing over you, trying to treat *you*, would that make any sense at all?

Would you feel *any* confidence in a doctor who could not tell the difference between your broken and bleeding wife, and your own sleeping form?

If you got upset with the doctor, and told him to treat your wife, not you – and the doctor claimed that neither you nor your wife told him who he should be treating, would you accept that as an excuse?

"She never *told* me she was injured! Neither did you!"

Would you even know what to say in such an insane situation?

Would it even be worth reminding the doctor that it is kind of his job to be able to tell the difference between the victim of a terrible car crash, and a man who just dozed off?

Yet this is what parents expect children to accept.

Total madness.

"I always tried to listen to you kids!"

Parents often defend their own bad parenting with the appeal to the statement: "*I tried!*"

First of all, decades-old claims of intentionality can never be verified.

Claiming that you are not responsible for anything because of some internal state that was utterly contradicted by your external actions – that all happened twenty years ago to boot – is both contemptible and ridiculous!

If a husband repeatedly beats his wife for years – and then, decades later, claims that he never actually *wanted* to beat her, and always tried to *not* beat her – what would that even mean?

Couldn't anyone just – say that?

Can a compulsive shoplifter stand before a judge after her tenth conviction and claim that she never *wanted* to steal anything, that her intention was to respect property rights, and she didn't mean to steal at all?

She is trying to overturn empirical and objective actions with a subjective and unverifiable state of mind.

This is beyond ridiculous!

As a child, if you fail a test in school because you didn't study, do you end up getting a passing grade, when you explain to the teacher that you really *meant* to study, and had the best intentions?

Nope.

You are judged by your empirical actions, rather than your unverifiable intentions.

Also...

Something you do repeatedly cannot be considered unintentional.

A serial killer can never claim that it was just a series of bad accidents – that he never *intended* to kill anyone, that it was all just involuntary manslaughter and unfortunate circumstances!

Why not?

Well, because he keeps killing people.

It's certainly possible for one man to accidentally kill another – but not if there are many victims, spread over many years, which were all chosen, pursued – and murdered!

Would it not be entirely right and just to say to such a serial killer: "We cannot judge you on your stated intentions – we can only evaluate your consistent actions!"

If we let serial killers off because of their unverifiable historical stated intentions, wouldn't we just be ensuring that many *more* people will end up being murdered?

Of course!

But it is even worse than that.

Imagine a powerful judge who sent hundreds of criminals to prison based on the results of a particular DNA test.

Then, imagine that the judge was accused of a crime based upon the results of the *exact same DNA test*.

Now, imagine the judge defending himself by saying: "Oh, that DNA test has never been accurate, it's complete nonsense, and should never be used to convict anyone!"

Would we believe him?

Would we apologize for accusing him of a crime?

No – this would be evidence of the highest, deepest and most contemptible corruption imaginable!

If the judge has punished people for decades based on the DNA test that he now claims is completely invalid the moment it involves him – what could we possibly say?

If the DNA test is valid, then the judge is convicted – if the DNA test is invalid, then the judge is also convicted, because he used that test for decades to send hundreds of innocent people to prison, while all the time *knowing* it was invalid.

How does this relate to parenting?

We know, right?

If parents should not be held accountable for bad parenting because of their unverifiable intentions – then they should have never held their own children accountable – because their children doubtless claimed that *they* didn't mean to do whatever they got punished for.

If a son is threatened with punishment for hitting his sister, but the son says – as all children do – that he didn't *mean* to hit his sister – do the parents then refuse to punish him, because he claims a lack of intention?

Children should never be punished, then – because claiming that you didn't *mean* to do something is enough to get you completely off the hook, right?

If parents accept that their own stated intentions are enough to establish perfect innocence – then why did they ever punish their own children, despite their children claiming that they had no intention to do wrong?

Children are even punished when their stated intentions are true, moral and valid!

Children who disagree with their parents – and have very good reasons for that disagreement – are often punished for “talking back,” “having an attitude,” and “being disrespectful!”

The child who disagrees with the parent has generally no intention of being disrespectful, or having an “attitude” – but that doesn't matter – the child is punished anyway – and why?

Because *intentions don't matter!*

Ah, but when the adult child holds his own parents accountable, suddenly – well, don't you know, intentions are *all that matter!*

You might say that the parents *used* to believe that intentions didn't matter – but over the years, with their accumulating wisdom and maturity, they now accept that intentions are *all that matter!*

But – this is like the judge finding out only late in his career that the particular DNA test is invalid – what should he do, on gaining possession of this terrible knowledge?

Well, of course – he should reveal this to everyone, work to reverse all of his earlier judgements based upon the validity of that DNA test, exonerate the innocent, get them out of prison, apologize, make

restitution – there would be a whole host of actions that he would have to take upon discovering that the DNA test was invalid.

But – parents don't do this!

They attack and punish their own children, ignoring all claims of intentionality – but when criticized by their adult children, they instantly switch to the defense of “intentions are all that matter!”

It's transparent and pathetic manipulation, moral hypocrisy of the worst kind.

"I've become a better person since then!"

Some parents claim that they should not be judged for their prior actions, because they have become better people since their dark and dismal days of punishing their children.

If that is truly the case, then they would have sat down with their children many years ago, and apologized for their own bad parenting, and made all possible restitution, such as paying for therapy.

If the parents end up waiting for their own adult children to confront them on parental wrongdoing, then guess what?

They haven't actually become better people!

A criminal who truly repents will contact his victims, apologize and make restitution.

That's an empirical way to tell that he's actually become a better person.

Even in the twelve step programs for recovering addicts, one of the steps is to contact people you have harmed through your addictive behaviour, apologize to them and make restitution.

Also, if the principle is that you should not be held accountable for past misdeeds if you claim to have become a better person, then surely the parents would never have brought up any of their own children's past misdeeds, since the purpose of parenting is to make your children better people.

If you are a good parent, your children continually become better people, and therefore should never be held accountable for anything wrong they did in the past.

However, we all know that most dysfunctional parents are constantly bringing up children's prior misdeeds, and would never stop doing this just because their children said: “Oh, but I've become a better person since then!”

So – apparently, as usual, it's a perfectly valid defense for bad parents – but a perfectly invalid defense for “bad” children.

Gross!

"I'll always be your mother, I deserve forgiveness!"

We don't have to spend much time on this one – if family members deserve forgiveness on the basis of blood ties, then why were children not given forgiveness, based upon their blood ties?

If you have to forgive another family member because of the permanency of familial relations, then why is it not equally valid to say – when you were a child – “I’ll always be your child, I deserve forgiveness!”

Any parent who claims a moral defense that she denied to her child is corrupt beyond words.

Why should adults have infinitely lower moral standards for themselves than the standards they inflict on their own children?

"The parenting books/therapist at the time said to let you work it out on your own!"

Claims that past experts are actually responsible for bad parenting decisions are beyond laughable.

First of all, whenever children ask for details about all of this prior expertise that led their parents down a bad road, it always turns out to be unverifiable.

“Some therapist told me such and such” – well, you will never be able to verify that claim in any objective way. The therapist is probably retired, and the notes have been destroyed years or decades ago, and the therapist has no obligation to talk to you anyway – and may be prohibited from doing so, according to regulatory standards.

So – your parents can say anything they want, and you can never verify anything at all.

Perhaps, though, they still have a copy of the book that gave them such terrible advice! Perhaps it even has notes scrawled in the margins, or other indications that they actually read the book and made decisions on its contents.

Okay, hard to believe, I know – but it could happen, I guess.

Very well.

When you think of the incredible variety of nutritional approaches and dieting advice, can someone on a diet say that they are just doing what some expert *told* them to?

Not really.

Why not?

For the simple reason that there is such disagreement among the experts.

There are books out there that recommend spanking.

However, there are *many* more books out there that recommend *not* spanking.

The argument that “the expert told me to” is invalid for the simple reason that, where there is such disagreement among experts, you will simply choose the expert who tells you what you already want to do.

If you like eating meat, you will doubtless be partial to the carnivore diet.

If you are okay with reducing your carbs, keto is the way to go, right?

It’s not the experts – it’s your own *preferences* that define what you do.

“I guess I didn’t do anything right!”

This is typically a more female defense – although fathers use it occasionally too.

In this defense, black-and-white absolutism is deployed so that any criticism of anything means that nothing good or right was ever done.

If you say to your wife that there is a little bit too much salt in the soup, and she responds with: “Oh, so I guess I never cook anything right!” – that is a transparently brittle and ugly defense.

It is a way to distract you from any immediate feedback or criticism – and also punish you for daring to provide negative feedback in any way, shape or form!

If you criticize your wife, and she explodes with irrational absolutes, and ruins the entire evening – she is simply punishing you for having any criticism – which is not for the present, but rather for the future. She is training you to avoid having any criticism of her, by applying hours of hysterical negative stimuli to anything you bring up.

It’s actually how you train a dog to poop outside the house.

If you criticize your mother, and she replies that: “Well, I guess I never did anything right in your eyes!” – what is she trying to do?

Well, it’s obvious, right?

She is trying to get you to talk about all the *good* things she did, as a way of programming you to stop saying anything negative.

Also, it is a common characteristic of narcissists to demand that you comfort them after they have injured you.

You have a problem with your mother’s parenting – and then she pretends to emotionally collapse, so that *you* end up having to reassure *her* and prop up her own self-esteem and infinitely fragile personality!

It’s tragically pathetic.

Of course, the real hypocrisy is – as usual – that you were never allowed this defense as a child.

If you were yelled at for breaking something, did you get to point out all the things that you hadn’t broken – at least that day – and thereby avoid any punishment at all?

If you failed a test, did you end up getting a passing grade because you said to the teacher: “Oh, I guess this means that I fail at everything in life, and will never succeed at anything, *ever!*”

I hope at least that your teacher would patiently point out that you were simply failing one test – it didn’t have any larger ramifications on your life as a whole.

If you broke a school rule, did you get to avoid punishment because you pointed out all the *other* rules that you did not break?

Does a murderer get his charges dropped, because he points out that he did *not* kill the vast majority of people he met?

Of course not.

My mother used to say: "One day you'll thank me for this" after beating me when I was a child.

It's hard to imagine any wrongdoing that could not be justified by an appeal to imaginary future benefits.

A man kills a woman – does he get to avoid punishment because he claims to know with certainty that she would have become a serial killer in her old age, so he is actually saving lives?

That would be halfway to an insanity defense!

A brutal father breaks his daughter's arm, putting her in hospital – would it make sense for him to later lecture her that he saved her life, because she would have certainly been hit by a bus, if she hadn't been safe in a hospital bed?

And – did *you* ever get this defense as a child?

If you broke a lamp, did you get to avoid punishment, because you informed your parents that they would thank you later, because the new lamp would be much prettier and brighter?

Of course not.

You would be *further* punished for your lack of remorse and insouciance.

Did your parents ever forgive you for your misdeeds, because you told them that they would end up thanking you, somewhere down the road?

If you drove your bike into the side of your father's car – what would happen if you loftily informed him that he might be upset now, but he would thank you in the future?

It's hard to imagine, right?

It would be like setting off a grenade.

If you spilled paint on a carpet, and your parents got angry – would they instantly calm down and thank you, if you told them that the new carpet would be much prettier and softer, so they should actually show you some gratitude?

I kind of doubt it.

What if your mother is really lonely and depressed, and calls you up, demanding that you come over and spend time with her – and you tell her that you are not going to, because you want to teach her strength and independence – and while she might be crying and angry now, she will totally thank you years down the road, when she has achieved all of this strength and independence – what would she reply?

Would she accept that you are right, and thank you for helping her become stronger – or would she condemn you for your coldness and heartlessness?

We all know the answer to that one, right?

If a man beats his wife, is it a reasonable, moral or legal defense to say that he was just trying to teach her to stop nagging, and that she would thank him down the road, for liberating her from such a bad habit?

Yeah.

Good luck with that!

The tragedy of all of these ridiculous and ghastly defenses is that they all rest on the premise that adults should never be held accountable to the moral standards they aggressively – and often violently – inflict on their own children.

Well.

No one is above the law.

And in particular – no one is above the *moral* law.

All who claim otherwise are hopelessly corrupt.

And I am now out of excuses to finish this book.

I could keep writing, but the work is done.

Everything has been proven.

Everything has been explained.

The great work of philosophy has finally breached the fiery moat of the family.

You have learned all you need to learn.

And thus you, my friend, are also out of excuses.

You must now go and live and spread the message of peaceful parenting.

Go.

Go on now.

Go save the world.

And please – stay in touch at www.freedomain.com

Thank you so much.

Stefan Molyneux, MA

Host, Freedomain

April 2024

The beginning of the future.

Reference 9: [\(Return to page\)](#)

Benefits of Mothers Staying Home

For the first five years at least, a stay-at-home mother is best for children.

“A 2014 study found that the benefits of having a parent at home extend beyond the early years of a child's life. The study measured the educational performance of 68,000 children. Researchers found an increase in school performance all the way to high school-aged children. However, the biggest educational impact was on kids ages 6 and 7.”¹⁷⁸

“Most homeschoolers also have an at-home parent instructing them. A compilation of studies provided by the National Home Education Research Institute supports the benefits of a parent at home for educational reasons.

“Some research has found homeschoolers generally score 15 to 30 percentile points above public school students on standardized tests and achieve above-average scores on the ACT and SAT tests.”

“Studies have found that children who spend a large amount of their day in daycare experience high stress levels, particularly at times of transition, like drop-off and pick-up.”¹⁷⁹

“Emerging interest in the daycare literature centers on relations with the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) system, which produces cortisol, a hormone related to stress response and adaptation. Animal research has demonstrated that chronic elevations of cortisol can deleteriously affect regulatory brain processes. Research has documented elevated cortisol levels in daycare children compared to those who are raised at home. However, specific links between daycare-induced cortisol elevation and developmental outcomes have not been established, and recent research suggests that cortisol response in daycare may be linked to children's home environment. Further evidence indicates that some children may be buffered against the elevated cortisol effect by child characteristics, quality of care, and mother-child attachment.”¹⁸⁰

For boys this causes an increase in aggressive behaviors - for girls it triggers anxiety.

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.verywellfamily.com/research-stay-at-home-moms-4047911>

¹⁷⁹ Nystad K, Drugli MB, Lydersen S, Lekhal R, Buøen ES. Toddlers' stress during transition to childcare. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal. 2021;29(2):157-182. DOI:10.1080/1350293X.2021.1895269

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insight-therapy/201710/nonparental-daycare-what-the-research-tells-us>

"Bad Behavior

"Data from a government study show a strong link between the total hours per week a child spends in day care and behavior problems at age 5. The 113 behaviors surveyed include frequent arguing, temper tantrums, lying, hitting and unpredictable conduct.

*"Number of hours in day care equals a percentage of bad behavior**

"Less than 10: 10 percent.

"10 to 30: 17 percent.

"More than 45: then 26 percent."¹⁸¹

From a 2013 study:

"In 1998 the Norwegian government introduced a program that substantially increased parents' incentives to stay home with children under the age of three. Many eligible children had older siblings, and we investigate how this program affected long-run educational outcomes of the older siblings. Using comprehensive administrative data, we estimate a difference-in-differences model which exploits differences in older siblings' exposures to the program. We find a significant positive treatment effect on older siblings' 10th grade GPA, and this effect seems to be largely driven by mother's reduced labor force participation and not by changes in family income or father's labor force participation."¹⁸²

"A fairly robust link has been found between attendance in daycare with six or more other children and increased likelihood of communicable illnesses, ear infections, and the flu."¹⁸³

Physical touch prevents developmental delays, lower blood pressure, and minimize stress responses.¹⁸⁴

Stay at home parents generally feed their children better food than institutions provide.¹⁸⁵

Infants get more touch and cuddles with stay at home mothers.

Here are some benefits of touch:

¹⁸¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/200505/the-trouble-day-care>

¹⁸² https://www.ssb.no/forskning/discussion-papers/_attachment/113165?_ts=13ea1e1e480

¹⁸³ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insight-therapy/201710/nonparental-daycare-what-the-research-tells-us>

¹⁸⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2865952/>

¹⁸⁵ https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2009-12-08-school-lunch-standards_N.htm

Enhance babies' awareness of being loved, accepted and safe.

Improve sleep patterns for babies.

Improve digestion and elimination for babies.

Reduce fussiness for babies and increase their comfort in their environment.

Improve neurological function in babies.

Increase weight gain for premature and full-term babies.

Increase lactation production for mothers.

Reduce postpartum depression for mothers.

Improve relaxation for both baby and parents.¹⁸⁶

Also, the benefits of breastfeeding – which requires the mother to stay home – are almost immeasurable.¹⁸⁷

Attachment theory has been well-studied for a half-century:

“When children do develop secure attachment, we know it can help set the stage for a child’s physical growth, learning, social relations (such as empathy), well-being and even their brain’s responses to stress.”¹⁸⁸

“Decades of research have shown that children who have a secure attachment are more likely to be better problem solvers, more emotionally intelligent and more prepared for school in terms of a child’s executive functioning (cognitive skills used to evaluate and control thoughts and actions) and their behaviours related to showing empathy and concern, helping, sharing and co-operating with others. They are also more likely to have better-quality friendships.”¹⁸⁹

Attachment theory also supports the value of having a stay-at-home mother:

“Drawing on theories of attachment and family instability, this study examined associations between early mother-child separation and subsequent maternal parenting behaviors and children’s outcomes in a sample of 2080 families who participated in the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project, the vast majority of whom were poor. Multiple regression models revealed that, controlling for baseline family and maternal characteristics and indicators of family instability, the occurrence of a mother-child separation of a week or longer within the first two years of life was related to higher levels of child negativity (at age 3) and aggression (at ages 3 and 5). The effect of separation on child aggression at age

¹⁸⁶ <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2013/09/the-benefits-of-touch-for-babies-parents.html>

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.healthline.com/health/breastfeeding/11-benefits-of-breastfeeding#benefits-for-baby>

¹⁸⁸ <https://theconversation.com/how-childrens-secure-attachment-sets-the-stage-for-positive-well-being-213423>

¹⁸⁹ <https://theconversation.com/how-childrens-secure-attachment-sets-the-stage-for-positive-well-being-213423>

5 was mediated by aggression at age 3, suggesting that the effects of separation on children's aggressive behavior are early and persistent."¹⁹⁰

Effects are observable when children spend only 10 hours a week away from mothers:

"After taking into account a host of potentially confounding background factors, results proved strikingly consistent with the risk-factor conclusion¹⁴—even though the opposite is implied by many writers.^{15,16} Typically emphasized is that no single feature of the day care experience in and of itself—quantity, type or quality of care—predicted attachment security, seeming to suggest no effect of day care on attachment security. Yet what the findings actually revealed was a "dual-risk" phenomenon.¹⁷ Although the strongest predictor of insecurity at 15 months of age was, as expected, insensitive mothering (observed at ages 6 and 15 months), this effect was amplified if any one of three distinct child-care conditions characterized the child's experience across the first 15 months of life: (a) averaging more than 10 hours per week in any type of care, irrespective of quality; (b) enrolment in more than a single child-care arrangement; and (c) exposure to low quality care. The first two amplifying conditions applied to most children being studied. But only the first, quantity of care, also contributed to the prediction of attachment insecurity at 36 months,¹⁸ again in interaction with insensitive mothering. Just as important was evidence that infants with extensive day care experience (a) were not less stressed in the SSP than other infants (see also¹⁹) and that (b) putatively independent behaviour was not misconstrued as avoidant behaviour."¹⁹¹

Also:

"The current study demonstrates the possibility of long-term links between the observed sensitivity/responsiveness of child care providers and the content of late adolescents' attachment states of mind—net of experiences with primary maternal and paternal caregivers. This is consistent with work that suggests children can form secondary attachment relationships with their non-familial child care providers, which may be beneficial (see Howes & Spieker, 2008 for further discussion). However, our results also suggest that these relations are weak in magnitude over the long-term. In line with attachment theory, the more significant caregiving context for the development of secure attachment representations appears to be with primary caregivers in the individual's family."¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3115616/>

¹⁹¹ <https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/attachment/according-experts/early-day-care-and-infant-mother-attachment-security>

¹⁹² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8478126/>

Most Spanking is Done in Anger (Return to page)

Most spanking is done in anger, out of a desire to punish – not in a state of calmness, out of a desire to instruct.

“This study tested the feasibility of using audio recorders to collect novel information about family interactions. Research into corporal punishment (CP) has relied, almost exclusively, on self-report data; audio recordings have the promise of revealing new insights into the use and immediate consequences of CP. So we could hear how parents respond to child conflicts, 33 mothers wore digital audio recorders for up to 6 evenings. We identified a total of 41 CP incidents, in 15 families and involving 22 parent–child dyads. These incidents were evaluated on 6 guidelines culled from the writings of CP advocates. The results indicated, contrary to advice, CP was not being used in line with 3 of the 6 recommendations and for 2 others, the results were equivocal. The last recommendation could not be assessed with audio. Latency analyses revealed children, after being hit, were misbehaving again within 10 minutes after 73% of the incidents. Mothers’ self reports about whether they used CP were found to correspond to the audio data in 81% of the cases. Among the mothers who were hitting, CP occurred at a much higher rate than the literature indicates. These results should be viewed as preliminary because of the small sample of families and the even smaller number of families who used CP.”

From: ‘Eavesdropping on the family: A pilot investigation of corporal punishment in the home’ 2014 – Holden, Williamson, Holland.

The Cost of Daycare

Let’s take a look at a mother in a rural area making \$100,000 and sending her kids to daycare:

- Pennsylvania (rough average of the country) These are rough estimates based on premium childcare prices in an average area:
 - Mother of Two
 - Starting Salary: \$100,000
 - State and Federal Taxes \$25,000
 - High Quality Infant Care \$12,156
 - High Quality Toddler Care \$11,556
 - Extra Car \$7,200
 - Car Maintenance \$999.96
 - Car Insurance \$2,013.96
 - Work Clothes \$1,800
 - Work Lunch \$5000
 - Gas \$1470
 - Take Home \$32,804
 - Assuming 50, 40 hour work weeks a year we have 2000 hours of work a year.

- $\$32,804 / 2000$ gives us $\$16.40$
- Work lunch = $\$20 \times 5 \times 50 = \5000
- Commute calculation:
 - 32 miles round trip (average commute) + 10 miles for daycare = 42 miles
 - $42 \text{ miles} \times 5 \times 50 = 10,500 / 25 \text{ miles per gal} = 420 \text{ gallons}$
 - Gas $\$3.5$ per gallon $\times 420 = \$1470$
 - She is NOT claiming the dependents on her tax return

Let's take a look at a mother in a larger city:

- Boston (big city – we are using
- These are rough estimates based on average prices in a more expensive city for childcare:
 - Mother of Two
 - Starting Salary: $\$100,000$
 - State and Federal Taxes $\$26,786$
 - High Quality Infant Care $\$20,913$
 - High Quality Toddler Care $\$15,095$
 - Extra Car $\$7,200$
 - Car Maintenance $\$999.96$
 - Car Insurance $\$2,013.96$
 - Work Clothes $\$1,800$
 - Work Lunch $\$5000$
 - Gas $\$1470$
 - Take Home $\$18,722$
 - Assuming 50, 40 hour work weeks a year we have 2000 hours of work a year.
 - $\$18,722 / 2000$ gives us $\$9.36$ per hour.
 - Work lunch = $\$20 \times 5 \times 50 = \5000
 - Commute calculation:
 - 32 miles round trip (average commute) + 10 miles for daycare = 42 miles
 - $42 \text{ miles} \times 5 \times 50 = 10,500 / 25 \text{ miles per gal} = 420 \text{ gallons}$
 - Gas $\$3.5$ per gallon $\times 420 = \$1470$
 - She is NOT claiming the dependents on her tax return

Lack of Benefit in Homework ([Return to chapter](#))

Alfie Kohn's 2006 book 'The Homework Myth' looked deeply into this subject and found there was no evidence that homework provided a clear benefit to students.

There is no evidence homework is beneficial:

- Students, parents, and some teachers frequently complain about homework.
- The prevalence of homework in U.S. education may be influenced by habits or international comparisons.
- **Scholastic article** states:
 - No evidence suggests homework benefits students below high school age.
 - Homework critics emphasize its encroachment on family time.
 - Schools might assign homework for the sake of assignment rather than addressing specific student needs.
- **Critiques of “busy work”:**
 - Both parents and students criticize assignments seen as busy work.
 - Such assignments include repetitive math problems, word searches, and reading logs.
 - Nancy Kalish claims many homework tasks are just busy work, turning learning into a chore.
 - Some students claim to spend more time on homework than in school.
 - Observation made: Slow-working students aren't given extended school hours but often have longer homework hours.
- **Efficiency of homework:**
 - Research from the Curry School of Education found no significant difference in grades related to homework completion.
- **Homework's primary objective:**
 - There's a positive link between time spent on homework and standardized test performance.

From: ‘The Homework Debate: The Case Against Homework’ – 2017¹⁹³

Free Play and Executive Function

Keeping children inside for most of the school day is destructive – especially for boys.

“Children showed greater attention during classroom circle time following outdoor play compared to after indoor play ($d = .34$). Children's non-sedentary activity during indoor play was not related to their subsequent task-based executive functions but showed negative associations with their subsequent classroom-based executive functions. Children's percentage of time spent in non-sedentary physical activity during outdoor play showed a quadratic association with subsequent task-based inhibitory control but linear associations with subsequent classroom-based attention and inhibitory control during circle time.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ (Alisa Bates, 2017)

¹⁹⁴ From: ‘Preschoolers’ executive functions following indoor and outdoor free play’ 2022 – Andrew E. Koepp, Elizabeth T. Gershoff, Darla M. Castelli, Amy E. Bryan.

Adaptation to Low-Oxygen Environment ([Return to chapter](#))

- Modern humans settled in diverse environments globally after leaving Africa around 100,000 years ago.
- Success in diverse climates due to both behavioral and biological adaptations.
- Challenges included cold weather, intense ultraviolet radiation, and high altitudes.
- Of these, high-altitude hypoxia is the only challenge that traditional technology can't mitigate.
- Tibetans, living at altitudes over 3,000 meters, are a prime example of high-altitude adaptation.
- The exact genetic mechanisms for long-term high-altitude survival are unclear.
- Genome-wide sequence variations in Tibetans were analyzed.
- Identified significant signs of selective sweep in two hypoxia-linked genes: EPAS1 and EGLN1.
- Tibetans significantly differ in these genes compared to non-Tibetan lowlanders (Han Chinese and Japanese).
- Tibetans have many unique sequence variations in these genes.
- Further study of seven Tibetan populations (1,334 people) showed prevalent selective sweep across the Himalayas.
- Indications of natural selection on EPAS1 and EGLN1 imply that Tibetans have acquired biological adaptations to high-altitude hypoxia over time.

From 'Genetic Variations in Tibetan Populations and High-Altitude Adaptation at the Himalayas' – 2011.¹⁹⁵

Abusive Parents Restitution Rate ([Return to Chapter](#))

Restitution is when someone has compensated their victim for harm done.

Primarily it consists of:

¹⁹⁵ (Yi Peng, 2011)

- Genuine curiosity for the harm done.
 - Asking their victim about what the perpetrator did, accepting their anger and criticism.
- Apologize and commit to never doing it again.
- Make restitution.
 - Go to therapy, anger management, whatever was needed to prove to them that your abusive behaviour would never happen again.
 - If financial or resource harm were done, make up for that financially or with resources. Not so much that the victim is happy the harm was done, but enough so that they are not materially set back by the event.

How often does this happen?

In short... never, not that we could find. We looked for:

- Restitution rates by abusive parents
- Abusive parents and compensation to children
- Studies on restitution by abusive parents
- How often do abusive parents apologize?
 - You will in fact find reports of children asking for an apology and the parents denying anything wrong ever happened.
- How often do abusive parents reform?
- How often do abusive parents go to therapy?

If we cannot find even these, what are the chances that the whole gamut of restitution is ever engaged in?

Abusive Husband Reform Rate ([Return to chapter](#))

- Study from 2008 used the Domestic Conflict Inventory to measure physical and emotional aggression in marriages.
- Sample size: 118 couples.
- Findings:
 - Physical aggression decreased by 43% annually.
 - Emotional aggression remained relatively stable over time.
 - Husbands exhibited a 3% increase in emotional aggression annually.
 - About 3 or 4 men in the study showed this change.
 - Marriages of longer duration exhibited less physical aggression.
- General trend from research:
 - Physical aggression tends to decrease with time.

- Emotional aggression remains consistent over the years.

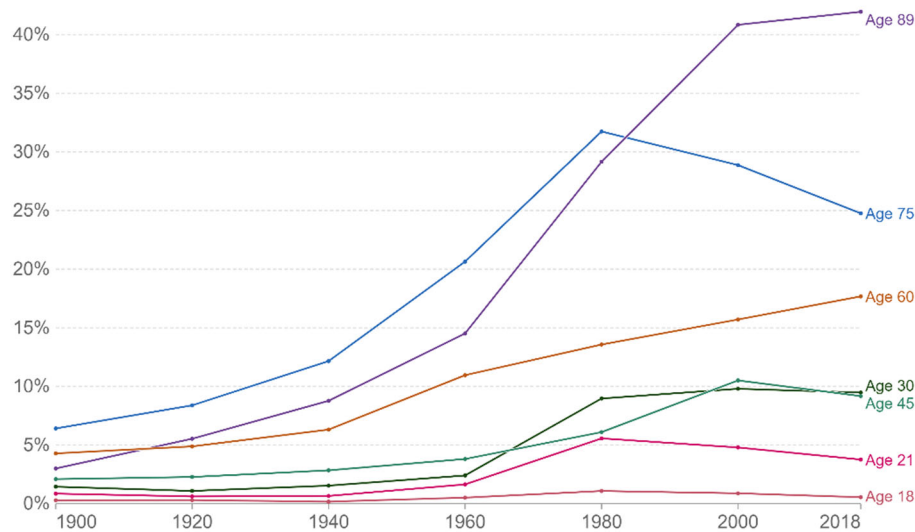
From 'Can Abusive Husbands Change?' – 2017¹⁹⁶

Isolation and Mental Illness ([Return to chapter](#))

Percentage of Americans living alone, by age

The share of Americans living alone, by age. An individual is defined as living alone where there is one person in the household and does not live in group quarters. See the source tab for more details.

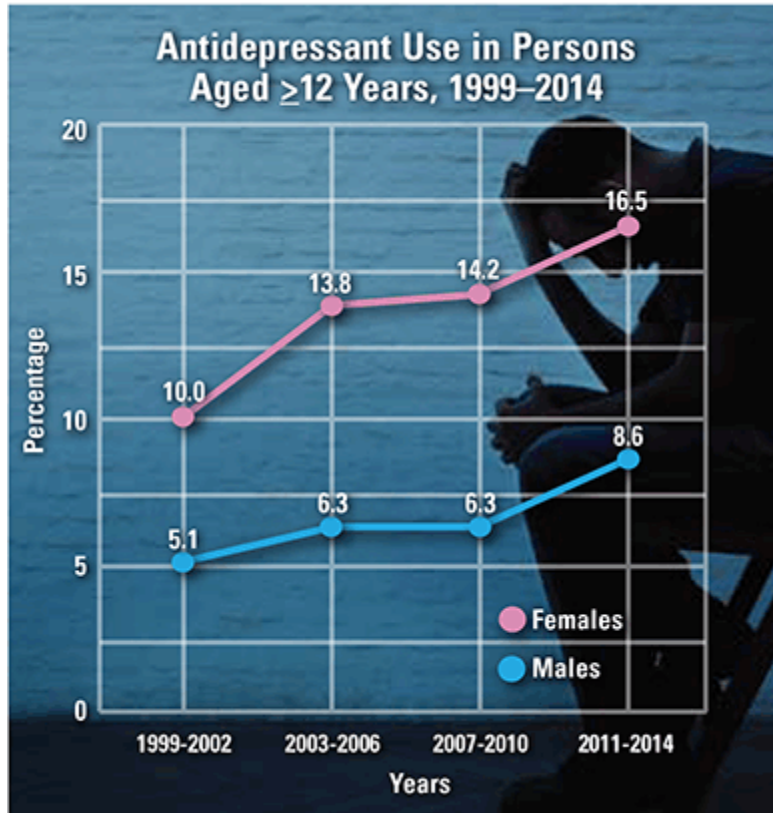
Our World
in Data



Source: IPUMS

OurWorldInData.org/social-connections-and-loneliness • CC BY

¹⁹⁶ (Can Abusive Husbands Change? [2 of 3], 2017)



<https://www.uspharmacist.com/article/trends-in-prevalence-of-mental-illness>

CDC Mental Health Data 2014:

- 25% of adults experienced mental-health disorders.
- Common comorbid conditions: cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity.
- 10% of young individuals affected by major depression.
- 4% of youth had severe mental illnesses (e.g., schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression).
- 50% of mental-health disorders manifest by age 14.
- 75% of these disorders start before age 24.

Latino Americans' Mental Health Trends:

- US-born Latinos: 30%-40% lifetime prevalence of mental illness.
- Non-Latino whites: ≥ 50% lifetime prevalence.
- Cuban, Mexican, other Latino immigrants: < 30% lifetime prevalence.
- Latino high-school boys vs. non-Latino white boys:
 - Suicidal thoughts: 10.7% vs. 10.5%.

- Suicide attempts: 6.9% vs. 4.6%.
- Latino high-school girls vs. non-Latino white girls:
 - Suicidal thoughts: 20.2% vs. 16.1%.
 - Suicide attempts: 13.5% vs. 7.9%.

African Americans' Mental Health Trends:

- 20% more African American adults reported severe psychological distress compared to white adults.
- Adults in poverty: 3x more likely to report serious psychological distress.
- African American teens vs. white teens:
 - Suicide attempts: 8.3% vs. 6.2%.

Treatment & Medication Use:

- 44% of adults with diagnosable issues received treatment.
- < 20% of children and adolescents received treatment.
- Antidepressant use (1999-2014):
 - Ages 12-19: Increased from 3.4% to 19.1% (for those ≥60 years).
 - Ages ≥12: 12.7% used antidepressants. By gender: 8.6% males, 16.5% females.
 - Racial disparity in use: non-Hispanic whites (16.5%) vs. Asians (3.3%), Hispanics (5%), non-Hispanic blacks (5.6%).
 - 65% increase over 15 years: 7.7% (1999-2002) to 12.7% (2011-2014).
 - Females 2x more likely than males to use antidepressants.
 - Highest use: non-Hispanic white females.
 - 68% of individuals (≥12 years) took antidepressants for 2+ years.
 - 21.4% males, 27.2% females took them for 10+ years.
 - Non-Hispanic white males and females most likely to use antidepressants.
 - 25% of antidepressant users had been on them for 10+ years.

From: 'Trends in Prevalence of Mental Illness' – 2017¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ (Somnath Pal, 2017)

Rate of Recidivism ([Return to chapter](#))

“The United States has some of the highest recidivism rates in the world. According to the National Institute of Justice, almost 44% of criminals released return before the first year out of prison. In 2005, about 68% of 405,000 released prisoners were arrested for a new crime within three years, and 77% were arrested within five years.”

From ‘Recidivism Rates by State’ – 2023¹⁹⁸

Loneliness as Lethal as Smoking ([Return to chapter](#))

Difference Between Being Alone and Feeling Lonely

- Loneliness and solitude aren't the same.
- Solitude can be beneficial if chosen.
- Elderly desiring company but not having visitors likely experience negative physical and emotional effects.
- Loneliness can occur even in company, especially if one feels misunderstood or not genuinely accepted.

Harmful Impacts of Loneliness

- Loneliness is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes daily.
- Lonely individuals have a 50% higher risk of premature death compared to those with healthy social ties.
- Loneliness can:
 - Lower immunity, increasing disease risk.
 - Boost inflammation, raising the risk for heart disease and other chronic conditions.
 - Magnify the emotional toll from stressors like financial issues, health challenges, and daily obstacles due to the lack of emotional support.

The Importance of Relationship Quality

- Quantity of social media connections doesn't equate to genuine social fulfillment.

¹⁹⁸ (Recidivism Rates by State [Updated May 2023], 2023)

- Quality of connections is more crucial than their number.
- Recognizing feelings of loneliness and isolation is vital.
- Engaging in meaningful social activities, such as meeting friends or volunteering, is key.
- Withdrawing further when feeling isolated can be harmful.

From 'Loneliness Is as Lethal as Smoking 15 Cigarettes Per Day. Here's What You Can Do About It' – 2018¹⁹⁹

The Importance of a Stay-At-Home-Mother

Child Development and the Importance of the First Seven Years

- The initial 7 years are often seen as critical in child development.
- Greek philosopher Aristotle highlighted the importance of these years in molding an individual.
- Outdated parenting styles and child development theories, such as preference for baby formula over breastfeeding and not holding babies too much, have been disproven.
- Research doesn't definitively state the first seven years determine a child's future, but they're significant for social skills development.

Brain Development

- Brain mapping systems evolve rapidly during early childhood.
- Before age 3, children form 1 million neural connections per minute.
- These neural connections are influenced by both genetic factors and interactions, particularly "serve and return" interactions.
- Serve and return interactions start with responding to an infant's cry and evolve to playing games as they grow into toddlers.
- This interaction shapes a child's understanding of social norms and communication.

Neural Connections and Life Stressors

- Neurons that activate simultaneously have stronger connections.
- Life stressors can disrupt serve and return interactions, but occasional interruptions don't necessarily impede brain development.

¹⁹⁹ (MORIN, 2018)

- Continuous disruptions can impact a child's development, emphasizing the need for parents to be engaged, especially during stressful periods.

Attachment Styles

- Mary Ainsworth's "strange situation" study identified four attachment styles: secure, anxious-insecure, anxious-avoidant, and disorganized.
- Securely attached children find comfort with other caregivers when parents aren't present and trust relationships.
- Attachment styles, formed early, can influence relationship satisfaction in adulthood.

Development by Age 7

- By 7 years old, children start to understand and communicate their feelings better.
- They begin to form peer relationships and are more vocal about their emotional needs.
- Their cognitive abilities improve, allowing for deeper understanding and metaphorical thinking.

Good Enough Parenting

- Simply meeting children's basic physical and emotional needs can significantly support healthy development.
- By age 7, children have accomplished many developmental tasks, preparing them for further growth.
- Parents play a role in demonstrating emotion management and resilience to their children.

In Summary

- While parents cannot control every facet of their child's life, consistent engagement and emotional support during the foundational years set the stage for future success and well-being.

From 'Do the First 7 Years of Life Really Mean Everything?' – 2017²⁰⁰

Furthermore:

Impact of Stay-at-Home Parenting on Children's School Success

- Parents staying at home can influence their children's academic achievement.
- Existing data indicates that staying home during a child's initial year offers long-term advantages.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ (Fraga, 2017)

²⁰¹ [Benefits of Staying Home](#)

- Other countries, unlike the U.S., offer paid parental leave during a child's first year.
- Debate continues over the impact on children once they're in elementary or middle school.
 - Secondary income is essential for many households.
 - However, the attention from an engaged parent is unmatched.
- A large majority of stay-at-home parents are women.
 - 70% of U.S. mothers with young children are now working, an increase from 10% in 1940.

Study Overview & Findings

- The study conducted by Eric Bettinger and two Norwegian researchers focused on Norway's "Cash for Care" program.
 - This program offers monetary incentives for parents to stay home with children under 3.
 - Prior to 1998, Norway provided quality subsidized daycare and 42 weeks of fully paid parental leave.
 - 84% of Norwegian mothers work outside the home.
- The study didn't directly focus on the infants and toddlers but on their older siblings as indirect beneficiaries.
 - Older children's benefits depended on the age gap with their younger siblings.
- About 68,000 children were studied, with their younger siblings born around the program's initiation.
- Only 5% of parents adjusted their employment decisions due to the new subsidies.
 - Higher-income families were more likely to opt out of work.
 - Lower-income families continued working, often depending on informal childcare.
- Older children in qualifying families showed academic improvement.
 - Grade point averages in 10th grade rose by .02 on a 1 to 6 scale in Norway, especially among kids aged 6-7 at the time of their sibling's birth.

Key Quotes & Insights

- Eric Bettinger: "Parents continue to be important much further along in a child's life than previously thought."
- The minor grade boost is statistically significant, implying that the parents who opted to stay at home had a major impact on their children's performance.

Potential Impact in the U.S.

- The benefits could be more significant for U.S. children due to limited affordable childcare options.
- However, the positive impact might be constrained to wealthier families.
 - Low-income families in Norway often kept working despite the subsidy.
 - Parental involvement is crucial, but policies aiming to enhance it might not benefit the neediest families.
- Overall, it's challenging to replicate the nurturing that a parent provides at home.

From: 'Eric Bettinger: Why Stay-at-Home Parents are Good for Older Children' – 2014²⁰²

Mothers Milk ([Return to chapter](#))

Is mother's milk best for the baby?

Let's review the data.

- **Healthy Nutrients:**
 - Nutrients in breastmilk are better absorbed by babies compared to formula. This includes carbohydrates and protein.
 - Supports brain growth and nervous system development.
 - Breastfed babies often score higher on intelligence tests in the future.
 - Enhances baby's vision due to specific fats in breastmilk.
- **Prevention of Infections:**
 - Contains numerous disease-fighting agents.
 - Reduces the risk of infections leading to hospitalization.
 - Lower rates of digestive, lung, and ear infections in breastfed babies.
 - Prematurely born breastfed babies have a reduced risk of NEC (necrotizing enterocolitis).
 - If infected while breastfeeding, the severity of the infection is likely to be diminished.
- **Prevention of Other Health Conditions:**
 - Reduces the risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
 - Lower probability of developing asthma and allergy-related skin problems.

²⁰² (Andrews, 2014)

- Reduced risk of milk allergies compared to formula-fed babies.
- Healthier gut bacteria, which aids digestion and disease resistance.
- Diminished risk of leukemia, diabetes, and obesity in the long run.
- Mothers who breastfeed often experience post-pregnancy weight loss and reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer, as well as diabetes.
- **Exclusive Breastfeeding:**
 - Recommended for the first 6 months.
 - Excludes giving water, sugar water, formula, or solids within this timeframe, unless advised by a healthcare provider.
 - AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) advises additional vitamin D for breastfed babies.
- **Risks of Partial Breastfeeding:**
 - Exclusively breastfeeding offers maximum health protection.
 - Introducing formula or other liquids might result in:
 - Challenges in breastfeeding.
 - Reduced milk production.
 - Decreased confidence in breastfeeding.
 - Less frequent breastfeeding.
 - Discontinuation of breastfeeding before 6 months.

From: 'Breast Milk Is Best' – 2021²⁰³

The Hedonic Treadmill ([Return to chapter](#))

Can we find lasting happiness in anything except virtue?

Here is the data on the diminishing returns of seeking happiness through experiences and other distractions.

Hedonic Adaptation and Its Effects

- **Definition and Background**
 - Hedonic adaptation, or “the hedonic treadmill”, denotes the return to a base happiness level regardless of life events.

²⁰³ (Breast Milk Is Best, n.d.)

- It reflects how people acclimate to emotional stimuli and hence need stronger stimuli for the same emotional response.
- **Terminologies**
 - **Hedonic vs. Hedonism**
 - Hedonic: Relates to the pleasure or displeasure from experiences.
 - Hedonism: Philosophical/psychological concept where pleasure (and avoiding pain) is the main motivator for humans.
 - **Hedonic Consumption and Hedonic Value**
 - Hedonic consumption: Buying goods/services for pleasure after fulfilling basic needs.
 - Hedonic value: The personal pleasure-derived value assigned to a good/service.
- **Illustrative Example**
 - Buying a stationary bike initially offers joy (hedonic value), but over time, its novelty fades leading to hedonic adaptation.
- **Real-Life Observations**
 - Lottery winners, after an initial happiness spike, return to their initial happiness levels.
 - People with major physical injuries like losing their legs tend to revert to their original happiness levels after adjusting.
 - The first taste of a treat is more pleasurable than subsequent bites.
- **Research on Happiness Control**
 - 50% of our happiness is genetically influenced.
 - 10% is influenced by circumstances like birthplace and upbringing.
 - The remaining 40% is more within our control.
- **Pleasures vs. Gratifications**
 - Pleasures: Short-lived delights with strong emotional components that fade quickly.
 - Gratifications: Activities offering a "flow" experience where time flies; more resistant to hedonic adaptation and increase in enjoyment over time.
- **Benefits of Pleasures and Gratifications**
 - Pleasures offer quick mood uplifts and need minimal effort.
 - Gratifications require more effort but have higher and longer-lasting rewards.

Emotional Abuse and the Amygdala ([Return to chapter](#))

What happens to some of the deepest parts of the brain when a child is tortured by emotional abuse?

Let's review the data.

- **Background:**
 - Childhood maltreatment linked with increased risk of adult mental disorders, e.g., depression and anxiety.
 - Amygdala, part of the limbic system, plays a role in emotional processes and has malfunctions in various psychiatric disorders.
 - Study's goal: Investigate the connection between childhood maltreatment and amygdala-based functional networks and their impact on adult depression and anxiety.
- **Methods:**
 - Study included 90 healthy Chinese volunteers.
 - Resting-state fMRI experiment conducted.
 - Childhood maltreatment measured using Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ-SF).
 - Also assessed: depression and anxiety levels.
 - Analyzed links between CTQ-SF scores and bilateral amygdala gray matter volume and its resting-state functional connectivity (RSFC) with specific regions.
 - Adjusted for variables: sex and age.
 - Analysis done to determine if connections could predict depression and anxiety levels.
- **Results:**
 - Significant negative connection found between childhood maltreatment and RSFC of left amygdala with anterior insula.
 - Detailed analysis: negative link specifically with left centromedial amygdala subregion.
 - This subregion's connection influences the association between childhood emotional abuse levels and depression/anxiety.
- **Conclusion:**
 - Evidence shows changed RSFC in the centromedial amygdala and anterior insula linked to childhood maltreatment.

²⁰⁴ (Elizabeth Scott, 2022)

- This change influences depression and anxiety levels in adulthood.

Emotion and Amygdala technical details: (Return to chapter) ([statistical values explanation](#))

Amygdala Functional Connectivity Analysis:

- CTQ total scores displayed a negative correlation with the RSFC of left amygdala and left anterior insula.
 - Significant data: ($k = 13$, $t = 3.80$, $p = 0.016$)
- After accounting for age and sex, a permutation test confirmed:
 - A negative association between the RSFC of left AMY-INS and CTQ scores.
 - Quantitative findings: ($r = -0.337$, $p = 0.003$)
- No notable connections observed between the RSFC of the amygdala and other regions (e.g., hippocampus, ACC, mOFC, putamen, and precuneus).

Amygdala Sub-Regions Connectivity:

- RSFCs of amygdala sub-regions revealed:
 - A negative correlation between CTQ total scores and the RSFC of left CMA and left anterior insula.
 - Significant data: ($k = 18$, $t = 4.06$, $p = 0.007$)
 - A permutation test verified a negative connection between RSFC of left CMA-INS and CTQ total scores.
 - Quantitative findings: ($r = -0.36$, $p = 0.001$)

Relation with Childhood Maltreatment Subtypes:

- A specific permutation test identified:
 - A negative correlation between RSFC of left CMA-INS and emotional abuse.
 - Quantitative findings: ($r = -0.229$, $p = 0.035$)
- No significant results linked to other CTQ subtypes.

Moderation Analyses:

- A noteworthy moderation effect was detected:
 - The interaction between RSFC of left CMA-left anterior insula and CTQ scores predicted depression levels.

- Quantitative findings: ($R^2 = 0.09$, $F_{3,86} = 3.06$, $p = 0.03$; $B = 0.89$, $S.E. = 0.38$, $t_{86} = 2.36$, $p = 0.02$)
- Further moderation analyses considering emotional abuse resulted in:
 - Predicted levels of depression due to interaction between RSFC of left CMA-INS and childhood emotional abuse.
 - Quantitative findings: ($R^2 = 0.17$, $F_{3,86} = 5.79$, $p = 0.001$; $B = 4.18$, $S.E. = 1.19$, $t_{86} = 3.51$, $p < 0.001$)
 - Predicted levels of trait anxiety due to the same interaction.
 - Quantitative findings: ($R^2 = 0.16$, $F_{3,86} = 5.44$, $p = 0.002$; $B = 3.8$, $S.E. = 1.42$, $t_{86} = 2.68$, $p = 0.009$)

From: 'Altered centromedial amygdala functional connectivity in adults is associated with childhood emotional abuse and predicts levels of depression and anxiety' – 2022²⁰⁵

Statistical Values Explanation: ([Return to guide](#))

Often we will omit these values as most readers will not be interested and for those that are, the relevant studies are thoroughly cited. However, when we choose to include these values, we have created this reference to help understand them.

1. **r value:**

- Represents the **correlation coefficient**.
- Measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables.
- Values range from -1 to 1, where:
 - -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation.
 - 0 indicates no correlation.
 - 1 indicates a perfect positive correlation.

2. **F value:**

²⁰⁵ (Lizhu Luo, 2022)

- Used in the context of an **ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)** test.
- Compares the variance (or spread) between different groups to the variance within those groups.
- A large F value typically suggests that the means of some groups are significantly different from others.

3. **t value:**

- Comes from the **t-test**.
- Measures the size of the difference relative to the variation in the data.
- The bigger the absolute value of t, the more likely there's a significant difference.

4. **k value:**

- In many neuroimaging studies, "k" represents the **cluster size** in voxel-based analyses.
- Indicates how many contiguous voxels (3D pixels in the brain scan) are part of a significant cluster.

5. **p value:**

- Represents the **probability**.
- In hypothesis testing, it's the probability of observing a statistic (or one more extreme) assuming the null hypothesis is true.
- A commonly used threshold for significance is 0.05. If $p < 0.05$, the result is often considered statistically significant, meaning it's unlikely the observed effect is due to random chance.

6. **β (Beta) value:**

- These values come from regression analyses, which examine how one variable affects another.
- The β value represents how much the outcome (or dependent variable) changes when the predictor (or independent variable) changes by one standard unit.
- If β is positive, it means the outcome increases as the predictor increases. If it's negative, the outcome decreases as the predictor increases.
- For instance, a β of 0.5 would mean for every 1-unit increase in the predictor, the outcome increases by half a standard unit. Conversely, a β of -0.5 would mean the outcome decreases by half a standard unit for every 1-unit increase in the predictor.

7. **R² values:**

- This is a measure of how well our predictor(s) explain the variability in the outcome.
- It's often expressed as a percentage.

- For instance, an R^2 value of 0.5 (or 50%) means that half the variation in the outcome can be explained by the predictor(s) we're examining. The other 50% is due to other factors not included in the model or random variation.
- The closer R^2 is to 1 (or 100%), the better our predictor(s) explain the variability in the outcome. If it's close to 0, they don't explain much at all.

These values are fundamental in statistical analyses as they help researchers determine the validity and significance of their findings.

Toddler “word spurt” (Return to Chapter)

What happens to toddlers during their times of greatest language acquisition and development?

- Developmental Milestones: Language Development
 - At 1 year:
 - Understands about 50 words.
 - Speaks a few words.
 - 20-24 months:
 - Understands 150-200 words.
 - Speaks 50-150 words.
 - Experience ‘fast mapping’ with up to 8 new words learned daily.
 - 24 months:
 - Speaks 250 words.
 - Can answer and ask questions.
 - Names familiar household objects.
 - Expresses desires verbally.
 - 30 months:
 - Understands 500 words.
 - Speaks 250-500 words more clearly.
 - Uses 2-word sentences.
 - Begins discussing feelings.
 - 3 years:
 - Speaks in full sentences.
 - Starts understanding grammar rules.
 - By kindergarten:
 - Knows about 10,000 words.

Study:

- Day long audio recordings taken for 146 infants and toddlers monthly for 6 months.

- Language Environment Analysis software used to estimate daily adult words and adult-child conversational turns.
- Follow-up evaluations conducted at ages 9 to 14, which included language and cognitive testing.
 1. 2 to 17 months
 2. 18 to 24 months
 3. ≥ 25 months

Results:

- Conversational turn counts from 18 to 24 months accounted for:
 1. 14% to 27% variance in IQ
 2. 14% to 27% variance in verbal comprehension
 3. 14% to 27% variance in receptive and/or expressive vocabulary scores a decade later, even after accounting for SES.
- Adult word counts from 18 to 24 months correlated with language outcomes but showed reduced significance after controlling for SES.

From: Language Experience in the Second Year of Life and Language Outcomes in Late Childhood – 2018²⁰⁶

Obesity During Pregnancy: [\(Return to Chapter\)](#)

What happens to pregnant women and their babies if the mother is overweight?

Impact of a Mother's Weight on Pregnancy Outcomes

- Abnormal growth of the fetus is correlated with a mother's obesity.
- As expectant mothers gain weight, the chances of giving birth to underweight babies decrease, but this advantage fades when her BMI surpasses 30 kg/m².
- Pregnant obese women have a 2-3 times increased likelihood of having a baby with macrosomia (baby weighing ≥ 4500 g).
- The relationship between a mother's weight and fetal macrosomia increases with her weight.
- Rates of babies with macrosomia by mother's weight:
 - Women with obesity: 13.3%
 - Extremely obese women: 14.6%
 - Average weight women: 8.3%

²⁰⁶ (Jill Gilkerson, et al., 2018)

- The worldwide rise in macrosomic babies primarily stems from increasing maternal weight, with diabetes in mothers being a secondary factor.
- Babies born to overweight mothers tend to have increased fat content and body fat percentage.
- A significant portion of this is due to the mother's weight gain during her pregnancy.
- Babies of obese mothers face heightened risks of neural tube defects (NTD).
 - A BMI increase of 1 kg/m² in mothers corresponds to a 7% rise in NTD risks for the baby.
 - NTD risk based on mother's weight:
 - Slightly overweight: OR 1.22
 - Obese: OR 1.70
 - Extremely obese: OR 3.11
- Theories behind this heightened NTD risk include diminished folic acid availability, prolonged low oxygen conditions, and increased metabolic by-products.

Appendix 1: The Environmental Impact of Divorce

We are constantly told that we must do everything in our power to reduce our negative impacts on the environment – recycle, don't wear jeans, don't drive, don't use plastic straws or bottles – you name it!

We are told that no inconvenience is too great for the sake of preserving nature's scarce resources.

Well, let's put that approach to the test.

Women initiate the vast majority of divorces, and the number one reason women give for breaking up a family is: *dissatisfaction*.

If we are supposed to put up with massive and endless inconveniences, dissatisfactions and difficulties in order to preserve nature and her scarce resources, then surely environmentalists should encourage families to stay together!

Those who divorce due to shallow and selfish reasons should be condemned and castigated, right?

Let's look at the environmental Impact of divorce.

Factors:

GPT4 Generated: (double check)

- **Total Estimated Carbon Footprint for Legal Proceedings:**
142.24kg+37.5kg+5kg=184.74kg of CO₂ for both parties
- Energy Consumption for Heating and Cooling:

- The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimated in 2020 that an average U.S. residential utility customer used about 877 kWh per month or about 10,524 kWh per year. Let's consider heating and cooling to be around 50% of that (an estimate), so 5,262 kWh per year.
- If two households operate independently, this energy consumption doubles to 10,524 kWh. The difference or the additional energy due to the divorce is 5,262 kWh.
- Carbon Emissions for Electricity Generation:
 - 0.92 lbs of CO₂ per kWh. This value varies based on the mix of renewable versus fossil fuel sources in a given region, but we'll use this average for our calculations.
 - So, the additional carbon footprint due to the extra 5,262 kWh is:
 - $5,262 \text{ kWh} * 0.92 \text{ lbs/kWh} = 4,840.64 \text{ lbs of CO}_2$ or 2.42 tons of CO₂ per year.
- Water Heating:
 - Water heating is another major energy consumer in households. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported that in 2020, water heating accounted for about 14% of residential energy consumption.
 - If we take the earlier estimation of 10,524 kWh/year for a household's total energy consumption, water heating would account for roughly 1,473 kWh/year (14% of 10,524 kWh).
 - For two households, the increase due to divorce would be another 1,473 kWh. Using the previous emission factor of 0.92 lbs of CO₂ per kWh, this leads to an additional:
 - $1,473 \text{ kWh} * 0.92 \text{ lbs/kWh} = 1,355.16 \text{ lbs}$ or 0.678 tons of CO₂ per year.
- Appliances and Lighting:
 - This category is vast, encompassing everything from refrigerators and ovens to light bulbs. If we group them together and assume they account for, say, 20% of a household's energy consumption (this is a rough estimate), that's:
 - $10,524 \text{ kWh/year} * 20\% = 2,105 \text{ kWh/year}$.
 - The additional footprint for two households would be another 2,105 kWh, leading to:
 - $2,105 \text{ kWh} * 0.92 \text{ lbs/kWh} = 1,936.6 \text{ lbs}$ or 0.968 tons of CO₂ per year.
- Water Usage, Waste Generation, and Secondary Impacts:
 - This becomes even more complex, as the carbon footprint of water includes its extraction, treatment, distribution, and wastewater treatment. Waste generation involves not just the disposal of the waste but also the production of everything that's thrown away.
 - For a rough estimation, if we assume these combined secondary impacts equal another 20% of the household's energy-related carbon footprint, taking our initial 2.42 tons for heating and cooling:
 - $2.42 \text{ tons} * 20\% = 0.484 \text{ tons of CO}_2$ per year.
- Extra food and food waste: 2.92 tons of CO₂e per year
- Second set of toys: 0.1 tons of CO₂e per year
- Furniture: $(70 + 60 + 40) * 0.5 = 85 \text{ kg CO}_2\text{e}$
- Kitchen Appliances: $(200 + 100 + 35 + 80) * 0.5 = 207.5 \text{ kg CO}_2\text{e}$
- Car: $6,000 * 0.5 = 3,000 \text{ kg CO}_2\text{e}$ (assuming only one partner needs to purchase a new vehicle)

- Second Home:
 - Adding these up, constructing an average home could result in a carbon footprint of around 70-80 tons of CO₂.
 - Plus maintaining the average lawn produces 0.48 metric tons (1,048 lbs) of CO₂ per yr.
- Extra driving shared custody:
 - Distance & Frequency:
 - Assume that one round trip to exchange the kids is 20 miles.
 - Assume this exchange happens twice a week (once to drop off and once to pick up).
 - Calculation:
 - Weekly Mileage: 2 trips/week * 20 miles/trip = 40 miles/week
 - Yearly Mileage: 40 miles/week * 52 weeks/year = 2,080 miles/year
 - Yearly CO₂ Emissions: 2,080 miles/year * 404 grams/mile = 840,320 grams or 840.32 kg CO₂/year
- Emotional Impact:
 - Vacations:
 - Flight: A single round-trip flight from New York to Paris emits about 1 metric ton of CO₂ per passenger.
 - Accommodation: Staying in a hotel could have a footprint of around 15-30 kg of CO₂ per night, depending on the hotel's efficiency.
 - Local Transportation, Food, Activities: This can vary a lot but might add another 50-100 kg of CO₂ for a week-long trip.
 - Goods for Comfort:
 - Clothing: The carbon footprint of a cotton shirt is around 2-10 kg of CO₂, depending on various factors. Buying a new wardrobe could thus have a significant footprint.
 - Electronics: Manufacturing a single smartphone can emit 60-70 kg of CO₂. Larger electronics like TVs or computers would have higher footprints.
 - Comfort Food: Eating an extra chocolate bar might add 1-3 kg of CO₂. Regular indulgence can add up over time.
 - Other Activities:
 - Spa Day: The carbon footprint here would come from the energy use of the spa, products used, and transportation. Maybe 5-30 kg of CO₂ for a full day, depending on treatments and location.
 - Going Out More: Taking a taxi can emit about 0.3 kg of CO₂ per mile. Going to a club or restaurant would involve energy for lighting, music, food preparation, etc.
 - Adding up these numbers for a hypothetical person:
 - A vacation might produce: 1,100 – 1,200 kg of CO₂ for a week-long trip to Paris from New York.
 - Comfort purchases might add: 100 – 200 kg of CO₂ if they bought several items.
 - Additional activities might produce: 50 – 100 kg of CO₂ over a month.

- This gives a total of around 1,250 – 1,500 kg of CO₂ for this hypothetical person in the aftermath of a divorce. Remember, these are very rough estimates and actual values can vary based on countless factors.

Overall Carbon Footprint of Divorce

- Total One-Time Carbon Footprint:
 - Approximately 75.534 – 86.034 tons of CO₂e.
- Recurring Carbon Impacts:
 - Total Recurring Carbon Footprint: Approximately 8.892 tons of CO₂e per year.
 - Sources:
 - Lawn: <https://palebluedot.llc/carbon-copy/2015/7/16/the-carbon-footprint-of-a-lawn>

* Maintaining the average lawn produces 0.48 metric tons (1,048 lbs) of CO₂ per yr.

The Financial Impact of Divorce

One way of measuring the environmental impact of divorce is to review its financial impact, since to a large degree monetary costs reflect the consumption of nature's scarce and precious resources,

Initial Costs:

1. **Second Home:**
 - Estimate: \$200,000
2. **Furniture:**
 - Estimate: \$5,000 – \$10,000
3. **Moving/Relocation:**
 - Estimate: \$1,000 – \$5,000
4. **Extra Car:**
 - Estimate: \$20,000
5. **Kitchen Appliances:**
 - Estimate: \$1,000 – \$3,000
6. **Household Goods and Tools:**
 - Estimate: \$500 – \$2,000
7. **State and Federal Taxes (Initial Implications):**

- Change in Tax Bracket: \$2,000 to \$5,000
- Capital Gains from Sale of Assets: \$15,000 (average)
- Combined Tax Estimate: \$17,000 to \$20,000

8. Legal Costs of Divorce:

- Average Legal Fees: \$10,000

Initial Costs Calculation:

- \$200,000 (home) + \$7,500 (average furniture cost) + \$3,000 (average moving cost) + \$20,000 (car) + \$2,000 (average appliances) + \$1,250 (average household goods) + \$18,500 (average tax implications) + \$10,000 (legal fees) = **\$262,250**
- \$200,000 (home) + \$10,000 (furniture) + \$5,000 (moving) + \$20,000 (car) + \$3,000 (appliances) + \$2,000 (household goods) + \$20,000 (tax implications) + \$10,000 (legal fees) = **\$270,000**

Range for Initial Costs: \$262,250 to \$270,000

Annual Recurring Costs:

1. Second Lawn to Care:

- Estimate: \$600/year

2. Extra Food and Food Waste, Eating Out More:

- Estimate: \$3,650/year

3. Extra Driving/Shared Custody:

- Estimate: \$500 – \$1,000/year

4. Extra Commute for Both Parents Working:

- Estimate: \$500 – \$2,000/year

5. Mental Health Costs/Therapy/Medication:

- Estimate: \$2,000 – \$5,000/year

6. Increased Health Costs:

- Estimate: \$500 – \$2,000/year

7. Second Set of Toys for Kids:

- Estimate: \$200 – \$500/year

8. State and Federal Taxes (Annual Implications):

- Change in Tax Bracket: \$2,000 to \$5,000

Annual Recurring Costs Calculation:

- \$600 (lawn) + \$3,650 (food) + \$750 (average driving cost) + \$1,250 (average commute cost) + \$3,500 (average mental health cost) + \$1,250 (average health costs) + \$350 (average toys cost) + \$3,500 (average tax implications) = **\$14,850/year**
- \$600 (lawn) + \$3,650 (food) + \$1,000 (driving) + \$2,000 (commute) + \$5,000 (mental health) + \$2,000 (health) + \$500 (toys) + \$5,000 (tax implications) = **\$19,750/year**

Range for Annual Costs: \$14,850 to \$19,750/year

Given the breakdown of the various costs, the overall financial implication of divorce can have an initial cost in the range of **\$262,250 to \$270,000** and ongoing annual costs between **\$14,850 and \$19,750**.

Parts of the Brain Associated with Empathy ([Return to chapter](#))

The most scarce and precious resource in the world is *empathy*.

Being able to accurately process the emotions of others is essential to building a peaceful and rational world.

Let's look at the basic building blocks of empathy in the mind.

- **Anterior insula:** Processes feelings and emotions, allowing you to resonate with the emotional states of others.²⁰⁷
- **Anterior cingulate cortex:** Recognizes pain and distress in others, reacting to others' emotional pain.²⁰⁸
- **Medial prefrontal cortex:** Supports perspective-taking, helping you understand and reflect on how someone else might be feeling or thinking.²⁰⁹
- **Amygdala:** Processes and detects emotions, particularly those that signal threat or distress, making it central to emotional empathy.²¹⁰
- **Temporoparietal junction:** Underlies the ability to understand the beliefs and intentions of others, a key component of theory of mind.²¹¹
- **Inferior frontal gyrus:** Facilitates emotional resonance, helping you connect with the emotions you see in others.²¹²
- **Somatosensory cortex:** Enables mirroring sensations, letting you feel a semblance of the physical pain or touch that another person is experiencing.²¹³

²⁰⁷ (Xiaosi Gu, 2013)

²⁰⁸ (TANIA SINGER, 2004)

²⁰⁹ (Kevin N Ochsner, 2004)

²¹⁰ (Jean Decety P. L., 2004)

²¹¹ (R Saxe, 2003)

²¹² (Simone G. Shamay-Tsoory, 2009)

²¹³ (Okuno, 2014)

- **Ventral premotor cortex:** Plays a role in action understanding and imitation, helping you interpret the actions and intentions of others.²¹⁴
- **Dorsomedial prefrontal cortex:** Assists in distinguishing your emotions and perspective from those of others, aiding self-other differentiation in empathy.²¹⁵
- **Orbitofrontal cortex:** Involved in emotional decision-making and predicting emotional outcomes, guiding empathetic responses based on predicted emotional states.²¹⁶
- **Posterior superior temporal sulcus (pSTS):** Processes biological motion, helping in reading others' actions and potentially their intentions.²¹⁷
- **Right temporo-parietal junction (rTPJ):** Focuses on theory of mind tasks, aiding in comprehending the mental and emotional states of others.²¹⁸
- **Ventral tegmental area (VTA) and nucleus accumbens:** Central to the reward system, making you feel good when seeing others happy or rewarded.²¹⁹
- **Oxytocinergic system:** Although not a distinct brain region, oxytocin is key to fostering social bonds, trust, and forming empathetic connections. Produced in the hypothalamus, it modulates various empathy-related regions like the amygdala and ventromedial prefrontal cortex.²²⁰

Developing these complex systems requires attentive and loving parenting when from birth to at least 5-7 years of age.

If your childhood was traumatic, healing is essential to ending poverty, war, disease, debt and dysfunction of almost every kind.

Learning how to love means no longer creating those trained to fear and hate.

²¹⁴ (Luca Bonini, 2010)

²¹⁵ (Simon B. Eickhoff, 2016)

²¹⁶ (Decety, 2010)

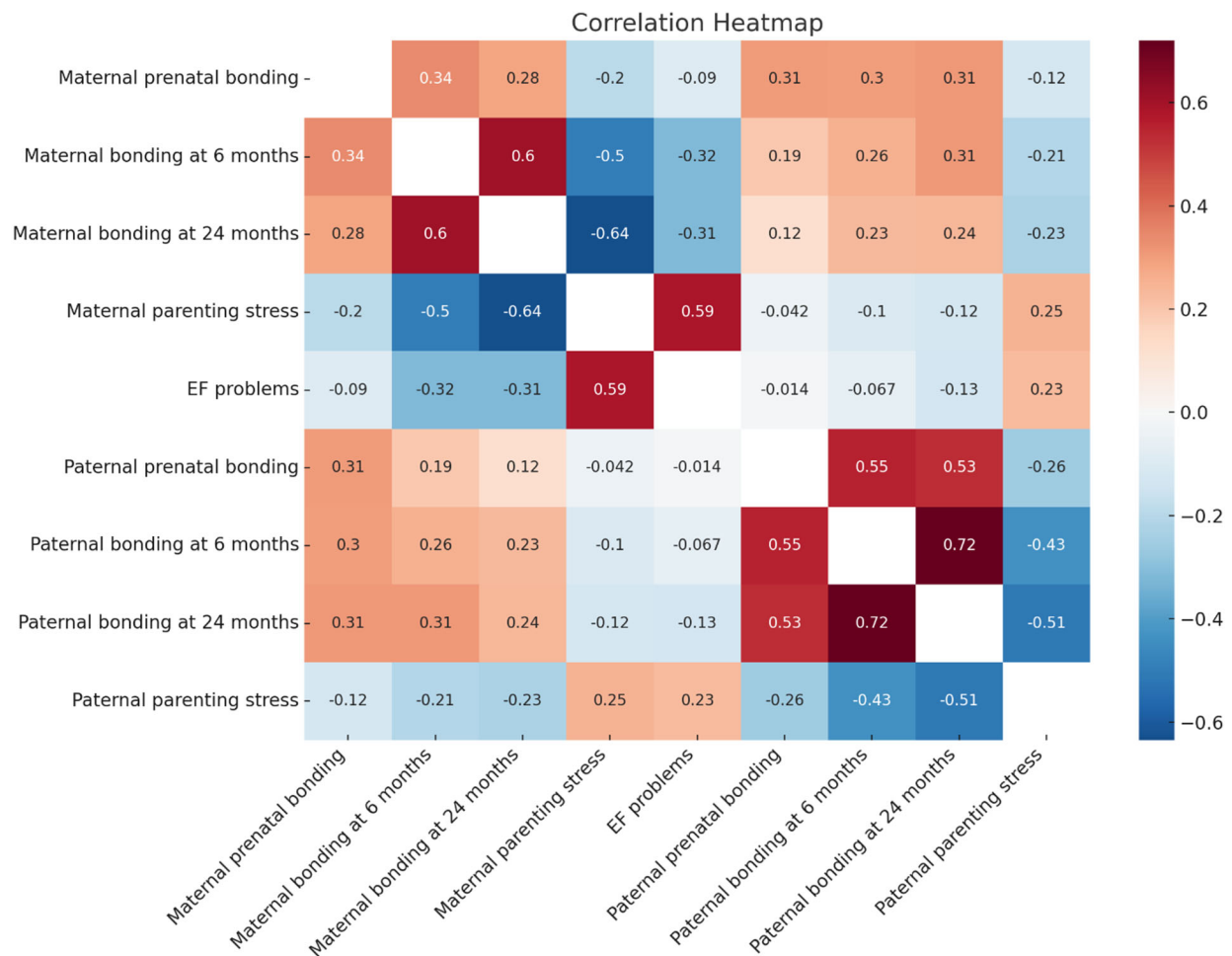
²¹⁷ (Jean Decety J. M., 2014)

²¹⁸ (R Saxe, 2003)

²¹⁹ (Schultz, 1998)

²²⁰ (Michael Kosfeld, 2005)

Early Parent Child Bond and Stress: [\(Return to Chapter\)](#)



Early executive functioning significantly influences children's cognitive skills and behavior. Parenting behavior is a known factor in child executive functioning, but the impact of parental emotions and thoughts on this has been insufficiently explored. This study (with 335 mothers and 261 fathers) investigates links between parental bonding, parenting stress, and child executive functioning. Assessments occurred during pregnancy (26 weeks), and at 6 and 24 months postpartum, with parenting

stress and executive functioning measured at 24 months. Results showed that bonding negatively correlated with parenting stress for both mothers and fathers.

From: Longitudinal Associations Between Parental Bonding, Parenting Stress, and Executive Functioning in Toddlerhood – 2017

Additional Information

The Importance of Sleep

From: 'Benefits of Healthy Sleep' by Marc Weissbluth²²¹

"Insufficient sleep degrades the brain's function. The more sleep the brain gets, the better it functions. The effects of inadequate sleep on brain function and performance are well-documented."

- Decreased focus by a significant percentage.
- Impaired decision-making capabilities.
- Rise in irritability by a notable percentage.
- Notable decrease in mood positivity.
- Marked drop in motivation.
- Slower response and reaction time by a certain percentage.
- Lowered resilience to stress.
- Enhanced likelihood of physical harm.
- Lengthier injury recovery period by a percentage.

Promoting Healthy Sleep

- Essential for optimal performance.
- Considerations for good sleep:
 - Sleep environment.
 - Pre-sleep routine.
 - Sleep schedule aligned with natural circadian rhythm.

²²¹ (Weissbluth, 2022)

Sleep Environment

- Optimal sleep in quiet, dark environments with comfortable temperature.
- Pre-teens and teenagers think they can sleep anywhere with ambient noise.
- Research indicates environmental sounds disrupt sleep, reducing its restorative value.

Pre-Sleep Routine

- Stress interferes with sleep.
- Routines that help winding down before sleep can facilitate transitioning into sleep and increase sleep duration.
- Activities like watching TV, playing video games, and online chatting arouse the brain and delay sleep onset. They should be avoided before sleep.

Sleep Schedule

- Best performance achieved by children who sleep consistently, aligning with natural circadian rhythm.
- Sleep duration and continuity maximized with this alignment.
- Real-life family events can be unpredictable, affecting sleep.
- Common causes of sleep disruptions include:
 - Shift work (i.e., late bedtimes for schoolwork or social activities).
 - Social jet lag.

Shift Work

- Humans naturally alert during day and sleep at night.
- Nighttime activities, like staying up late for tasks or socializing, degrade sleep quality even if children sleep during the day.
- Adapting to abnormal sleep schedules is possible but never complete. It impacts waking performance and daytime sleep quality.

Social Jet Lag

- Staying up late and sleeping in on weekends compared to school days leads to social jet lag.
- Similar effects to traveling eastward across time zones.

From: 'Does Impaired Sleep in Children Cause Mental Health Problems in Children?' by Marc Weissbluth²²²

²²² (Weissbluth, Does Impaired Sleep in Children Cause Mental Health Problems in Children?, 2023)

- All 35 studies concur that children with poor sleep have an increased risk for negative mental health outcomes.
- From a sample of 800 children aged 6 and 8:
 - Short sleep duration led to a higher percentage of emotional disorder symptoms 2 years later.
 - Emotional disorders didn't influence sleep durations at any age.
 - This research used objective sleep measurements and clinical psychologist interviews, not just parent reports or self-assessments.
 - "Short sleep" is defined as sleeping 30% less than the age group's average duration, emphasizing even slight sleep duration differences' clinical significance.
- For children aged 30-36 months:
 - The study involved nap allowance vs. a single afternoon nap deprivation.
 - Videotapes and sleep measurements were used for objectivity.
 - Children were challenged with solvable or unsolvable puzzles.
 - After no-nap challenges:
 - Positive emotions decreased with the solvable puzzle.
 - Negative emotions increased with the unsolvable puzzle.
 - There was decreased recognition of puzzle errors and reluctance to admit inability.
 - Increased behaviors like thumb sucking, hair twirling, lip or nail biting were observed.
 - Greater fixation on incorrect puzzle pieces and false puzzle completion claims were noted.
 - Reduced joy and pride were evident even when the solvable puzzle was completed.
- Studies indicate the significance of slight variations in sleep duration on mental health.
 - Children aged 7-11 years:
 - 1-hour sleep adjustment over 5 nights.
 - Sleep extension by 27% led to better emotional stability and reduced impulsive behavior.

- Sleep reduction heightened irritability, frustration, and emotional impulse issues.
- Adolescents:
 - Extending sleep by 1 hour over 5 nights.
 - Sleep extension by 13% lowered insomnia and depression symptoms.
- Research shows parent intervention in child sleep habits can potentially deter future mental health concerns.
 - Children having irregular bedtimes at ages 3, 5, and 7:
 - Experienced more behavioral problems by age 7.
 - Cumulative effects observed: longer duration of irregular bedtimes led to worsened behavior.
 - Behavior improved when switching from irregular to regular bedtimes.
 - For children aged 2-13 years:
 - Parents provided with a mobile app for personalized sleep strategies.
 - Over 7-14 days, difficult temperament ratings dropped from 51% to 36%.
- Dose-response relationship observed: Greater sleep issues correlate with more severe mental health problems.
- Study on 315 children (ages 2-6) over 15 months:
 - Night sleep duration at start predicted hyperactivity/inattention, conduct problems, peer relations, and prosocial behavior changes.
 - Shorter sleep duration correlated with more mental health issues.
 - Baseline emotional and behavioral problems didn't predict sleep durations after 15 months.
 - Children who increased sleep duration showed decreased hyperactivity/inattention, fewer conduct problems, improved peer relations, and increased prosocial behaviors.
 - Suggestion: Enhancing children's sleep may prevent mental health issues.
- Nonregular bedtimes for children at ages 3, 5, and 7 linked to more behavioral problems at age 7.
 - Cumulative effect: More years of nonregular bedtimes equated to worsening behavior.
 - Transitioning from nonregular to regular bedtimes led to behavioral improvements.
 - Suggestion: Enhancing children's sleep can prevent future behavioral issues.

- Studies indicate early-age sleep disruptions may impact brain maturation, possibly leading to future mental health issues.
 - 2-year-olds with more sleep issues had reduced grey matter volume and thinner prefrontal cortex by age 7.
 - Children with sleep problems at 1.5, 2, and 5 years had compromised white matter microstructure integrity by age 10.

From: 'Neural Consequences of Chronic Sleep Disruption' 2022:²²³

Chronic Sleep Disruption in Humans: Summary

Prevalence and Causes:

- Widespread chronic sleep curtailment in modern society.
- Reasons include work demands, lifestyle choices, medications/substances affecting sleep, and the use of artificial light devices.

Previous Assumptions:

- Belief: Performance deficits due to sleep disruption could be reversed with limited recovery sleep, like on weekends.

Challenging the Assumption:

- Studies indicate persistent impairments despite recovery sleep.
- People often misjudge their performance after sleep loss.
- After 1-2 weeks of <7 hours sleep/night:
 - Sleep desire increases by a significant percentage.
 - Mood and vigilance deteriorate.
- Subjects often don't recognize the gradual decline in performance.
- Subjective impairments improve after 1-2 recovery nights, but objective vigilance measures don't return to baseline even after 2-3 recovery nights.
- Similar findings in adolescents and young adults after sleep restriction.
- A field study on young adults showed cognitive and visual response deficits even after a 7-day recovery period.
- After 40 hours of total sleep deprivation, cognitive task performance wasn't normalized even after two recovery nights.

²²³ (Zachary Zamore, 2022)

Neurobiological Insights:

- Sleep disruption leads to neurobehavioral deficits.
- Adenosine in the brain increases with wakefulness but normalizes after short-term sleep recovery.
- However, long-term sleep disruption doesn't always match adenosine levels, suggesting potential neural injury.
- **Potential Neural Injury:**
 - Difficulty in identifying neural injury due to lack of defined measures.
 - Old studies on rats did not find significant brain abnormalities even after extreme sleep deprivation.
 - Newer studies suggest sleep loss can result in lasting neuron loss and dysfunction.

Recent Findings and Future Directions:

- Shift in perspective: Sleep loss effects may not be easily reversible and can cause lasting neuronal damage.
- Factors affecting impairment and recovery include age, timing of assessment, brain regions affected, and protein aggregation.
- Need for understanding the mechanisms behind neural injury due to sleep loss and finding potential therapies for the damage caused by sleep disruption.

Highlights

- Chronic sleep disruption in humans leads to:
 - Extended recovery in neurobehavioral performance.
 - Impacts on sustained vigilance and episodic memory.
- Animal model studies show:
 - Extended and sometimes incomplete recovery after chronic sleep disruption.
 - Neuron loss in the locus coeruleus and hippocampus, crucial for vigilance and episodic memory.
- Neural injury severity from sleep disruption is influenced by:
 - Duration and type of sleep disruption.
 - Age at exposure.
 - Neuronal populations examined.
 - Genetic predisposition to neurodegenerative processes.
- Chronic sleep disruption leads to:

- Early oxidative stress.
- Ongoing inflammation.
- Metabolic changes, behavioral impairments, and pathological findings.

The Relationship of Adulthood Chronic Disease and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Implications Regarding Prevention and Promotion in International Health – 2020

Adverse childhood experiences and biomarkers of inflammation in a diverse cohort of early school-aged children – 2020

Key Components and Processes Healing

This information is included as a starting point to researching the biology of healing.

- Activation leads to the secretion of corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) by the hypothalamus.
 - CRH is also known as corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF).
 - CRH describes its function in the neuroendocrine system.
 - CRF refers to its role as a neurotransmitter.
 - Inconsistent terminology usage in literature.
- CRH stimulates the release of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH).
 - ACTH binds to CRH receptors in the anterior pituitary.
 - Promotes cortisol secretion from the adrenal cortex, mainly the zona fasciculata.
- Cortisol impacts:
 - Activation of glucocorticoid and mineralocorticoid receptors throughout the brain.
 - Regulates gene expression related to metabolism, immune function, cognitive, and brain development.
 - Suppresses immune system.
 - Stimulates gluconeogenesis.
 - Self-regulates via negative feedback to receptors in the hippocampus.
- CRF has a wide distribution in the brain and is linked to:
 - Stress response.
 - Learning and memory.
- Cortisol's regulatory roles:

- Attenuates stress response in the hippocampus and medial PFC.
- Promotes stress response in the medial and central nuclei of the amygdala through CRF-1 receptors.
- Controls its own secretion, bringing the body to homeostasis.

Patterns and Changes

- Cortisol levels:
 - Peak during morning awakening.
 - Increase further 20 minutes post-awakening.
 - Decline, reaching lowest in the afternoon for children, adolescents, and adults.
- Cortisol levels and pituitary volumes rise with age.

The LHPA Axis and Childhood Trauma: Key Points

- Severe stress and trauma during youth can impact the LHPA axis's regulation throughout life in both animals and humans.
- For animals:
 - Early-life CRF injections lead to:
 - Reduced cognitive function in later life.
 - Decreased CA3 hippocampal neurons.
 - Diminished branching of hippocampal pyramidal neurons.
 - CRF stands for "Corticotropin-Releasing Factor" (sometimes called "Corticotropin-Releasing Hormone" or CRH). It's a neuropeptide hormone involved in the stress response.
- In humans, findings from trauma research show:
 - Dysregulated LHPA system in trauma-exposed youth.
 - Conflicting data on cortisol regulation:
 - No differences in baseline morning and 24-hour cortisol concentrations in some studies.
 - Higher cortisol levels in others.
 - Lower cortisol levels in a few studies compared to non-traumatized youth.
 - Some reports show no difference in cortisol responses.
 - Blunted cortisol responses reported in maltreated individuals.

- Elevated cortisol concentration responses observed in some maltreated individuals.
- Other LHPA axis measures, like ACTH, also have mixed findings:
 - Both reduced and elevated ACTH levels reported in maltreated individuals.

Meta-analyses indicate:

- Adults reporting childhood trauma had:
 - Lower morning cortisol levels.
 - Higher afternoon/evening cortisol levels.
 - Flatter diurnal rhythm.
 - Increased daily cortisol output.
- Suggests the LHPA axis is susceptible to dysregulation due to childhood trauma.
- Discrepancies in findings might be due to:
 - Various mediator and moderator mechanisms.
 - It's crucial to study the factors associated with these mechanisms to understand individual responses to early trauma effects on biological stress systems.
- **Endophenotyping:**
 - Describes emotional and behavioral symptoms into stable phenotypes or traits with genetic links.
 - Recognizing endophenotypes in traumatized children can be crucial for new treatment approaches, like personalized medicine.

Childhood Trauma and Biological Stress Systems

- Childhood trauma can adjust biological stress systems.
- Long-term impacts of early trauma:
 - Resets LHPA axis regulation leading to lower ACTH and cortisol secretions during non-stressful conditions.
 - Adult victims of childhood trauma often show lower cortisol levels.
 - Meta-analysis found that the more time elapsed since the trauma, the lower the morning cortisol and other related levels.
 - Childhood PTSD studies often reported higher baseline cortisol levels in children, while adults maltreated in youth showed lower levels.
 - A longitudinal study found:
 - Higher initial cortisol activity in sexually abused girls after trauma disclosure.

- Lower cortisol activity during young adulthood compared to nonabused individuals.

Priming and Sensitization in Trauma

- Childhood trauma results in "priming" or "sensitization."
- Priming reflects chronic adaptation of the LHPA axis post-trauma.
 - This may be more prominent after puberty.
- LHPA axis regulation is influenced by other stress-mediated hormones like AVP and catecholamines.
- A primed system reacts excessively during acute stress or when reminded of trauma.
 - Results: enhanced response to stress, dysregulated LHPA axis, higher ACTH and cortisol levels.
- Findings include increased ACTH secretion in depressed, abused youth experiencing chronic adversity.
 - Adults with a history of child abuse show higher cortisol levels when exposed to traumatic reminders.

Influence of Trauma Timing and Duration

- The timing and duration of trauma impact post-trauma cortisol levels.
- Cross-sectional studies' findings:
 - Infant primates and very young children in orphanages have low morning and daytime cortisol production.
 - Sexually abused prepubertal children with depression showed lower baseline ACTH levels after sleep onset.
 - Elevated central CRF in very young children leads to down-regulation of ACTH and cortisol.
 - Larger pituitary volumes found in maltreated children and adolescents with PTSD.
 - Elevated central CRH may result in pituitary growth, particularly evident in early childhood and puberty.
 - Adaptive responses include down-regulation of CRH receptors.
 - Control of cortisol secretion in infancy and attenuation after trauma aligns with the allostatic load theory, suggesting organisms adapt to chronic stress to avoid harm.

Childhood trauma responses link to diverse biological stress regulation

- Different reactions to childhood trauma are linked to variations in biological stress system regulation.

- Behavioral and emotional responses differ due to varying LHPA axis dysregulation.
- A majority of research indicates:
 - Elevated central CRF in youth with a history of childhood trauma.
 - This elevation is consistent with those showing depressive and anxiety symptoms or both internalizing and externalizing behaviors.
- Traumatized children displaying significant disruptive or antisocial behaviors have decreased cortisol levels.
- In adults with moderate to severe child maltreatment histories but no diagnosable mental disorders:
 - Lower cortisol and ACTH levels were observed during the Trier Social Stress Test.
 - This is in comparison to healthy adults without maltreatment backgrounds.
 - This suggests maltreatment can elevate central CRF even in those with resilient outcomes.

The biological stress systems are impacted by the nature and intensity of early traumatic experiences

- Biological stress systems are influenced by early trauma type and severity.
- LHPA dysregulation is more probable with certain trauma types and greater trauma severity.
- Children exposed to physical and sexual abuse in the first 5 years:
 - More likely to experience internalizing symptoms.
 - Show higher rates of LHPA axis dysregulation compared to abuse/neglect/emotional abuse after age 5.
- Increased childhood trauma severity links to LHPA axis dysregulation.
- Elevated cortisol levels are seen in children:
 - Experiencing multiple maltreatment types.
 - Undergoing severe sexual abuse.
- Maltreated children with PTSD:
 - 24-hour urinary cortisol concentrations rise with extended trauma duration.
 - Positive correlation between cortisol levels and PTSD symptoms (intrusive and hyperarousal).

Biological stress system responses to childhood trauma are impacted by genetic components

- LHPA-related genetics can modify the effects of trauma on the LHPA axis.

- The interaction between genes and environment determines resilience or negative outcomes post-trauma.
- Gene-environment research is in early stages; findings are preliminary.
- Polymorphisms are normal variations in genes, affecting body functions.
- Single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) are a frequent genetic variation.
- Specific polymorphisms (related to CRH and glucocorticoid receptors) can affect child abuse outcomes:
 - Impact on childhood neuroticism and adult depressive symptoms.
 - Activation of brain's CRH type 1 receptors (CRHR1s) may induce anxiety and depression.
- Limited studies on gene-environment interplay in children. A highlighted study showed:
 - Abused children with two copies of TAT haplotype of the CRHR1 had increased neuroticism, leading to anxiety and depression.
 - Some children, based on abuse type and genetic factors, had protection against neuroticism.
 - Only maltreated children with the TAT haplotype had LHPA axis dysregulation.
- Adult studies:
 - Certain genotypes (TCA and TAT haplotypes) showed protection from depression in spite of child abuse.
 - Other studies contradicted findings based on population demographics.
 - CRHR1 gene variations can determine cortisol responses after child abuse.
 - Sex-based differences in genetic effects are evident in certain studies.
- FKBP5 gene study findings:
 - Gene interacts with trauma, predicting adult depression.
 - Three FKBP5 variants were linked to altered cortisol responses post-stress.
 - Carriers of the minor FKBP5 allele with child maltreatment history had higher depression, PTSD, and suicide risk rates.
 - FKBP5 haplotype influenced aggressive behavior in abused male prisoners.
 - Certain FKBP5 polymorphisms showed heightened amygdala reactivity in emotional neglect cases.
- In conclusion, risk genes combined with childhood trauma can lead to varied adult emotional and neurobiological outcomes.

Epigenetic elements influence the biological stress system reactions to childhood trauma

- LHPA-related epigenetic factors can alter the impact of childhood trauma on the LHPA axis, leading to negative emotional and behavioral outcomes.
- Epigenetics, a fairly new field, focuses on the epigenome comprising chromatin (protein structure around DNA) and DNA methylation at CG dinucleotides.
 - The epigenome dictates DNA's accessibility, crucial for gene function.
- Childhood trauma correlates with both hyper- and demethylation of essential stress system gene regulatory sites.
 - Examples include genes for the glucocorticoid receptor and the neuropeptide AVP.
- Increased methylation can turn off gene activity; demethylation can activate it.
- Childhood trauma may impact long-term gene activity without altering the DNA sequence.
- Animal studies indicate:
 - Rats in good environments exhibit reduced stress reactivity.
 - Offspring of mothers with high care levels (licking/grooming) display decreased stress reactivity and different methylation patterns.
 - Maternal behaviors also influence biological systems linked to the LHPA axis.
 - Prolonged maternal separation affects methylation, leading to increased stress reactions and behavioral challenges in offspring.
- Infant maltreatment in rodents:
 - Reduces BDNF gene expression in adult PFC.
 - Leads to intergenerational transfer of epigenetic changes, suggesting heritability.
- Human findings:
 - Methylation differences found in hippocampi of suicide victims with childhood abuse histories compared to those without.
 - Early trauma and epigenetic changes are linked to increased risks of depression, suicide, and LHPA dysregulation.
- Preliminary research:
 - Childhood foster care experience correlates with methylation changes in genes linked to the HPA axis and immune system.
 - Suggests that childhood trauma can influence genetic expression and subsequent mental and health issues.

Gender differences impact how childhood trauma affects biological stress systems

- Childhood trauma's effect on the HPA axis varies between genders.

- Studies indicate:
 - Men exposed to early trauma (without psychopathologic diagnoses) had a stronger link between trauma and increased CRF levels compared to women.
 - Physically abused girls exhibited:
 - Higher urinary oxytocin levels, which is associated with regulating cortisol and complex social behaviors.
 - Lower salivary cortisol levels after experiencing stress compared to non-abused girls.
 - Abused and non-abused boys showed no difference in hormonal responses.
- Areas needing more research:
 - The interplay between early trauma and gender differences.
 - The potential for maltreated males being more likely to commit violent crimes in adulthood (by a prospective investigation).
 - A concern: maltreated males might be overrepresented in prisons, and underrepresented in retrospective studies, leading to potential selection bias.
 - This underrepresentation may cause a misconceived notion that females are more susceptible to the effects of early trauma.
- Important findings:
 - Elevated CRF and other stress markers might cause a higher down-regulation of cortisol in males than in females after trauma.
 - These findings are often observed in individuals displaying antisocial behaviors.

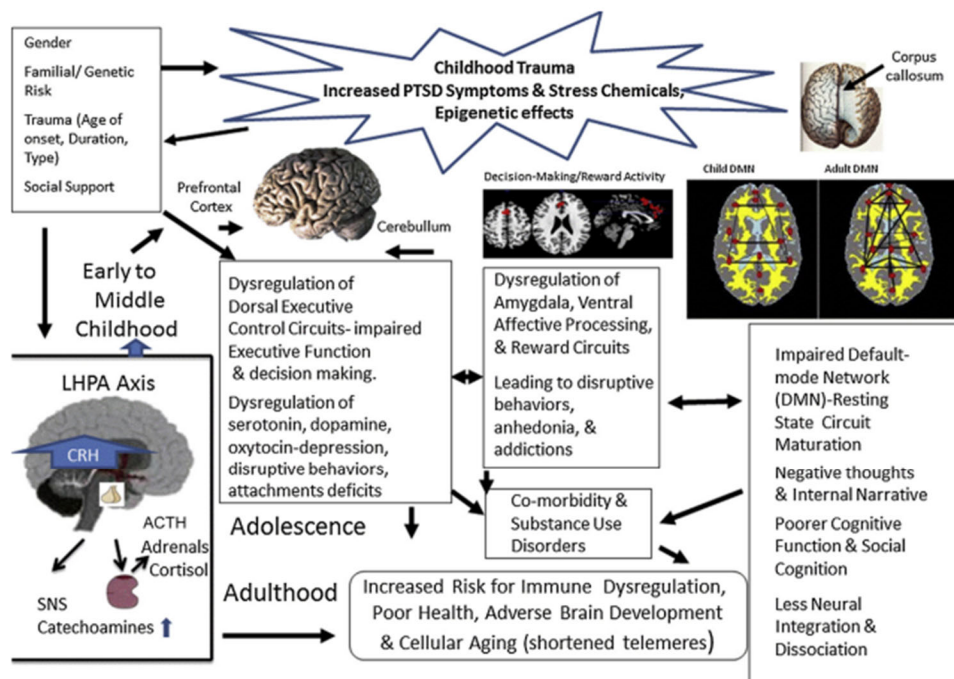


Fig. 1. Developmental traumatology model of the biological effects of trauma.

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Too much cortisol, stress and anxiety, too little, depression.

In the vast tapestry of human existence, it is paramount that we recognize the profound and often unseen reverberations of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The chains of childhood traumas, seemingly invisible, yet undeniably influential, manifest in the physical realm as ailments like obesity. The heart of peaceful parenting lies not just in preventing conflict in the present, but in obliterating the echo of past adversities that resound through the halls of adulthood. To shield our progeny from the specter of obesity and other health challenges is not merely a matter of diet or discipline, but a profound commitment to understanding and healing the deep-seated wounds of the past. In the genuine embrace of this noble endeavor, we not only secure the health of our children but lay the foundation for a brighter, freer future for humanity.

Comparing Male and Female Fertility

To become a peaceful parent, you first need to become a parent of course!

²²⁴ (Michael D. De Bellis, 2014)

Few people seem to understand the increased risks of pregnancy and childbirth – particularly for women of course – as time marches inexorably onward.

What are the facts?

- **Database on Male Fertility:**
 - Covers 17 high-income countries.
 - Explores male and female fertility trends.
 - Shows male fertility can be both higher and lower than female fertility.
 - Recently, male fertility has generally been lower.
 - These findings are consistent with Schoumaker (2019).
- **Counterfactual Calculations:**
 - Differences in the male and female Total Fertility Rate (TFR) often arise from partner age differences and postponement behavior.
 - Analysis of Cohort Fertility Rates (CFRs) supports this conclusion.
- **Age Differences Between Parents:**
 - Have remained the same or decreased in most studied countries.
 - Exceptions include Eastern European countries and eastern Germany.
 - Larger differences in gender equality influence these differences but not exclusively.
- **Global Perspective:**
 - In polygyny-practicing, rapidly growing populations, male fertility can be twice as high as female fertility (Schoumaker 2017, 2019).
 - Large gender differences in fertility are often due to fertility timing differences.
- **Notable TFR Ratios:**
 - Lowest: England and Wales in 1973 at 0.89.
 - Eastern Germany: 0.84, suggesting a "birth squeeze" effect.
 - Cultural and political similarities lead to similar trend patterns in TFR ratios.
- **Mean Age Differences:**
 - Detected differences align with other studies (e.g., Kolk 2015).
 - However, some African countries report age differences over 10 years.
 - European countries with higher gender equality show smaller age differences, but Japan, with low gender inequality scores, exhibits the smallest age differences.

- **Gender Differences in Fertility Postponement:**
 - Generally decrease over time, but increase in Eastern Europe.
 - Stable mean age differences observed in countries like Finland and France.
- **Fertility Preferences:**
 - Men often report lower ideal family sizes than women.
 - Surveys show that the ideal number of children is higher than the actual number born.
 - Men's TFR estimates for 2011 correlate highly with Eurobarometer results.
 - Both genders believe men should have children at older ages compared to women.
- **Limitations and Further Studies:**
 - Register data cannot calculate the number of childless individuals.
 - Birth registers don't record the father's parity.
 - New database can be used for macro-level studies and in understanding gender's role in fertility trends.
- **Database Availability:**
 - Offered as part of the Human Fertility Collection (2019).
 - Opens avenues for more in-depth research on male fertility.

From: 'Male–Female Fertility Differentials Across 17 High-Income Countries: Insights From A New Data Resource' – 2021²²⁵

Datapoint 2:

Women's Age and IVF Success Rates in Australia:

- Misconception: IVF can always overcome age-related infertility.
- Age significantly impacts IVF success.
- Live birth rates from one complete IVF cycle:
 - 30-34 years: 43%
 - 35-39 years: 31%
 - 40-44 years: 11%
- Higher success for older women using eggs from younger donors.

²²⁵ (Christian Dudel, 2021)

Women's Age and Pregnancy Complications:

- Pregnancy complications risk rises with age.
- After age 35:
 - Increased risk of miscarriage.
 - Higher likelihood of chromosomal abnormalities in fetus.
- Older women face higher risks of:
 - Gestational diabetes.
 - Placenta previa.
 - Caesarean section.
 - Stillbirth.

Male Fertility:

- Recent studies indicate male age also influences pregnancy chances and health.
- Male fertility starts to decline around age 40-45 due to decreased sperm quality.
- As male age increases:
 - Overall chances of pregnancy decrease.
 - Time to pregnancy increases.
 - Risk of miscarriage and fetal death rises.
- Children of older fathers face higher mental health risks, though these occurrences are rare:
 - Children of fathers 40+ years old are 500% more likely to develop autism than those with fathers 30 or younger.
 - There's a slight rise in risk for schizophrenia and other mental health disorders with older fathers.

From: 'Age and fertility' – 2023²²⁶

²²⁶ (Age and fertility, 2023)

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