

RAISING PARENTS

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Lazy Parenting

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Years ago I was a member of a yahogroup called LazyBones. While lazy is generally a slander indicating a character flaw, participants on the list wrote eloquently (and briefly) on how life was made better though laziness. I heartily agreed and argue that lazy is no more slanderous than efficient, and that parenting is a particular area of life benefited by the slacker approach.

There are three main reasons (there would be 10, but, hey, look at the title) that lazy parenting is quality parenting:

1. Children learn self-sufficiency as early as they are capable (a key to healthy self-esteem),
2. Time and energy are not wasted on trivia, and;
3. Great joy results from never sweating small issues.

Again, because I'm lazy, I'm only going to give one example of each...

1. A parent who is quick to help, who jumps in and takes the tool out of the struggling child's hands accomplishes two things: a) a child who learns, right now in this moment, that she is incapable, and; b)

guaranteed work for many more years to come. Consider the opposite: a half-distracted parent watching with patience and an eye for safety (or for a moment to present itself to give an additional piece of information) accomplishes two completely other things: i. A child who may surprise herself and actually complete the task, or at least learn a lot about it, and; ii. Have time and energy to do other, self-directed tasks. A third possible bonus for the latter is having a moment of pride and awe, watching someone who came helpless and frail surmount a new challenge successfully.

Well, I *could*, of course, spend time and energy on, say, my children's beds... their tidiness, whether the bottom sheets are flat, or the covers tucked in. Yup, I could totally do that. Or not. Net effect of me not doing it?

2. Time to do other things and kids who sleep in their version of comfort instead of some external and irrelevant (to them) set of arbitrary criteria. Besides, I recently found out that dust mites thrive on the moist beds that are all made and tucked each morning... and die rapidly in the arid 'aired' (read: unmade) beds in my house. Yes! Vindication comes to all lazy enough to wait it out! It's the second time: the first was confirmation that it is far more hygienic to air dry dishes than it is to towel dry them... Ha ha ha! In your face! Laziness rules!

3. Over many years studying of psychology, health, the human stress response, spirituality, and personality types, I have never, ever found any researcher or expert who declares fretting, worry or anxiety to promote health, create inner peace or contribute in any way to a joyful life. Here is my deranged perspective: there are millions of stars in this corner of the galaxy... many of which are more than close enough to vaporize our planet, everything on it and the rest of the solar system with it, in the event of a supernova. Not dozens of close-enough stars... not hundreds. Millions. This may seem like nihilism to those who haven't seen the big joke yet... but I find this to be a massive relief. That's the whole worst-case scenario and there isn't thing one I can do about it...Whew! So, what *will* I do with however much time might be left to spend? Fret that my kid will mark their bodies with ink, washable, permanent or sub-cutaneous? Yeah, probably not. What will I do with all the energy I save in not fretting... and what will I do with all the peace of mind I find?

One suggestion I just love is: Look for opportunities to love yourself and others.

In your spare time, grow things, or meditate, or make things, or watch tv. Anything, really, is a better use of time and energy than worry. If

it's going to happen, worrying won't stop it, and you get to deal with it whether you worried or not.

So, lay back and enjoy the ride. There is just one lesson that must be learned before it's possible:

It is not possible to control other people, even when they're really short.

I won't argue whether parents *should* control their kids (because, really - too much effort), simply that they cannot- not effectively, not really. Can not. Because it's not possible: people do not have the keys to whatever locks out control, or the magical powers needed. Parents can secure what *looks* like control, providing no one looks very carefully or noticed all the undermining evidence (like lying, rebellion, resistance, belligerence, sass, forgetfulness, insolence, sulking... the list is really long) that naturally follows even apparently 'successful' attempts.

It is psychologically natural for humans to resist the control of others...

... there is no 'too young' for that to start.

What *looks* like effective control is often apparent compliance, followed in days or weeks with *apparently* unrelated misbehaviour, willful stupidity, and 'unbreakable' stress-relieving habits (nail biting, hair pulling, thumb sucking, etc.) It is psychologically natural for humans to resist the control of others, and there is no 'too young' for that to start.

Lazy parenting is mostly about relaxing into the natural pace of

childhood and maturation. Kids will grow up without being pushed, and pushing doesn't hurry development, it impedes it. Laziness allows kids to develop at their pace because that's the fastest it can go anyhow. From walking to weaning, from potty learning to reading, no outside force can compel a child to be ready physically or mentally. Besides, as the epitome of laziness, I figured if I were going to 'drive' any of this, I'd have to *do* something, and I preferred the motto from the title of Richard Eyer's book:

Don't Just Do Something... Sit There!

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