

// Parent Ministry

The Collapse of Parenting

How We Hurt Our Kids When We Treat Them Like Adults

Authors: Leonard Sax

REVIEW:

There is a transfer of authority from parents to children in the homes of America. *The Collapse of Parenting* is a book that takes on that trend and its effects on kids. While more money and time is being spent than ever on kids, the next generation has more emotional, physical and spiritual problems than ever before. Leonard Sax writes a poignant and powerful parenting book that stands apart from most other parenting books.

This book will challenge parents to take a very hard, real look at their parenting style and the modern family. This will be a wakeup call to many readers and leaders alike, as they realize they are not helping their children by treating them as adult equals.

SNAPSHOT

PART ONE: PROBLEMS

The Culture of Disrespect

There is a difference between animal families and human families; it is simply "culture". Humans are raised in culture defined by customs, practices and instruction differently than another species. The difference also is how we get along with each other in that culture. These are defined by the cultural constructs and rules of right behavior. Right behavior should be taught in the home by parents. Kids need parents more than ever to teach them, but there has been a role confusion where parents are no longer the authority in the home. Instead, the children are the authority. Kids are not being raised to be respectful of authority.

Why Are So Many Kids Overweight

Being fit is not the same as being thin, and lack of fitness is not the same as being obese. Three factors are effecting the rise in childhood obesity: 1.) *What kids eat.* 2) *What kids do.* 3.) *How much kids sleep.* If a child is the final authority in the home, children decide what they will eat. Children will not choose to eat healthily if they are simply offered it as an option. Once again, with kids being left to be the decider of activity, children will choose to sit and be inactive over active play. Finally, sleep patterns and traditional bedtimes have been sacrificed in homes that have lost a culture respect so that kid can do more of what they choose.



Why Are American Kids Falling Behind?

The culture of disrespect goes beyond the home. It has also made its way into the American school systems. The reason why American kids are falling behind is not because of lack of education or resources. It is for lack of respect. Students are coming from home with parents that are no longer respected, do not ask for respect, or even teach respect. Students attend school each day with the understanding they are the ultimate authority, which in turn undermines the most basic idea of learning and education. Even in areas of creativity, evidence shows that true creativity is undermined. The three domains where America has caused kids to fall behind are: 1.) *Overinvestment in technology.* 2.) *Overemphasis on sports.* 3.) *Low selectivity in teacher training.*

Why Are So Many Kids So Fragile?

Fragility has become a defining trait of the American child, going back about 25 years. While American kids play sports at younger ages, they are still more likely to be out of shape and be more susceptible to injury. Various factors play into this trend with more overprotective parents, less physical activity, and the rise of personal, portable technology. There is once again a core issue of parent relationship and respect. Parents choosing to lead and build relationships prepare their child for adulthood through unconditional love, even in times of failure, will build into their children stronger resilience.

PART TWO: SOLUTIONS

What Matters?

The five dimensions of personality are: *Conscientiousness, Openness, Extraversion, Agreeability, and Emotional Stability.* Out of the 5 traits, one trait stood out in research as a determining factor in future happiness, satisfaction, and success- Conscientiousness. Children and teens who were conscientious were less likely to be obese, use drugs, or engage in risky behaviors. While parents look to grades and achievement as determining factors for future health and happiness of their children, honesty, integrity and self-control far outweigh cognitive achievement. Behavior becomes identity. That is why Deuteronomy speaks of diligently teaching children God's commands on how to live. When parents teach virtue and respect, it requires children to be virtuous and respectful. What matters is parents teaching self-control, restraint, and honor.

Misconceptions

The misconception is that there is a tension between being loving and being strict. The other false assumptions parents have that hold them back are: 1.) *It is important for my child to be popular.* 2.) *It is unrealistic for me to hold my child responsible for behavior outside of the home.* 3.) *Parents should find a balance between 'too hard' and 'too soft'.* Parents doing their job as a parent means doing things that will upset their child.

The First Thing: Teach Humility

Humility has become an unpopular virtue in American culture. Humility is being as interested in others as you are interested in yourself. Parents must teach their children how to meet new people and be sincerely interested in listening. The issue that has grown in children have been given an over-inflated self-esteem. Humility helps children recognize their shortcomings in a healthy way.

Humility in turn leads to gratitude, appreciation and contentment. The key to lasting happiness is contentment.

The Second Things: Enjoy

Parents enjoying their time with their child will cause their child to enjoy spending time with them. This can be enforced in various things in a family including rules like, “no devices at mealtimes” or “no headphones in the car”. The focus of enjoying time is choosing to interact. Parents should learn to talk and listen to their child. Parents devoting 100 percent of their effort and attention to their child requires an investment of time that will pay out. If other things are more important to a parent, other things will seem more important their children. The focus of a balanced family is enjoyment and relationship, not an emphasis on accomplishment.

The Third Things: The Meaning of Life

The middle-class American script is simple: 1.) *Work hard so you can get into a good college.* 2.) *Get into a good college, so you can get a good job.* 3.) *Get a good job and you will make a good living and have a good life.* The job of a parent, however, should not be to reinforce this script, but rather to undermine it by empowering children to take risks and learn through failing. Learning to fail will grow children and give them wisdom. If a child doesn't ever experience disappointment or failure, they will never be prepared for life. Children will, through these experiences, develop much needed character, self-control and of course much needed, conscientiousness.

The meaning of life ,which a child must learn, is to embrace the deeper desire of life through: 1.) Meaningful work. 2.) A person/people to love. 3.) A cause to embrace. *“The conscientious child or teen is more like to develop into a Contentious adult... mature enough to set meaningful goals and work toward them with integrity. To serve others. And to love, honestly, and faithfully,”* That is the meaning of life that parents must teach in order to reverse the trend of parentings and the downward spiral of the next generation.

We would strongly recommend you pick up this entire book at your nearest book store or go online and purchase this book for yourself. This snapshot provides a very quick overview of a well written 300+ page book with in-depth research and a wealth of information for parents.

