

In Defence Of Parents

*by IRA T. SMITH



We are living in a very stressful age. Various studies have been reported which indicated the effects of stress to be quite devastating on the Community. It has been expressed statistically that one in ten will spend a period of hospitalization for treatment of stress induced illness.

Detailed studies have been carried out in the field of industrial stress. Organisations have expended large sums of money to obtain information towards devising ways to control the affects of stress on their workers.

Universities have mounted ongoing research projects to study the effects of stress on behaviour of life forms from planaria through to man.

We find that just about every area of occupational endeavour has been investigated and certainly every stage of development is mankind from birth to adulthood. Researchers have gone to great pains to draw attention to the stresses of assembly line, the stresses of supervision, the stresses of management, the stresses of buying, of selling, of saying yes, of saying no and to use the favourite extension of the King of Siam etcetera and etcetera.

**Mr. Ira T. Smith, B.A., Dip Psych., M.A.Ps.S., Clinical Psychologist, "Alexandra", 201 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane, Queensland, 400, is also a member of the Australian Crime Prevention Council.*

Perhaps the most difficult occupation is one which is self imposed, and non remunerative. It involves considerable expense. It carries with it huge responsibilities. To be successful in it involves supreme dedication, optimism, patience, understanding, love, caring, self sacrifice and luck.

It demands no formal qualifications but anticipates a working knowledge of medicine, psychology, religion, mathematics, science, politics, law, broad general aptitude in all technical skills and every other branch of knowledge.

It is an occupation which is mixed with heartache, disappointment, estacy, joy, happiness, sympathy, sharing, giving, loving and all other feelings capable of being experienced.

Because it is so demanding and high in expectation one would expect the most stringent of formal qualification requirements. You would expect the community to require presentation of credentials to establish fitness to undertake the supreme responsibilities of this position. But no! No qualifications are necessary. Only an ability to do what comes naturally.

However having become a parent one becomes the target of criticism and unsolicited advice from all quarters. Life becomes a continual bombardment of do this, do that, don't do something else. The advice is full of contradictions and biases depending upon the leanings of the giver. There is full free and plenty advice from some with professional qualifications, pseudo qualifications, and some with absolutely no qualifications whatever. It is dished out through magazines, newspaper articles, book publications, over radio, on television, at the laundramat, over the back fence and by poster published by the Police Academy "with compliments of the Community Relations Unit".

That masterpiece of cynical presumption is titled "How to Bring up your Child to be a Juvenile Delinquent".

Being a moderate person of natural good humour and tolerance I do not propose any destructive criticism of this authoritarian piece of advice. For those who have not read it or cannot recall it goes as follows:—

1. BEGIN FROM INFANCY to give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe that the world owes him a living.
2. WHEN HE PICKS UP BAD WORDS, laugh at him. It will encourage him to pick up "cuter phrases" that will blow the top of your head off later.
3. NEVER GIVE HIM ANY spiritual training. Wait until he is 21 and then let him decide for himself.
4. AVOID THE USE of the word "wrong". It may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later when he is arrested for stealing a car that society is against him and he is being persecuted.
5. PICK UP EVERYTHING he leaves lying around — books, shoes and clothes. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing the responsibility on to others.

6. **LET HIM READ** any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized but let his mind feed on garbage.
7. **QUARREL FREQUENTLY** in the presence of children. Then they won't be too shocked when the home is broken up.
8. **GIVE THE CHILD** all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them.
9. **SATISFY HIS EVERY CRAVING** for food, drink and comfort. See that every desire is gratified. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
10. **TAKE HIS PART** against the neighbours, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
11. **WHEN HE GETS** into real trouble, apologise for yourself by saying "I never could do anything with him".
12. **PREPARE FOR A LIFE OF GRIEF** – "you will have it".
Let us look at this advice in a quiet, homely, and mutually respectful way.
 1. From infancy parenthood imposes a responsibility to provide for the ongoing needs of the child in every way. During the first periods of life the parent takes notice of every signal that the child puts out. A good parent – a practiced parent – a patient parent – a caring parent learns to distinguish between a manipulative cry and the needy cry.
His or her judgement depends very largely on life experience, common sense and the application of individual reasoning. There are no hard and fast rules which can be dealt out like medical prescriptions. I would much prefer the chances of an indulged child to make a satisfactory way in life than of the deprived rigidly disciplined moulded-to-conformity alternative.
 2. The words which make up our language are the units of communication. It is not only the form of the word which has meaning, it is the intonation which conveys the final meaning of the word. Certainly there are what we call bad words but one only has to watch television programmes or listen to the documented discussions of our parliamentarians, leaders of labour and daily commentators to become accustomed to expressive, four letter, anglo-saxon terminology.
 3. So far as early training is concerned it is unfair to suggest that those who receive no spiritual training have a greater chance of becoming delinquent. Taking "spiritual" to be synonymous with religious I would comment that I have seen many instances of reaction formation arising from rigid religious training. Moderate religious views may help provide security through faith.
In my personal experience I have been lead to believe that "spiritual training" helps to produce balanced attitudes together with warm, affectionate and secure homelife (even indulgent). However, it is entirely the prerogative of parents to determine how they will endeavour to set guidelines of morality and responsibility.
 4. It is part of the normal training programme of life that the young be shown how to distinguish between "right and wrong". Let us realistically recognize that "right and wrong" depend very much on the circumstances of the moment. It is wrong to assault our fellow man and to take his property and to kill his family. But in our lifetime we have seen it become right for city destroying bombs to be dropped and for 10s of 1000s of people to be annihilated in a matter of a few minutes with further 10s of 1000s of persons to die lingering death during the subsequent years.
I well remember an incident of a general being interviewed concerning the large number of Korean civilians

- who were killed during the Korean campaign. His blase retort to the newspaperman's enquiry as to what was being done to reduce the high incidence of civilians killed and injured was along the lines that it was part of war for civilians to get killed and it was not his worry. These attitudes expressed by persons in high positions undermine the best efforts of conscientious parents to engender attitudes of compassion for others.
5. The training of a child towards being respectful of his and other people's property commences with examples and by encouragement to follow that example. It is a gradual encouraging process. Responsibility is increased with development and maturity.
It is not uncommon for strong criticism to produce a reaction which leads the young person to feel incompatible with society, and causes him or her to withdraw, to become a member of some splinter culture. How often do we hear a bewildered parent ask "where did I go wrong".
 6. The selection of reading matter for one's children is not entirely in the hands of the parent. There are people within our community to whom it is given the responsibility to choose for us. The frequency which confrontation occurs between concerned parents and those people demonstrates the differing attitudes which occurs in our community and because these differences are demonstrated the active young mind seeks to obtain further information for itself.
 7. Any interpersonal relationships there are always going to be differences of opinion, differences of attitude and these differences will be expressed. Arguing in front of children should be modified but not totally avoided. It is part of life to disagree with others, to put forward your views and listen to others views. To compromise, to come to a level of comfortable agreement. If it were not for the fact of differing opinions there would be no need for law courts or for the police force because being on the one track everyone would be in complete accord and compliant.
 8. For parents who seek to train their children in a value system the provision of spending money is seen as a necessity. It provides an exercise for the young person to learn value in terms of commodity and in terms of labour spent. However any work done for gain outside the family circle needs to be supervised until the child is old enough to have the level of judgement necessary to protect him or her from exploitive adults.
 9. Whenever a person, child or adult, experiences a *craving* investigation should be carried out to find the origin of this craving and appropriate treatment implemented. Cravings may be significant of physical or psychological disturbances being present and be of diagnostic help to avoid problems with possibly long lasting effects.
 10. Every parent who cares for the secure development of personality will provide a sense of security and protection within the family unit.
It is not a matter of taking sides so much as having to take a protective role, then an examining role, then a disciplinary role.
All is not black and white – it is far easier to apply hard and fast rules. It is hard to undo adverse effects which may have been caused through the absence of common sense. Misinterpretations, misunderstandings and false impressions are not the province of any one section of the community. We are all capable of making mistakes.
 11. No apologies are necessary. A parent who has done his best owes no apologies. Perhaps though he should receive some. From the media, the experts, the government, the well wishers, the critics of his efforts. From all those who

with well meaning pronouncements have confused the environment to the extent that for every piece of advice he may offer his child there is a piece of counter advice available from another source which is significant in the child's life.

12. This deserves no comment.

It is too easy for persons in positions of respect to give forth in criticism of their fellows and to make pronouncements on the errors they have made in bringing up their children.

Let us remember that any fool can be wise in the hindsight.

Let us recognise that delinquency is a social ill which is present in every socio-economic strata. Let us also recognise that "delinquent" behaviour is transitory. Part of growing up.

Let us give credit to the huge task which parents of today are faced with. Our economic system makes it necessary for both parents to be in employment in order to support most households. The influences of T.V., radio, newspapers and magazines are towards greater and greater liberalization of attitudes and behaviour. Drugs and alcohol are not only available but are actively canvassed amongst the young. Supplied through an organization of people to whom profit is more

important than lives.

1. "We believe in the sacred right of parents to raise their children in their own way".
2. In the innate desire of all parents to teach their child how to be a valuable member of society.
3. In the power of parental love to demonstrate to children the pleasure to be had from caring for others and to share responsibility.
4. In the right of each person to have his own life philosophy or to share that of others.
5. In the responsibility of each person to conform to the requirements of society whilst retaining his individuality within the society.
6. In the need for community teachers to set examples of honesty, integrity and dedication for the young to follow.
7. In the principal that advice is an expression of opinion of one person to be evaluated in the spirit in which it is given.
8. In the value of being able to extend a helping hand and offer a sympathetic word of encouragement to those less fortunate than ourselves.

I think we owe admiration for the efforts of parents when they succeed and compassion when they fail.

What do your readers think?

TOP DRESSING
GARDEN SOIL

Landscaping Rocks – All Types of Filling
4 Wheel Drive Articulated Loader
KALLANGUR
PHONE 203 1443
QUEENSLAND



Sub-Zero Storage
Blast Freezing
Contact Freezing

347 Lytton Road,
Morningside, Qld.

Office
Phones: (07) 399 3411, 399 5826
Telex Watcol AA41026



**F. J. SHERBORNE
PTY. LTD.**

**CUSTOMS, SHIPPING
AND FORWARDING
AGENTS**

Specialists in Freight
Clearance, Storage
and Transport

**21 Henry Street,
Fremantle, W.A.**

Telephone: 335 7455

The Key to Security

Experts throughout the world recognize Medeco's high security locks as the ultimate in mechanical security and key control. Fitting Medeco cylinders to your locks make them virtually impregnable. The focus is on key control and real security with the most revolutionary pin tumbler type locks and lock cylinders available — MEDECO! Angled cuts across a Medeco key blade provide dimensions that defy duplication on conventional key duplicating equipment.

For a free brochure, write or call

SAFEGUARD LOCKSMITHS
16 Errol Street,
North Melbourne, 3051
Phone: 329 8713

Name _____
Address _____