**Parenting- Stories & Illustrations**

**First man: “What’s it like having a kid?” Second man: “It’s different. You go from thinking that you’re the center of the universe . . . to knowing that your child is.” (Tom Batiuk, in Funky Winkerbean comic strip)**

**The total cost of raising a child from birth to age 17 is $222,360 for middle-income parents, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That’s 22 percent higher than the 1960 cost, adjusted for inflation. (Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, July 2-9, 20l0)**

**Americans once expected parents to raise their children in accordance with the dominant cultured messages. Today they are expected to raise their children in opposition to them. Once the chorus of cultural values was full of ministers, teachers, neighbors, leaders. They demanded more conformity, but offered more support. Now the messengers are violent cartoon characters, rappers and celebrities selling sneakers. Parents are considered "responsible" only if they are successful in their resistance. That's what makes child-raising harder. It's not just that American families have less time with their kids; it's that we have to spend more of this time doing battle with our own culture. (Ellen Goodman, in Boston Globe)**

**Fact: As a parent, you can do nothing to guarantee your child will never make a certain bad choice. Fact: Therefore, when a child makes a bad choice, it isn't necessarily because of bad parenting. Fact: Good parenting is doing the right thing when a child does the wrong thing. Fact: To do the right thing when a child does the wrong thing requires clear thinking. Fact: You cannot think clearly if you believe your child's bad choice is because of bad parenting -- that it's your fault, in other words. Fact: When your child makes a bad choice, your child needs correcting, not you. Fact: When your child does the wrong thing, you can think clearly and do the right thing by keeping all of the above facts in mind and saying to yourself, "My child's bad decision is his fault, not mine." (John Rosemond, in Teen-Proofing: A Revolutionary Approach to Fostering Responsible Decision Making in Your Teenager)**

**Parenthood and happiness: Parents tend to say that their children bring them joy, but research consistently shows that raising kids causes marital stress and other varieties of unhappiness. A new long-range study may explain that contradiction, LiveScience.com reports. Demographers from Germany's Max Planck Institute surveyed 200,000 men and women in 86 countries and found that young parents with young children were generally unhappier than their childless peers, while older parents with older children were happier. Children, in other words, "may be a long-term investment in happiness," says study author Mikko Myrskyla. Globally, the contentment of couples under 30 decreased with the birth of their firstborn, and dropped further with each subsequent child they had. Conversely, parents over 50, no matter how many kids they'd raised, were happier than their childless counterparts. The trend was less pronounced in countries with highly developed welfare systems, like Switzerland, where parents and nonparents tended to be equally happy at any age. Myrskyla and his colleagues believe their findings suggest that the expense, anxiety, and lost sleep brought on by young children overshadow the positive aspects of parenthood -- until those kids grow up to become a source of financial and emotional support. (The Week magazine, March 25, 2011)**

**Kids can add to happiness: Having children won’t ruin your life after all. Two new studies have found that raising kids adds to people’s overall happiness – contradicting recent research that found that parents are more likely to be depressed and unsatisfied in their marriages than non-parents are. In one study, researchers tracked British and German couples from four years before they had children to four years after. They found “no evidence that parental well-being decreases after a child is born,” study author Mikko Myrskyla of Germany’s Max Planck Institute tells USA Today. He says some previous studies compared how couples felt just before they had children through the first year or two after the first child was born, when stress and sleeplessness caused a dip in their sense of well-being. That dip disappears later on. A second study, an analysis of surveys taken between 1972 and 2008, found that in recent decades, parents have become relatively happier than their childless peers. The findings also showed that parents who have children at an older age are happier than younger parents, and that the number of children they have is important. “The first child increases happiness quite a lot,” Myrskyla says. “The second child a little, the third not at all.” (The Week magazine, May 25, 2012)**

**Peaceful parenting keys:**

1. **Peace begins with me.**
2. **I have made my home a place of kind words.**
3. **I catch my children in the act of positive behavior and praise them immediately, specifically and sincerely.**
4. **I spend at least 15 to 20 minutes a day with each child, listening, interacting and giving my full attention.**
5. **I am clear on the standards of behavior I expect of my children. I honor those standards and expect my children to do the same. (Naomi Drew, in Peaceful Parents, Peaceful Kids)**

**Of all the new experiences parenthood has brought into my life, I was least prepared for the public rebukes. I was standing at a bus stop recently after a long workday with my 2-year-old, worried that we would be caught in an imminent downpour. As I searched my phone for the status of the next bus, a car sped by. "Watch your child!" the driver yelled unkindly. An immediate panic seized me, but my toddler, who had been holding my hand until a few moments earlier, was perfectly safe, intently examining the wall of a coffee shop not two feet away. The driver assumed he'd seen a neglectful mom absorbed in her phone, too busy scrolling through her Facebook feed to watch a wandering child. It didn't matter that it wasn't true; the reproach still stung. Passing public judgment on a stranger's parenting has become a national sport. Whole corners of the internet are dedicated to shaming mothers who decline to breast-feed, let their kids cry it out, or dare to sit the little one in front of the TV. Practices that were commonplace 30 years ago, such as allowing a child to walk alone to the playground or sit solo in the car for a few minutes during an errand run, now can lead to calls to the police and moms in handcuffs. This parenting paranoia makes little sense: Statistics prove it's never been safer to raise a child in the U.S., though we act as if the opposite were true. Raising a child used to take a village of neighbors helping you. Now it takes a village telling you why you're doing it all wrong. (Carolyn O'Hara, in The Week magazine, May 29, 2015)**

**Postpartum perfectionism: New mothers who are overly concerned about being the “perfect parent” may be more at risk for postpartum depression, says LiveScience.com. Researchers at York University in Canada surveyed 100 first-time mothers and found a much higher rate of postpartum depression among women who hoped to live up to the expectation that they’d be perfect parents. The link between postpartum depression and perfectionism was strongest among women who’d never admitted they were scared or overwhelmed, and always acted as if everything was fine. “The tendency to put on this front usually means that people don’t tell other people when they’re doing badly,” says psychologist Gordon Flett. “It’s important for new mothers and fathers to just realize, “Hey, you haven’t got a lot of experience with this, you don’t need to be perfect, just do your best.” *(The Week magazine, July 23, 2010)***

Prescription for Parents: A New Zealand publication called The Reaper contained some interesting advice to moms and dads written by teenagers in jail. Here in essence is what they said:

1. **Keep cool; don’t lose your temper in the crunch. Kids need the reassurance that comes from controlled responses.**
2. **Don’t get strung out on booze or pills. We lose respect for parents who tell us to behave one way while they are behaving the other.**
3. **Bug us a little; be strict and consistent in giving out discipline.**
4. **Don’t blow your class; keep the dignity of parenthood.**
5. **Light a candle; show us the way.**
6. **Be strong. Don’t be afraid of us. If you catch us lying, stealing, or being cruel, get tough. When we need punishment, dish it out. But then let us know that you still love us.**
7. **Call our bluff; make it clear that you mean what you say. If you collapse, we will know we beat you down, and we will not be happy about the “victory.”**
8. **Be honest with us. Tell the truth no matter what. Be straight about it. (Our Daily Bread)**

**Parenthood can affect pay. A recent study found that women with children earn 5 percent less per child than women without children. Fathers, on the other hand, are often offered higher starting salaries than their childless male counterparts. (NewYorker.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 24, 2013)**

**Parenting without a filter: In the pre-Internet world, parents often shielded young children from gruesome and terrifying news events, said Dahlia Lithwick. "Those times are decidedly over. We are no longer the gatekeepers of our children's nightmares." My kids, 11 and 9, know more than I'd ever choose to tell them about the murdered parent of a schoolmate, a teacher arrested for child pornography, the murdered college student Hannah Graham, the Ottawa terrorist shooting, and "every last thing Ray Rice did in that elevator." Not incidentally, they don't own smartphones -- but many of their friends and older classmates do. All news is now viral, spreading instantly through the population, including kids. I'm not sure how to manage this problem, but I do feel certain that lying to children, or downplaying the seriousness of certain news events, isn't a viable solution. They already know too much. Trying to pretend the world isn't scary will only undermine the credibility of parents, teachers, and other adults. "Technology has transformed parenting and education," and we'll need to answer their questions about terrorism, murderers, and pedophiles as best we can. (The Week magazine, November 14, 2014)**

**Smith's parenting style: Will Smith was raised by a father who expected him to be seen and not heard, said Grant Rollings in The Sun (U.K.). "I was brought up with, 'You don't talk to your parents about what your opinion is, you don't even have an opinion,'" says the actor. He and his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, are raising their children -- Jaden, 14, and Willow, 12 -- in a very different manner. "We generally don't believe in punishment. From the time Jaden was 5 or 6 we would sit him down, and all he has to do is explain why what he did was the right thing for his life. It's a much more difficult question to ask -- 'Why was that right?' -- than to show them why it was wrong. So if he can explain why kicking his sister was the right thing to do, we can see to it that he understands it wasn't so smart." Some commentators have condemned the Smiths' liberal parenting style, including their recent decision to let Willow shave her head bald. "Well, the rule in our house is you can do anything you want and we don't pull the parent card until danger is involved (or if) it will have long-term repercussions. But she didn't cut my hair, she cut her own hair. It grows back." (The Week magazine, May 31, 2013)**

**Middle-income Americans earning between $59,410 and $102,870 can expect to spend an average of $234,900 raising a child from birth to age 17, according to a new government estimate. That is 3.5 percent higher than last year, mainly because of increases in the cost of gas, food, education, and child care. (Time.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 29, 2012)**

**New Words for the Parentally Challenged:**

**Droppler Effect: The prolonged uneasy feeling parents experience when watching their toddler walk across the kitchen carrying a full glass of juice.**

**Impolert: A child's indiscreet call of attention in public to a stranger's physical abnormally (e.g., "Hey, look! He's only got one leg!").**

**Lullcry: The dramatic pause between a child's sustaining an injury and beginning to wail.**

**Nopen: To witness your kid pulling the car door handle just as you're trying to automatically unlock the doors, causing the doors to remain locked.**

**Wishjack: To blow out the candles on another child's birthday cake.**

**(Eric Ruhalter, in The Kid Dictionary)**

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