

The Wisdom of Children

Michelle Vandebos

In the past it was thought that children needed parental discipline and instruction in order to become happy, productive, and well-balanced adults. Because of this, our forebears spent a great deal of time and energy training their offspring, and teaching them right from wrong. Our ancestors believed it was a parent's solemn duty to wield authority in the home, and a child's responsibility to obey his parents.

Fortunately, recent discoveries in psychology have proven that this type of strenuous child rearing unnecessary. Children, psychologists have discovered, are actually wiser than adults, and do not need any input or discipline from their parents at all. Due to their superior wisdom and selflessness, children are in fact more capable of knowing what is best for them than their parents, and should therefore be granted the right to govern their own households.

Actually, we should not be surprised children are wiser than adults. Our own experiences also teach us children are extremely sensible. It has been proven time and time again that, given the right to make their own choices, children invariably make good ones. My own children are prime examples of discretion and prudence, especially when it comes to proper diet and nutrition. For example, last night I prepared a delicious dinner for my family featuring my favorite one-dish meal: "Sugar Surprise." Our evening went something like this:

"Alright, here you go kids, eat up! Tonight it's my favorite: candy corn topped with caramel sauce and chocolate sprinkles! We also have some left over mud pie from last night, and there's ice cream in the freezer!"

My seven-year-old daughter, Kerah, objects. "Now Mom, have you forgotten that too much sugar is not good for you? The American Dental Association recommends that we eat less of it, and I want to have good, strong, healthy teeth when I grow up. May I please have some fresh veggies instead and maybe some whole grains? Are there any brussel sprouts left in the refrigerator?"

"Yuck! That is SO gross!" I retort, holding my nose. "How can you eat that stuff?"

Kerah sighs. "You really should take better care of your health, Mom."

Children are also notoriously clean and well groomed, knowing intuitively that a neat appearance is important for positive self-esteem. My ten-year-old son, for example, continuously begs me to bathe, and would take three showers a day if I'd let him. Recently we got into a heated discussion about soap:

"Mom, did you buy me that new soap I wanted?" he asked.

"What soap? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Aw, Mom, you remember. It was that good smelling soap with oatmeal and lanolin, specially formulated to protect against dry, flaky skin. I just ran out of Ivory and I want to take a bath."

“But you already took a bath this morning, and it’s only 10 o’clock.”

“I know,” he concedes, “But I really need to wash behind my ears again, and my fingernails could sure use a good scrubbing.” This goes on until I finally give in and get him the soap. And he never leaves his towel on the floor, like I do.

Children should rule the roost not only because they are health conscious and impeccably groomed, but also because they are wonderfully well mannered. This is obvious and hardly worth mentioning, but to prove my point I will again offer evidence from my own experience.

I direct a latch-key program at a local school, where I enjoy my job so much, I have refused any financial remuneration on moral grounds. Every day forty-six children file silently into the cafeteria to take their places and wait, hands folded, for their snacks to be brought to them. You could hear a pin drop in there. It’s beautiful.

Occasionally, one of the children does make a request of me. It is, of course, surprising when this happens, but the little darlings are so gracious, I don’t mind too much. For instance, the other day, Paul raised his hand and gently whispered to me.

“Teacher,” he said. “I’m so sorry to bother you, but may I please have some more juice? I’m thirsty. If you’re busy though, I could certainly wait and ask again when it would be more convenient for you. I wouldn’t want to trouble you in any way.” All the children are equally courteous.

Furthermore, my students also display good manners and thoughtfulness when they play together. They never have any problem sharing their toys and dearly love to cooperate. The other day, when walking by the toy center, I overheard one student talking to another:

“I noticed you came late to play time today, and didn’t get any toys. Would you like to sit down next to me and share my building bricks? Here’s a green base plate for you to start with, and in just a second I’ll have my project torn apart so you can have enough pieces to make something too!” It’s heartwarming, really. If only international diplomats could see how well these children get along, I’m convinced there would be world peace in less than a month.

In addition, children should have moral authority in the home, not only because they are neat and polite, but also because they are noble. Children always choose to do what’s right, even when it is difficult. My son, for example, is a pillar of virtue. Every morning I lie in bed with the covers pulled over my head, dozing lazily, until Mr. Sunshine wakes me up.

“Mom,” he beams, “I need you to get up and take me to school. Education is fundamental to future success, you know, and learning is power. I can’t wait to get to school and continue memorizing my math facts!”

“Uh,” I groan, turning over. “Why don’t you put your pajamas back on and go back to sleep? Learning’s not really all that important. Wouldn’t you rather stay home and watch cartoons all day? Scooby Doo is on in a few minutes.”

“Why, no Mom. How could you think such a thing? Cartoons are too violent for my young, impressionable mind. I never watch cartoons. Please get up and take me to school.

A mind is a terrible thing to waste, you know.” He has a perfect attendance record at school, six years running. I don’t know what’s wrong with him.

My children also love to do their chores. They enjoy housework so much, in fact, that they often ask me to give them extra jobs to do just for fun. Every day when I come home, I find them cleaning their room, whistling a happy tune.

“You kids are working too hard,” I remark nonchalantly, trying to coax them. “Why don’t you go out in the living room and watch some TV? Your favorite program is on. Or you could play some Nintendo or something.”

“No thanks, Mom,” they answer in unison. “We saw a speck of dirt on the window sill last night, and we want to disinfect the area before we catch any germs. After that, we still have lots of great chores to do. We want to wash the windows in the bathroom again, and dust on top of the refrigerator. We’re having so much fun that we don’t want to stop!”

I often worry one-day they may work their fingers to the bone. At night I sometimes check to make sure there’s still flesh on all ten digits. You can never be too careful, you know.

From all these indisputable facts, it can readily be seen that children are pure and upright, possessing a wisdom that escapes their older, less enlightened relations. Kids take good care of their bodies through proper nutrition and good grooming habits, are courteous and well mannered, noble, and are industrious, hard workers. Excellent behavior is proof of sterling character. Therefore, children should no longer be stifled by demanding, bothersome parents, but should instead be elevated to their rightful positions of authority in homes all across America.