

Would You Have Saved Jews from the Nazis? Your Family Background Tells the Answer.

Every year the victims of the Nazi Holocaust [are remembered](#) on the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In 2018, this anniversary falls on April 12th.

Countless tragic stories have emerged from the Holocaust. But so have many other inspiring ones, such as those of [Irena Sendler](#), [Corrie ten Boom](#), and [Marcel Marceau](#), individuals who saved hundreds of Jews from almost certain death.

The stories of these heroic individuals should bring an important question to each of our minds: Would I have had the courage to do the same?

Most of us want to believe we would, but find it hard to say what our true actions would be unless put to the test.

What many of us don't realize, however, is that there is a simple, research-backed way to discern whether or not we would perform courageous acts as the aforementioned individuals did. In essence, it all goes back to how we were raised by our parents.

Thomas Lickona explains this in his new book, [How to Raise Kind Kids: And Get Respect, Gratitude, and a Happier Family in the Bargain](#). Unpacking various research and testimonials from those who were or were not involved in rescuing Holocaust victims, Lickona sees several common threads:

1. Moral Values

Today's parents often say that they don't want to force their moral values on their children, wanting them instead to choose their own belief system. But had the parents of Holocaust

rescuers said the same, we likely never would have heard of their children's exploits, for researchers found that parents who modeled and taught values like generosity and selfless service were the ones whose children demonstrated the same toward Jews of the World-War-II era.

2. Form of Punishment

Those who rescued Holocaust victims grew up with parents who discussed their wrong behavior and tried to redirect wrong thinking. Those who did not get involved with Holocaust victims, however, often had parents who punished them in anger.

3. Treatment of Others

In essence, Holocaust rescuers were those whose parents taught them the Golden Rule. They were welcome and accepting of those who were of races and religions different from their own.

Lickona summarizes why these elements are so crucial to raising respectful, helpful, self-sacrificing adults:

"The family is also the first school of virtue. It is where most of us first experience love and learn to give it in return. Research finds that children's character development is best supported when parents provide a stable and loving family environment; when they stress the importance of being a good person and also set a good example; when they teach respect for legitimate authority, including theirs as parents; when they not only teach kindness and respect but also hold their children accountable to those expectations through appropriate correction and discipline; when they help their kids understand how their actions affect other people; when children have meaningful responsibilities in family life; and when they grow up with a vision of life that gives them a sense of purpose and an ultimate reason for trying to lead a good life."

Lickona concludes by saying:

“Much of good parenting is a matter of recovering this wisdom, which used to be more reliably passed on from one generation to another.”

That statement is one we should consider carefully. Instead of embracing the latest trends in “being your child’s friend” or “fostering childhood self-esteem,” do we need to return to basic, moral-based parenting? If we don’t, will we only succeed in producing wishy-washy individuals who refuse to take a stand in times of great trouble?