

Yale Student Explains Why It's Necessary to Encourage Two-Parent Families

It's graduation season and everyone is talking about success and how best to achieve it. This, of course, includes encouraging those who are victims of tragic circumstances to overcome their difficult pasts.

One student who has done just that is Rob Henderson, a 2018 graduate of Yale University. Henderson's story, which [he explains](#) in the *New York Times*, is quite remarkable. Born to a drug-addicted mother and abandoned by his father, Henderson was passed from home to home through the foster care system. Although eventually adopted, Henderson continued to sporadically live in broken homes through high school.

Henderson goes on to explain that a fellow student at Yale once encouraged him to claim his victim status. But while he certainly has legitimate grounds to do so, Henderson has refused. In the process, he is also breaking another taboo by pointing to past wisdom and claiming that two-parent families are essential to the success of the next generation. He explains why:

"First, two parents can provide their children more resources, including emotional support, encouragement and help with homework. One conscientious parent, no matter how heroic, cannot do the work of two. Second, single-parent households have a lower standard of living, which is associated with lower school grades and test scores.

Here is an example of the success of intact families from one of my psychology classes. The professor asked students to anonymously respond to a question about parental background. Out of 25 students, only one student besides me did not grow

up in a traditional two-parent family. It's no accident that most of my peers at Yale came from intact families."

Unfortunately, such views – even from one who has lived through and overcome them – are not always well received by others. Henderson explains:

"...when I say parents should prioritize their children over their careers, there is a sense of unease among my peers. They think I want to blame individuals rather than a nebulous foe like poverty. They are mostly right. Many people who come from privilege do not like placing blame on ordinary people. They prefer to blame ideologies, institutions, abstractions.

...

My skin crawls when people use me as an example of a person who can shoulder the burdens of a nontraditional upbringing and succeed. They use my success as an argument for lax attitudes about parenting. But I am one of the lucky ones."

Research shows just how right Henderson is. Children growing up without two married parents are more likely to exhibit [behavior problems](#), have [greater health issues](#), [drop out of school](#), and [experience poverty](#). Only, as Henderson recognizes, that's not popular to say.

The fact is, we're very concerned about the well-being of children, but when it comes to promoting one of the greatest facilitators of that well-being – a traditional, two-parent family – we shy away from it, encouraging adults to follow their heart and not worry about the repercussions their choices will have on their children.

Is it time we stopped worrying about political correctness and began doing everything we can to encourage two-parent families so that our children can have a greater chance at successful lives, and not have to work so hard to beat the odds like Rob

Henderson did?

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