

The ‘Parenting Coach’ Industry Has Exploded in the Last 20 Years. Here’s Why.

Ever seen an episode of *Supernanny*?

For those unfamiliar with the British TV program, Jo Frost is the supernanny who comes into a chaotic home, evaluates the situation, and then teaches parents how they can restore peace and raise their children in a proper way. The clip below provides a good example:

But *Supernanny* isn’t just an amusing TV program that’s dramatized for effect. It’s increasingly becoming real life for parents across the country. A recent *Star Tribune* article [explains](#):

“Megan and Michael Flynn used to dread bedtime. Every night, the Edina couple spent two stressful hours putting their preschooler and toddler to bed. With help, they cut that time in half.

They did it by hiring a parent coach, who listened to them describe an average night and concluded they needed structure. Instead of caving into requests for book after book, they set a routine – and stuck to it.”

Parenting coaches, it appears, are the real life supernanny’s for the average family. But they don’t come cheap. These parenting coaches “charge from about \$125 to \$350 a session” for their listening ear and valuable advice.

As the *Star Tribune* goes on to explain, such a profession was “virtually nonexistent 20 years ago” and leaves many “wonder[ing] why parents would shell out hundreds of dollars for

suggestions they might easily get elsewhere.”

And there, I believe, is the real problem. Parents are willing to fork over hundreds of dollars because their families are miserable and they really don't *have* anywhere else to turn for help.

So why don't they? Three reasons come to mind.

The first is the fact that the traditional family structure has dissipated. Many of today's parents were raised either in broken homes, or homes in which both parents spent a majority of their waking hours at the office. As such, family time happened on the fly, and parents – tired from their other responsibilities – had little time to model the training and discipline so essential to rearing children. And if those children didn't catch the training, then how can we really expect them to pass it on to their own young ones, or even feel like they will receive plausible advice if they ask for it from family members who have blazed the trail before them?

Family is not the only thing that has declined. Community has as well, cutting off another avenue for parental advice. Neighbors no longer know one another, so turning to the elderly couple next door for help is out of the question. And as the local church or community club is quickly fading from view, young parents no longer have consistent meeting times where they can discuss everyday life and swap parenting tips in the face-to-face manner which can offer more friendliness and privacy than today's online message boards.

A third reason, however, is what we might label the cultural literacy dearth – or lack of knowledge regarding the wisdom of the past. Surrounded by self-help books, today's parents have forgotten – or never learned – the ancient wisdom of becoming a well-rounded, upright, and worthy person often advanced by thinkers such as Aristotle, Augustine, John Locke, or even Solomon, the ancient Hebrew king. This lack of grounding leaves

them with little truth to hang their hats on, leaving them tossed about by the latest parenting fads instead.

The *Star Tribune* article ends by quoting parenting coach Tina Feigal, who notes, “‘Parenting is the hardest job in the world, but there’s not training for it in advance.’”

I would disagree. There can be advance training for this, the most important job in society. The question is, are we willing to reinstate the structures needed to do it naturally, or would we rather fork out money to have the “experts” tell us how to raise the next generation?

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