

Why Do Parents Have Trouble Teaching Children Respect?

Kids are hard work.

Anyone who has spent even a small amount of time around children knows this. So it's no surprise that parents are eager to get away and spend some time by themselves.

Yet we also have this modern phenomenon of parents who want to keep their kids with them, even while doing traditionally adult activities in adult-oriented locations.

Enter the fine-dining industry turned babysitter. Restaurateurs, *The Wall Street Journal* [reports](#), are seeking to capitalize on parents who want the fine dining experience, but can't have it because their children get bored or can't maneuver the demands of a long meal in public:

Upscale establishments have long tried to accommodate requests for Wikki Stix and a kid's menu. Now some are getting more creative to keep youngsters occupied. Tours, babysitting, specialty classes, movies and unique play spaces are popping up even in deluxe dining rooms. The goal: Keep the kids too distracted to distract the adults.

This sounds like a great marketing tool. But I also have to wonder, how great is it for the kids?

Sure, they need time where they can hang out, explore, and have fun. But is it best to always cater to them? Is there value in parents taking children to fine, upscale places and having them practice being adults for a little while?

Many would say yes in a heartbeat. But there's a hurdle we must overcome before children are able to practice being an adult out in public. It's called training.

Philosopher John Locke addresses this in [*Some Thoughts on Education*](#), noting that the reproofs and despair many parents expend on their children in public are often a cover-up for a lack of training at home. Children, Locke implies, can happily accompany their parents to adult-centric places as long as they have been trained to have a healthy respect for their parents beforehand:

If the noise and bustle of their play prove at any time inconvenient, or unsuitable to the place or company they are in, (which can only be where their parents are,) a look or a word from the father or mother, if they have established the authority they should, will be enough either to remove, or quiet them for that time.

It sounds simple enough. But many parents have trouble establishing a healthy respect for authority (both their own and that of other adults) in their children. Why?

The answer to this question may be found in another modern development: the rise of parenting coaches.

Parenting coaches, or even parenting academies, seek to give advice and direction to those struggling to raise their children. As one Parenting Academy [explains](#), “Parents meet with a specialized coach to focus on the goals set for the family and child.” Parents also receive “[h]ands-on coaching” via “one-way mirror[s] and ‘bug-in-the-ear’ technology to offer in-the-moment guidance.”

Clearly parents want to raise their children to be successful adults, but they simply do not know how to accomplish this. They are seeking advice, but they have nowhere to turn except to professional coaches.

Once upon a time, this advice wouldn't have come from professionals. Instead, it would have come from extended family members, neighbors, or fellow church attendees. But

divorce, decline of religion, and the disappearance of community has virtually eliminated traditional, natural parenting coaches.

Is this the root cause of the disrespect we see in today's children? Has the breakdown of traditional family and community left many parents clueless and without support in raising the next generation? If so, would we be wise to begin rebuilding these institutions?

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