

family



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHER'S DIARY

Bad habits: from parents to kids

Before we begin any discussion about the bad habits of our kids we would be very wise to do an introspection review of our own routine of living to determine what habits we may have.

No doubt, your list is already laden with a half dozen no-nos, habits we have and know we should have gotten rid of a long time ago. On your list you may have smoking, excessive drinking, excessive use of medicine cabinet drugs, excessive eating, excessive food seasoning and even gambling. We know we shouldn't be doing these things and, yet, day after day we perform tasks that eat away at our stability and ultimately our survival.

We have our reasons, but unfortunately, the reasons are often very superficial remedies to eliminate the underlining tensions and problems we may be having.

As parents, before we can be of any support to our children in their overcoming bad habits, we must be aware of our own, take steps in

reversing our style of doing things and, by all means, be honest with our kids in discussing the issue.

Growing up is one big nail biting experience. No child wants to chew every last millimeter of nail off his or her finger in order to destroy his or her person. The act is a release mechanism and needs to be dealt with a back door approach and not the front door approach.

The front door approach to nail biting is reprimanding the child and then painting his or her nails with awful tasting lacquer. This approach reinforces anxiety and tension and causes a decay in the relationship you have with your child.

The back door approach is to realize there is a reason for such a behavior, its basis is tension and an attempt must be made to get at the situation that is making the child feel uncomfortable. The job of finding out may require the involvement of the teacher, your child's brother, sister or close friend in order to



As parents, we need to be good examples for our children.

determine why he or she is uptight about things.

The source of tensions may be with you as well. You may be expecting too much from your child. The expectations are too much to bear and a manifestation of the

tension and strife is nail biting.

And what about the child that steals? Your child? It could be. No matter how great we think we are as parents, our children could very well be experimenting with all kinds of erratic behavior. A spanking, a

lecture or even the issuance of a JD card by the police may not be enough of a deterrent to stop stealing.

Could the child be saying, "Here I am—I am me and I want to be recognized, listened to and have my parents around." God only knows

what our kids will do in order to get their parents and friends to look at them. Even if it means getting in trouble to gain the attention, it's better than nothing. This kind of bad habit can get out of hand and eventually lead to serious offenses against persons and property. Parents, therefore, should get into the habit of being available and willing to share their time without reservation.

And what about our bad habits when we were young? We turned out all right. In Dr. Dodson's words, "I wish that somehow the fathers who are staid, respectable teachers, bankers, repairmen, insurance agents, actors, engineers, bricklayers, or physicians could see sound movies of their own behavior at the age of seven or eight or nine. I have a hunch that such a movie would enable them to relax and not worry so much about the 'bad' habits of their offspring."

Although there is no doubt kids can have bad habits, all must be put into perspective and the habits evaluated according to age and social standards. All kids get out of hand a little and do things we would rather they didn't. However, whether the habit is silly, annoying or a real concern, simple and direct strategies of kindness, fair play and dialogue with our kids will see happier days in the future.

"Surviving With Kids" by Dr. Wayne R. Bartz and Dr. Richard A. Rasor (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), can help you in achieving your parenting goals in this area.