

# family



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## Common sense for all parents

I'm going to blow off a little steam.

I really want to address myself to some of the conditions that are having such a negative impact on our kids these days — lots of different things — no particular order.

So excuse me for a moment while I throw my format out the window. Be right back.

There. Now. About cars and kids. Cars kill more kids each year than any disease does. Help your child cross the street and teach caution through example.

When the kids are in the car you ought to make them use the seat belts. Belts can save a lot of young lives or prevent a lot of injuries even if they're not perfected yet.

All kids get sick. Having to stay in bed is bad enough for them — don't let them suffer boredom too. In addition to providing the obvious things — rest, nutrition, good children's television — create a few simple games to keep them occupied — something that can teach and entertain.

Or if the child is a reader, buy him some books or good magazines. If the child is young and is well enough to sit up, let him do some tracing and color his work. Hang it on the wall. About toys. Don't give your kids toys that can do everything — they're boring. And because they don't require any imagination, such toys can actually be detrimental to the development of the child's imagination.

What you spend on a toy may have nothing to do with its capacity for teaching the child or increasing his understanding or experience.

Everything we do with children or for them has consequences in terms of a child's self-esteem. The way we talk to children makes a big difference. We ought to speak with them maturely and fairly.

You can also further a child's self-esteem by providing him a means of acquiring a skill or developing a talent. Think about music lessons. Or art lessons or dance lessons. Or a short course in computer science.

Children, obviously, have a lot to do with your marriage. Don't let them wreck it. Don't agree to something you're going to regret later on. Tell children how you really feel.

Never pass the buck to your spouse. When a child comes to you for advice, discipline, or a permission of one kind or another, make a decision there and then. And if your spouse has made a decision with regard to one situation or another, support it. The "referral game" only makes children insecure — they see their parents as weak and incapable making decisions.

Since it is to be hoped that parents are going to be together long after the children leave home, it's a good idea to establish a mutually honest and cooperative environment.

Don't show disrespect for a child by assessing his problems externally. If the child stutters, for example, don't simply think of him as "a stutterer"; Think of him as a normal child who has a problem and remember that there is always a reason. Find out what the reason is. Help him get over his stuttering.

Parents ought to put themselves in their kids' shoes, then act compassionately and respectfully.

There are no prepackaged formulas, but in my book a perfect parent would be one who is willing to learn from his mistakes. And who is willing to learn — to read some books. Good books can get you going in the right direction.

And common sense remains the bottom line — we'd be great parents if we always used it.