

The 7 Worst Parenting Mistakes Ever

I'm sure you heard about the 4-year-old girl in Delaware who gave tiny packets of cocaine to her daycare classmates—because she thought it was candy. Her mother, who was arrested earlier this month, said she gave her daughter the wrong backpack and couldn't tell police how 249 packets of cocaine ended up in her possession.

Every week I hear similar stories of children suffering because their parents used horrible judgment. Like the Ebola virus, bad parenting seems to be spreading—and the church is not immune. We had better get busy teaching Christian parents how to raise their kids the old-fashioned way, because recent trends are scary.

I made a list of some of the most disturbing trends in modern parenting. I am sure you can add a few more:

1. Whacky names. We joke about the ridiculous names some film and music stars give their kids: Pilot Inspektor, Denim, Camera, Blanket or Diva Thin Muffin. Yet the common people come up with even stranger names for their babies: Facebook, Hashtag, Aquafresh, Cheese, Chlamydia, Random and—get this—*Felony*. Do these parents want their kids to be bullied? I'm all for creativity, but if you name your child after a dairy product, social media or a sexually transmitted disease you are setting them up for abuse.

2. Allowing kids to “explore” their gender. Our culture today has gone insane when it comes to gender rules. In some schools, teachers are urged not to “impose” gender on boys or girls but to let them “decide” which gender they are, regardless of reality. And there are parents who insist that their fourth-grade boy be allowed to go in the girls' restroom

because he “feels” he is a girl. Am I the only person who believes that the “psychologists” responsible for this trend need therapy themselves?

3. Sexualizing children. Back in my day kids really didn't think about sex until hormones started kicking in at age 13. When I was 9, I was playing with Lincoln Logs, watching *Johnny Quest* cartoons and learning how to tie square knots. Today, experts say children show sexual interest and engage in sexual behavior earlier than ever. Much of this is fueled by pornography, but television, music videos (think Miley Cyrus' influence on tween girls) and even toys are also to blame. The popular Bratz dolls feature young girls dressed in fishnet hose and miniskirts and wearing heavy makeup. And why did Victoria's Secret produce underwear last year featuring the words “Eye Candy” and “Wink Wink”—and then market them to pre-teen girls? Parents who expose their kids to sexually charged media or clothing simply invite trouble. Learn to put guardrails around the media your child is exposed to.

4. Showcasing kids. At the risk of offending church moms who put their daughters in pageants: Please stop it. We all know there's only one reason a mother would force her three-year-old daughter to wear mascara and tons of hair spray to compete with other toddlers in a beauty contest: It's all about the mothers. The girls are the victims. It has already been proven that girls who are subjected to these expensive pageants suffer from eating disorders and other self-image issues. Forcing your child to live out your fantasies is cruel. (FACT: Did you know that some American families spend more than \$75,000 a year on child pageants, and that the entry fees are often priced higher than the awards given?)

5. Not showing affection. I can't tell you how many times I've asked a group of grown men how many of them had fathers who hugged them during their childhood. Often not one hand goes up. The concept of a loving dad who wrestles with his kids or bounces them on his knee has become a fairy tale to many

people—and the lack of affection shows up later in insecurity, depression and a host of other psychological problems. Doctors have proven that human beings need seven expressions of meaningful touch every day. Depriving kids of wholesome affection is as serious as withholding food and water.

6. Abandoning your kids. One-third of all children growing up in America today don't have a father in the home. And the U.S. Census shows that this number continues to climb. Children who grow up in single-parent families face higher risk of poverty, and many end up delinquent, addicted to drugs or alcohol or in jail. This crisis represents a huge mission field for churches today, but we can't fight the abandonment epidemic unless we can convince more parents to consider the kids before they break up a family.

7. Giving your kids everything they want. Author Elizabeth Kolbert wrote in *The New Yorker* two years ago that American kids are “the most indulged young people in the history of the world.” The word discipline has become a dirty word in our lexicon. Children today have all the toys and expensive gadgets they want, but they are not expected to share in household chores and don't even want to tie their own shoes or take out the garbage. It's no wonder some 30-year-old men end up living with their parents and playing video games all day: They never learned adult responsibility, so they are stuck in perpetual adolescence.

Ps. 127:3 says: “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord.” I'm afraid we've squandered the privilege of raising them. What we need today is a massive movement to reclaim biblical principles of protective love and strong discipline—along with a huge dose of common sense.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of *Charisma*. You can follow him on Twitter at [leegrady](#). You can learn more about his ministry, *The Mordecai Project*, at [. His new book, The Truth Sets Women Free](#), was released this month from *Charisma House*.