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Different Types of Parents

Anyone who is biologically capable and who can find another biologically capable person--of the opposite sex, of course--can become a parent. Parent-hood is a state that has no special conditions, and one must pass no qualifying exam to enter it. Since the word parents encompasses such a large number of people, it is easy to understand why there are so many different kinds. In terms of how they treat their children, however, within this variety, there are three basic types: autocratic, democratic, and permissive.

The autocratic parent's word is the law, and when he says jump every one had better do it quickly. He assumes that he and he alone knows what is best for his children and that they will learn discipline and respect for authority from his regimentation. What he does not consider is that he may not know best and that rules untempered with mercy breed rebellion and contempt for authority. The authoritarian whose child came home one hour late from a date because there had been a major accident on the highway tying up traffic for miles would allow the child no opportunity to explain his reasons for being late. The child would be immediately grounded and have his allowance suspended. This kind of parent probably has good intentions, wanting his child to grow up "right," but approaches the task as if his family were in boot camp.

The democratic parent is not so strict. He is willing to discuss rules and punishments with his children and to listen to their side of an argument. If his child had come in an hour late from a date he would listen to the explanation about the major wreck that tied up traffic for miles. Since this is such an easily verifiable story, the democratic parent would suspend any punishment in this case when he sees the morning paper or hears the morning news. In general, the democratic parent lays down fewer rules than his autocratic counterpart because he realizes there are some things in life children must learn on their own. He prefers to work in the role of an advisor and always to be available when his children need help.

The permissive parent has no rules for his children and offers little guidance. Frequently, this parent is too busy to take time with his children and leaves their rearing to TV, school, and chance. He sets no rules for his children, so it would be impossible for his child to come home late from a date. He allows his children to come and go as they please either because he doesn't care what they do or because he thinks they must learn to set their own rules. He doesn't understand that all young people need guidance because when they mature, they will have to abide by society's rules. Not learning a respect for order early may cause this parent's children to resent the rules everyone must obey.

Too few people with children are democratic parents, which is the best of these three. Too much authority, or too little, often breeds disrespect and resentment. A good parent should offer guidance and advice and not try to rule or disregard his children completely.

The Labor of Love or Not

"Push! Push! Breathe short breaths! O.k. You're doing fine. One more time." These words all sounded like they were coming from far away. All I could think about was the pain and pray it would soon be over. This is a pretty familiar story to women who have had a child and most of us know that all that pain is forgotten as soon as that tiny child is laid in your arms. This experience and how we raise our children however, differ greatly. Some mothers try their hardest and do their best, others coast by with enough effort to get the job done, and still others shut down and totally neglect their children.

We have all seen the type of mother who tries her hardest and we hope that we will be able to live up to this high standard. These mothers always put their children first, no matter what. They love talking and visiting with their children. These mothers try their hardest to punish their children equally and fairly, rarely using spanking as a method of punishment. The children of these mothers flock to their mothers and love to be around them; they know that their mothers listen to them. My mother was and is a mother who tried and tries her hardest (perhaps I'm just a little prejudiced.) She was always there for my little brother and I. Anytime I was upset I could talk to her and she always (and still does) made me feel better. When I was about five years old my Mom and Dad owned a grocery store in Comstock (don't blink, you'll miss it) where I grew up. One day mom sent me to the store for some milk. You could see the store from our house, but I had to walk up a hill to get there (it looked more like a mountain back then.) After I had gotten the milk I started home. About a fourth of the way down the hill, the steepest part, I started to run. Faster and faster, I went until suddenly I realized that I couldn't slow down or stop. I tumbled down that hill and didn't quit falling until I was almost at the bottom. I sat there with dirt in my hair and on my teeth, tears streaming down my face, and my nice neat pig-tails all lopsided; then my mother appeared to make it all go away. That was when I decided that my mother must have some kind of mommy-magic. Now though I know that it wasn't magic, but her trying her hardest to be there for me and loving me with all her heart.

Unlike the moms that try their hardest, some mothers just coast by with enough effort to get the job done. I know that sounds pretty blunt and rude, but it's true. These mothers do not put their children first, but third, fourth, or fifth. Sometimes they want to visit with their children, if it's convenient for them. When disciplining their children these mothers usually spank them and send the child to its room. They do not talk to the child and try to explain to the child why its in trouble. These children seem to acquire this same nonchalant attitude towards their mothers eventually. When the children are young though they need and want their mothers attention. A friend of mine from high school has a one year old little boy. She spends just enough time with him and tries just hard enough to get the job of raising him done. I had heard some disturbing things about how she was raising her son (with that less is more approach.) One afternoon she left her little boy with the babysitter to go to a dance, which was fine. What was not fine though was that she had told the babysitter that she would be back around 1:00 a.m. She went out and had herself a good ol' time. She did not return to pick up her son until 10:00 a.m. the next morning. This is a prime example of a mother who only does just enough; a mother who puts her child 3rd or 4th on her list of priorities.

The third type of mother and the absolute worst is the mother who simply shuts down and ignores her child. These mothers do not think of their children at all. These children do not fit anywhere on

their mother's list of priorities. They don't communicate with their children and if they do talk to them it's only to scream a string of obscenities at them. There is no set of discipline for these children and there are no rules for them to follow. The punishment they receive is a slap on the face or a strap across the back. As far as how these kids react to their mother, they react with fear and try to stay as out of her way as possible. There is a girl about my age who lives in the same town as I do. She is one of these atrocities of our society. She has been turned in to the welfare offices numerous times, somehow she always gets around it. I saw her in the grocery store one day and she stopped to talk (we knew each other from high school.) Her little girl who is two and the same age as my little boy, was with her. She was dirty and she smelt like she hadn't had a bath in days, but that was pretty much the norm. The thing that bothered me the most was that every time her mother's hand, arm, or body got close to her she flinched and her eyes widened in fear. The little girl also didn't respond to anything I asked her. She didn't seem to know many words. I found this sad because my little boy was talking up a storm. I guess when a mother doesn't spend any time with her child and doesn't bother to talk to it this is the result.

Everyone does not react the same way to motherhood. Some mothers try to do the best they can and try to be loving and understanding. Others try enough to squeak by, and others have not the will or the capacity to love to be a mother. Mothers can control what kind of mother they want to be. It's all up to the individual. The choice for children is obvious.

Types of Gas Pumpers

There are many types of people who purchase gasoline, but three types are easy to spot. All three have an obvious physical appearance which sets them apart from other gas purchasers. Each also has a distinctive pumping technique and freely vocalizes his opinion. Finally, each type has a particular way of annoying every other patron at the same location.

The first type of gas purchaser is Leisure Lou. He can be identified immediately by his appearance. He drives a station wagon with wooden side panels and a bumper sticker that tells the world that he is retired. His Hawaiian print shirt captures everyone's attention. He wears Bermuda shorts and black socks with sandals. On his head sits a fly fisherman's hat which is his obvious display of a continuous state of leisure. His pumping technique also sets him apart from the normal crowd. When he parks his car, he stops at the first pump, preventing the use of the pump in front of him. He always pays for his gas in advance, so that the attendant can preset the pump and he will not have to worry about stopping the pump himself. He activates the pump before opening the access door and unscrewing the tank lid. He tucks the hose under his elbow and spills gas on his hip while opening the tank. As Leisure Lou leans against the side of his car, he pumps his gas absent-mindedly, confident that the pump will stop before gas pours onto the ground. Once the pump stops, he replaces the hose and screws on the tank lid but forgets to close the access door. Leisure Lou even vocalizes his not-a-care-in-the-world attitude. He whistles some melodic tune from *The Sound of Music* while pumping his gas. When inside the convenience store, he tells everyone how wonderful retirement is. But Leisure Lou can be a tremendous annoyance. He blocks the use of two pumps while he performs a number of time-consuming tasks. First he browses through the store with no intention of making a purchase. Then he washes his car's windshield. Next he visits the restroom to wash his hands and look at the stain on his hip. Last, he walks his dog around the small patches of grass that serve as landscaping. Leisure Lou is a man who cannot be ignored.

The second type of gasoline purchaser is Strictly-Business Betty. Her physical appearance is also very distinctive. She drives an economical, imported car that has a lock on the access door so that she can safely hide a spare key inside. She wears closed-toe pumps instead of a flirty sandal. Her skirt and blazer are of a classical line with no frills. Strictly-Business Betty's pumping technique is equally distinctive. She unscrews the lid to her tank before removing the hose from the pump. She pumps her gas until the tank is nearly full and then slows the volume to prevent the gas from spewing from the tank. Next she turns off the pump and gives the handle a final squeeze to empty the hose. Finally, she replaces the hose, seals the tank, and closes the access door as if following instructions. Now Strictly-Business Betty's most tell-tale characteristic is voiced. She announces to the cashier that she must have a legible receipt for her expense-account report. Then she preaches about the economic virtues of owning an import. Finally she distinguishes herself in a way that annoys everyone. She spends more than her fair share of time at the cashier's counter but pays no attention to the amount of purchase because she plans to pay with a credit card. But when the cashier announces the price, Strictly-Business Betty has to double check the accuracy of the computer. Then she borrows a calculator to check the gas mileage that she has received from her last tank. In the end, no one has missed Strictly-Business Betty's presence, but the other customers hope they miss her the next time she purchases gas.

The last type of gas purchaser is Lawnmower Larry. He can generally be recognized by his physical appearance. He drives a pickup truck that has a dented fender with a red and yellow gas can in the bed. He wears a sweat-stained shirt and jeans that sag to his hips. Glaring over the waistband of his jeans is his underwear. He has on a baseball cap to protect his face from the sun, and stuffed in his pocket is a red shop rag. He has a streak of grease across his brow where he has obviously wiped his sweat off with a dirty hand. Also unique is Lawnmower Larry's pumping technique. He pays his two dollars in advance but always overpumps the gas by one cent or two. He has no change and borrows the needed pennies from the courtesy jar on the cashier's counter. Lawnmower Larry can be distinguished from the other patrons by his conversation. He complains about the difficulty he has had trying to get that blankety-blank lawnmower started. Also, now that the mower is running, it is too hot to mow. Lawnmower Larry's annoyances are only two, but they distinctly identify him. First, he leaves sweat on the counter where he has leaned. Second, he always returns later in the day for more gas and repeats his earlier routine. While sympathetic to his plight, the normal patrons do not miss Lawnmower Larry when he has gone.

In conclusion, these three types of patrons can add more frustration to the life of the average patron than the price of gasoline. While somewhat humorous, these three could test the patience of a saint. Most people can identify with one or two characteristics of each type, but these are extreme characters. If any patron misses Leisure Lou, Strictly-Business Betty, or Lawnmower Larry, he should consider himself lucky.

Three Types of Dieters

A sad fact in American society is that thousands of people search for the elusive dream of being thin. On any given day, one finds neighbors, friends, and relatives on some kind of diet. Dieters assume various disguises, but the noteworthy ones are the "bandwagoner," the "promiser" and the "lethal loser."

Everyone wants to lose weight quickly and effortlessly; therefore, any fad diet promising overnight

results becomes the new "call" of the "bandwagoner." She tries the grapefruit diet or the watermelon diet, but she decides her stomach cannot possibly deal with all of that fruit. The next day the television advertises a new wonder pill that allows the user to lose up to ten pounds in one week, and the "bandwagoner" answers the "call." Although the magic pill does not produce the desired weight loss, she never gives up hope for a new "wagon" to hitch onto. Once again, this dieter is lured by advertisements of instant spot reduction--liposuction. She crosses over the safety line into a danger zone of unknown procedures, performed by unqualified physicians. Some dieters lose their lives in the search for a beautiful body. The stomach staple is another dieting tool that dieters try. The staple yields a large weight loss, but the dieter endangers her health because of excess loss of body fluids. The "bandwagoner" is always listening for the newest cure on the dieting market.

A family wedding or a special dance is a logical reason for a woman to decide it is time to take off her few, unwanted pounds; however, decisions made in haste are hard to keep, and the "promiser" soon fails in her attempt. She is the dieter with only fifteen pounds to lose, and, as each year flies by, she decides dieting is harder than eating what she wants to, and much less fun! She promises to lose the extra weight for her ten-year class reunion, but her weight-loss pledge is not kept. Some women become "promisers" during their pregnancies, and they broadcast to all within hearing distance that they will lose the extra pounds as soon as the baby is born. The "tomorrow promiser" and the "Monday promiser" are the dieters with whom most people are familiar and whose excuses they know. The "promisers" are always starting their diets tomorrow, after one last, scrumptious dinner--their favorite meal of course! The "Monday promiser" can last through lunch, but by dinner she cannot take her hunger pains any longer. She decides there is always another Monday; furthermore, she eats all week, like a bear preparing for winter hibernation, in preparation for her Monday fast. One is not fooled by the "promiser" but saddened that her attempts at weight loss are unsuccessful.

The most tragic dieters in American society are the "lethal losers," young women following a self-destructive path. Characteristically, this dieter is a young woman with low self-esteem from a middle income family. While in her teens, the young lady decides to shed some unwanted pounds, and, much to her surprise, she loses the extra weight quickly. She attends a party with friends, overeats on junk food and decides to "rid" her body of the excess food by purging in the bathroom; thus the "deceiver" is born. From that moment on, she thinks she is in control of her "new found" diet, but the ultimate "deceiver" is her diet. She sneaks large quantities of food for midnight snacks, and she does not care what she eats, only that she satisfies the yearning deep inside her soul. She faces the beginning of the downward turn of her diet--the binge and purge cycle. Ultimately she loses touch with reality and is treated by a physician in a hospital. The "deceiver" has a companion who is, much like herself, another deadly player in the dieting game. This dieter analyzes the calorie content of every morsel of food on her dinner plate and decides whether or not to eat it; usually she does not, but quietly excuses herself from the table to return to her room. She has lost all sense of the value of food for her body, and she cannot see what she has become--a "sad scarecrow." A scarecrow gains nourishment from her straw stuffing, and the "sad scarecrow" needs food to hold her body together. But this dieter cannot see the "straw" she leaves on the ground when she turns her head away from food; she is beyond all reasoning. Innocently enough, the "deceiver" and "sad scarecrow" start their diets with good intentions; however, along the way some mechanism is triggered, and the "lethal losers" are awakened; their lives are never the same.

All dieters share a common goal, losing weight, but they approach the goal from many different sides. The importance of the dieting game is not the goal, but how one decides to get there. The dieter can choose life or death in her quest for a thin body.