

Devastating Parenting Traps

Part One:

Trap 1—Anger. The Prophet Joseph Smith corrected a mistranslation, or an unauthorized addition, in the New Testament by some scribe. Someone had changed the meaning of Christ's original statement in Matthew 5:22 in the King James New Testament that says that whosoever is angry with his brother **“without a cause”** is in danger of ... The Prophet Joseph Smith took out the **“without a cause”** and thereby changed the meaning significantly. The Book of Mormon also leaves out the “without a cause” phrase (3 Nephi 12:22).

Anger is a secondary emotion and is the result of our often becoming frustrated because we are unable to control others. Satan's tantrum in front of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price (Moses 1:18-22) was designed to frighten Moses into doing what Satan wanted. This is a classic example of how many parents use anger and even rage to frighten their kids into submission.

Trap 2—Arguing. There are several references in scripture that condemn contention and bickering. We are commanded to “cease to contend one with another” (D&C 136:23). Arguing often leads to serious contention, fighting and eventually even violence. To have peace in the home and to enjoy the Spirit of the Lord, we must stop the bickering and arguing in our homes. There is far too much of it tolerated in many LDS homes and we need to repent and drive out the spirit of contention because according to Christ the spirit of contention is the spirit of the devil (see 3 Nephi 11:29). We are not to suffer our children to fight and quarrel, one with another.

Trap 3—Criticism and Perfectionism. We are commanded to be perfect as Christ is perfect. Realistically, however, no one except Christ will ever attain perfection in this mortal life. Therefore we need to work toward perfection. Some LDS parents act like they expect everything to be perfect at home and they overreact when their kids don't clean their rooms perfectly, etc. Some parents (because they want what is best for their kids) really panic when a child announces he or she has decided they don't want to attend seminary (or some such thing). It is a principle of great power if we will just decide to follow Christ's simple admonition to “. . . cease to find fault one with another” (D&C 88:124). That is a commandment; but most of us have forgotten we are breaking a commandment when we criticize other persons (including our kids or our parents). It is up to the parents to present a non-critical example of others before their children.

Trap 4—Lazy Kids. Parents are to teach their children to work and be industrious. Some of us have fallen into the trap of providing everything for our kids except training in how to work and see a job through. Persistence and tenacity in finishing a difficult and unpleasant job is necessary for all of us to learn. Life is not always easy and we must teach our kids to solve and work through their problems until they overcome them. God has commanded us to work six days. He purposely made life difficult so that his children would struggle and become strong.

Part Two:

Trap 5—Rescuing and Codependency. Parents who continually rescue their kids from the consequences of their irresponsible choices are in fact rewarding them for being irresponsible. Can parents train their children to be lazy and irresponsible? Yes! Sometimes parents unwisely step in and rescue when they should let the child struggle with a problem. Only by struggling can we develop better coping skills. Studies show that inappropriately rescuing our children can set them up to be at higher risk for suicide and drug abuse (because they have never learned to cope with and solve their problems).

Codependency can become addictive to parents because they learn to soothe their own anxiety (over the kids) by rescuing them from failure. Of course there is appropriate rescuing and inappropriate rescuing. Unfortunately it is very easy to become addicted to rescuing because we hate to see our kids suffering or failing. Sometimes failure is the best teacher; our Heavenly Father allows us to make mistakes and to fail.

Trap 6—Choice and Consequences. We learn by making choices and then observing the consequences of those choices. Heavenly Father taught Adam by allowing Adam to choose for himself and then administering the consequences of those choices without rancor or scolding or depreciating him in any way.

Too often we parents fail to unemotionally administer consequences. We often scold or give an ‘appropriate’ lecture that is calculated to share our superior wisdom with the “underachieving” child. When we administer a consequence (not as a consequence but with a scolding in anger) the child does not see the connection between the choice and consequence. The child might only see the situation as involving an angry and displeased parent who is punishing and vengeful.

Trap 7—Teenage Retirement. Modern parents must try extra hard to teach their kids to work because our modern society offers fewer and fewer opportunities for kids to milk the cow or to feed the animals or plow the fields or carry the water. Our modern lifestyle seems to offer limited opportunities for kids to learn to work as their ancestors who were raised on the farm were required to work. Work is an eternal principle that is the basis for all growth and development, and God enthrones work when He declares that He Himself works. His own work and glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden and commanded to work all the days of his life by the sweat of his face (see Moses 4:25). The false teachings of the world suggest that man should by his wits make a lot of money and then retire in ease to enjoy life. The purpose of work in God’s eyes is personal growth and development and eventual glory. The purpose of work in the eyes of the world is riches and a life of abundance and ease.

What are we teaching our kids? The church wants us to work with our brains but also stresses that we should learn to work and enjoy physical labor as well. Some of our kids are coming to believe that physical work is ‘beneath’ them. Physical work is good for the body and the spirit. Remember again the phrase our Heavenly Father picked was, “by the sweat of thy face” (Moses 4:25). It seems pretty clear that our Heavenly Father expects us to earn our living and to work hard all our days, whether we work physically or mentally.

Trap 8—No Organized Work and Plan of Accountability. Too many of our LDS homes have no intelligent plan laid out for the child to learn to work and begin to care for him/herself.

Too often the plan is just a helter skelter, hit and miss, chain of events that is entirely inconsistent and confusing to the child. The child’s work needs to be age-appropriate and challenging. It should be regular, expected and required. This work should be tied to earning money and privileges. The work should be designed to give the child the opportunity to learn skills to do the work and also to manage time and money properly. Developing pride in one’s work is a noble goal of work and having responsibility. The work should be scheduled so that there is no question or ambiguity about it. Everyone must know what work is required by whom and when, and the acceptable standard of performance that is expected. Shoddy or incomplete work should not be tolerated. A high standard of performance will take into consideration the difficulty of the job and the age of the child. Unrealistic expectations and perfectionism discourage children.