

# Getting it together

## Kids need rules, not taming



### On Children...

By  
DR. RALPH CASH, MD

Dear Dr. Cash:  
My 5-year-old son still wets his bed at night. I've tried everything to make him stop—restricting liquids after dinner, waking him to urinate before I go to sleep, and even threatening or punishing him. No luck. All of his friends have been dry at night for a long time. Is something wrong with him?  
—The answer:

This is probably a problem in delayed physical maturity rather than a medical illness. The most common cause of bedwetting is deep sleep. The child isn't awakened by the sense of urgency most of us feel when the bladder is full. Most children achieve this developmental task by age 5. But up to 10 per cent of 7-year-olds still wet at night. Often there is a family history of bedwetting with such "primary enuresis" (when a young child has never had consistent periods of dryness at night).

For some reason, parents are able to understand that some 4-year-olds can ride a two-wheel bike long before some 8-year-olds. But they have trouble transferring the same thinking to bladder control.

Try not to pay too much attention to the bed-wetting. It's a normal variation of your child's development, and you don't want to superimpose psychological problems on it.

But if a child has stopped wetting at night for a period of time and then begins to wet again, there is a reason to seek medical advice. For this secondary enuresis, Dr. Alan Perlmutter, chief of Pediatric urology at Children's Hospital of Michigan and

professor of urology at Wayne State University school of medicine, recommends having the child's urine tested to rule out diabetes or an infection as the cause. Children older than 4, who also wet during the day, should definitely be checked.

Some children may have a special bladder problem. Dr. Perlmutter says, but the cause of secondary enuresis is most often emotional, not physical.

For children 8 years old and up who wet at night, the following treatments have been somewhat successful. Keep in mind that the treatment should not be worse than the problem.

•Double-voiding: Have the child urinate a second time before falling asleep to be sure the bladder is completely emptied.

•Behavior modification: The child and parents agree to a reward for staying dry a certain number of nights. Each night that the child is dry, he puts a star on a calendar until he receives his reward.

•Medication: The drug imipramine, which tightens the bladder outlet, has been successful in some cases. But there are undesirable side effects.

•Conditioning devices: a mattress can be equipped with a bell which rings when drops of urine are sensed. This method is expensive and has not had better results than the others.

This column is written as a service to the community by Children's Hospital of Michigan in the Detroit Medical Center. Questions from readers are welcomed. Address letters to Dr. Ralph Cash, Children's Hospital of Michigan, 3901 Beaubien, Detroit 48201.

All kids do it. The toddler heads right for the houseplant that got him in trouble yesterday. The teenager consistently arrives at his home 20 minutes later than his curfew.

They are, in the jargon of the modern parent, "testing the limits." And it seems as though this is just a troublesome quirk in the nature of children which is aimed at making it hard to be parents.

As most think of it, the concept of testing the limits implies a kind of power struggle or cold war between parents and their offspring. It's as if unruly subjects are trying to see how much they can get away with from their older, more powerful rulers.

It goes with a philosophy of child-rearing which claims that kids are basically like wild animals and must be tamed by their parents. In the extreme, this model of parenting says that parents must break the wild spirit of their kids as horsemen do with untamed steeds.

TO BE A SUCCESSFUL parent, according to this philosophy, you must get and keep the upper hand. You must maintain a united front with your partner against your children or they will manipulate you and play you against each other.

To be a proper child-taming parent, you've got to keep a firm grasp on the controls, watching vigilantly for any sign of an up-rising, and stamping out any challenge to your authority.

For the basic assumption of this phi-

losophy is that learning to follow rules, orderliness, cooperation, and getting along with others is against the essentially animalistic nature of children. So, if they are to be domesticated, kids must be systematically trained and even coerced for their own good.

IT AMAZES me that a philosophy that is so inaccurate can be so widely spread and so well-rooted in our thinking. This wild-animal view of kids couldn't be further from the truth.

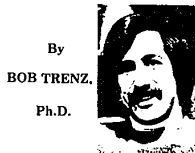
The actual nature of children, from the very moment of their birth, is to yearn for harmony. Even young children want to assume their proper role in the flow of things. They want order, not chaos. They want their selfish needs met, but not at the cost of losing love.

In contrast to the out-dated ideas of Freud, children are not just self-centered and governed by narcissism. Kids want to fit in, to be a successful part of their surroundings.

It doesn't even make logical sense to believe that we human beings begin our lives as something less than human and our parents must force us to adopt an alien nature.

The truth is that children are emerging humans. They are born with all the best motives and tendencies, but they lack the skills and worldly knowledge to express them well. And so they need guidance and supportive education to bring out their inherent loving, creative, orderly, decent side.

LIKE A FINE humanitarian who



By  
BOB TRENEZ,  
Ph.D.

emergence. Rather than believing that they must shove humanness down the throats of their wild offspring, parents should look for the seeds of their child's basic goodness and nurture their growth.

This is not to say that parents shouldn't provide rules and firmness. To the contrary, kids need to learn the real limits of their world. In fact, one of the main reasons they test the limits is because they really want to know where they are.

They want rules. They want order and clear, consistent structures. It's part of their basic, in-born humanness.

Bob Trenez is a psychologist and marriage counselor in Rochester. Comments for Dr. Trenez may be sent to P.O. Box 64, Rochester 48063.

has immigrated to a foreign culture, a child needs education and orientation before he can successfully express his essential high qualities.

Parents should therefore take the role of an assistant to this benign

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**Survival center moves**

The Women's Survival Center, formerly of 70 Whittemore, Pontiac has moved to All Saints Episcopal Church, 171 W. Pike at Williams.

The hours for the center and it's crisis line for battered women will remain, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday thru Friday. The crisis line offers supportive counseling, information and referral to victims of domestic violence.

Three professional counselors are available for further counseling, at no cost, by appointment.

A drop-in center for women of the community is planned and women interested in becoming part of mutual support groups are urged to call. The Women's Survival Center's telephone numbers remain the same: crisis line: 335-1530; business phone: 335-2885

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