

Try Spending Less Time With Your Kids - Dr. Camilo Ortiz

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SUMMARY

Parents are increasingly spending more time and money on their children, yet many feel worse about their parenting abilities, highlighting a disconnect between effort and perceived effectiveness. This phenomenon, known as over-parenting, is affecting various socioeconomic and cultural groups, leading to a lack of independence in children, particularly boys, who are deprived of essential experiences that promote resilience and problem-solving skills.

- Over-parenting is becoming a widespread issue, impacting diverse socioeconomic and cultural groups beyond just affluent families.*
- Parents are stepping in to "protect" children, which can ultimately hinder their development and independence.*
- Boys, in particular, are missing out on crucial experiences with discomfort, danger, and risk-taking, which are essential for their growth.*
- The parenting style is increasingly characterized by anxiety and a focus on safety over risk-taking, often leading to a feminization of parenting roles.*
- Dads typically promote independence more than moms, but the absence of fathers can lead to less encouragement for children to engage in independent activities.*
- Experiential learning, such as engaging in risky play, is more effective than verbal instruction for teaching children about consequences.*
- Urban and rural environments offer different levels of independence for children, with suburban areas facing unique challenges in fostering independence.*
- Initiatives like "independence therapy" aim to encourage children to engage in independent activities, which can be beneficial for their mental health and development.*

Parents are um spending more and more time with their kids, which might seem on the face of it like it's a good thing, um but there's mounting research that for many outcomes it is not a good thing. And at the same time, parents are feeling worse than ever about the job that they're doing despite reliably spending more and more time with their kids and more money, by the way. Uh they feel worse about it than ever.

So, there's a big disconnect there. Have you noticed in your review of all of this differences in terms of class and ethnicity {slash} culture? Yeah. >> Because one of the things that I feel like has been under-reported or under-explored is which cultures and cohorts in America this is impacting the most, and some of that I think intuitively seems like a little surprising.

Yeah. So, I think the stereotype is that wealthy white East Coast or coastal families suffer the most from over-parenting and the negative effects of over-parenting, but we're almost seeing this as a sort of export to

other countries and to other groups of people within the United States. And so, uh in the worst possible way, the poor are catching up, and and people who live in rural areas are catching up. Um and so, this this really is not a niche uh problem anymore. This is a really pervasive problem, and now we're seeing parents stepping in a lot to quote-unquote protect kids, uh which in the end ends up really hurting them. Since last we spoke and since this channel started, there's been a lot of cultural shifts in America. So, we launched going on 3 and 1/2 going on 4 years ago.

And um we've had the return of Donald Trump to the White House. We've had peak social justice hit and now start to recede, at least for now, in the public square, certainly not in the universities, they're all still run by lunatics. And um the rise of characters like Nick Fuentes on the right who see who are sort of revolting against our order, if you if you want to call it that, our our culture, our legal system, our economic system.

From the standpoint of of this group of young Gen Z men who feel very deep disempowered. And I'm how do you think about those forces right now and how they re- relate to this, relate to this anxious generation, the snowplow parenting, um cuz I'm not sure how I think about it. They're they're they're connected, but I don't know how to understand them. Well, I don't think it's obvious, but I think the the most apparent connection to me is that children, and in particular boys, don't have the practice they used to with doing difficult things, um including physical things, rough-and-tumble play, and and things like that, um dangerous things. And so, you know, I talk a lot about what I call the four D's, and that um discomfort, distress, disappointment, and danger, and that kids, in particular boys, need lots of experience with danger. And and so, the over-parenting epidemic really is depriving boys of what comes naturally and what is good for them, which is to be physical and to learn to assess and problem-solve around danger. And so, if we sort of extend that into uh young adulthood and and uh even beyond, you know, that that may have an effect on the self-image of boys in a way that uh in an indirect way can lead them to some of the things that you're describing, extremism and and addictive behaviors.

The cryptocurrency gambling, there's a bunch of threads, all of which have are now like we can talk about in ways that were that would have gotten you censored before. And one thing I can't help but come to is that some of this feels like the feminization of parenting. We've had the the fall of stay-at-home [snorts] mothering. So, it's weird that we would have the rise of like a more overall feminine parenting. But the kind of parenting you talk about in your article, in all of the work, and our past conversations, is one dominated by anxiety, a desire for safety as the primary value above risk-taking. Um and and frankly, a elevation of emotional stability over what one could call the truth. Yeah. Yeah.

>> do you think about that? How do you think about the role of dad shrinking in the household or being told that to be a good father, even if you are there, is to act more like neurotic mom. Yeah, this is this is really important and and a good segue into the work I've been doing on independence. So, just as a little bit of background, I've developed a treatment called independence therapy for anxious kids, where we take them out of the therapist's office and they do daily what we call mega-doses of independence, which is no adult with them, and they go do hard things that are fun that they want to do.

And so, we did a study where we asked moms and dads about their opinions about independence, and there was

a very clear sex difference. Both thought independence was important for their kids, but moms were much less likely to want to encourage kids to do the daily doses of independence that we are finding is actually an effective treatment for anxiety. And I think that touches on your question, that when dads are not present, then kids, by definition, just because moms and dads are different, will be less independent.

That's just less of a value for moms than it is for dads. And we know that the frustration of independence is one of the causes of increased anxiety in kids. And that relates to over-parenting. You can't be independent if your mom is hanging around you all the time. So, these things are all related to each other, but it's very clear that dads are more willing to allow independence on average, not always the case. And that is one of the barriers that we're facing is when the dad is not there, it takes a little more convincing uh to get moms to agree to independence. But we've been successful at it, but it takes effort. It's not Let's just say that they're ambivalent about it because they recognize at some level that independence is important for their kids, but they're pretty terrified of allowing it. Why is this?

You know, it's always worth revisiting some of these basics. Why do we see, in your opinion, and I know this can't be perfectly understood, but why do we see this difference between men and women, between mothers and fathers in comfort with risk-taking and independence and sort of the different sort of focuses? It's a hard question to answer because I think a lot of it stems from biological differences between men and women, and it can appear that those are environmental or social just because of the interaction between biology and our society. Um and we can't do randomized studies where we take a dad out of the picture or we allow some independence but not others. And so, this is all conjecture and really based on correlational studies. Um So, if we sort of get granular and we look like what does it mean to be independent? One of the components of independence is risky play.

And it is clear that boys enjoy risky play more than girls do. And so, part of it may just be the experience of fathers remembering that when they were kids, they did risky play and got hurt and they're fine. Whereas mothers remembering when they were kids did less of it, and so there's just less data that they have about the positive benefits of risky play. I think that's one part of it. The other part is, I think, my field being to blame by constantly encouraging parents to be around all the time and stop kids from experiencing the the four D's, you know, distress, discomfort, disappointment, and danger. And so, we've taken a difference that already exists and expanded it by who is giving advice from my field. And that's the part that I think we can control the most. We certainly can't stop biological differences as much as some people might try, uh but if we at least have some different voices that it's okay for kids to get hurt, uh which is sounds like a weird thing for a child psychologist to say, but Jonathan Haidt has really talked about the plummeting numbers of broken bones that we are seeing in kids as not a good sign. And I totally agree with him.

>> Yeah, the plummeting instances of a lot of danger that is uh the behavior that's risky and dangerous. And the other little piece is just when we see how people learn, the worst least effective way to learn something is information transfer from someone. The best way to learn something is the literal consequences of making that choice. And so that's why being cold when you don't wear a coat is a hundred times more effective than your parent telling you every single day to wear a coat or you're going to be cold.

This um this is so clearly true. You know, the the experiential learning is is the only way. And one of the things about that that makes this moment we're in in like the history of humanity so hard is we are very wealthy by mod by human standards. Certainly in America, but increasingly the whole of the planet. There's there's several billion people that live in absolute grinding poverty.

But there are more people living a a fundamentally comfortable modern American middle class style life. Something to the tune of four to five billion on this planet that live basically like that, that have a roof over their head with relatively clean non-disease ridden running water, heating and cooling, transportation, internet, access to functional health care services for emergencies at at a minimum, etc.

A world that kings of a hundred years ago could not imagine. And so we have this situation in which the training ground of learning is inescapably narrower. The set of opportunities for danger is inescapably smaller. We the hardest part about like Peter Gray and and uh Lenore Skenazy and you and and is and me is we say send your kids outside. It's like there's nobody out there. So they go outside, there's nobody out there, and um and that's a failure. Like we have a we have like a a network effect problem that we're trapped in.

For sure. Um >> What Jonathan has called it a collective action problem. And he's successfully tackling this with phones, which I think is easier than the fact that nobody's outside, but that's been my focus is how do we get groups of parents who agree generally on the idea of independence is good to create neighborhoods where that can happen. And that's quite challenging. It's um yeah, I mean and if that's also quite expensive and um yeah, that I mean literally like the cost of doing that is to pre-identify a place where you can find like-minded people and move to I believe that's just called the farm.

You know. I think that this has there been is there a divergence in the kind of parenting that you you're talking about between urban and rural America? I my observation is absolutely yes. Yeah, and it it's it's actually not a simple relationship. There tends it to be what we call a curvilinear relationship where urban kids actually often have a lot of independence cuz they're walking around taking the subway and then rural kids obviously have a lot of independence. And it's sort of like the suburbs are the what do they call the >> Exurbs or yeah. Exurbs where there's really a crisis of independence in part due to the the urban planning and geography of it all, which is really hard to change. So I've co-developed something called independence therapy for anxious kids, but with Let Grow and with some other organizations, we are also talking about the power of independence for non-anxious kids. You don't need a ton of therapy to do this.

You don't need any therapy to do this. You can watch one of my videos and do it for free. And kids want to do this stuff, whereas they don't want to practice mindfulness. Every kid wants to go and order a Chick-fil-A by themselves or ride bikes with their friends or whittle with a knife or set off firecrackers. You know, all the kind of stuff that often involves a little bit of danger. So there's no convincing. They're they're all in on doing this stuff. And we are again finding some positive effects for very little effort. In fact, it's less than little effort because parents are not there. So parents can go relax while their kids are doing independence. It's Little Rascals therapy.

Absolutely. I actually have a slide of the Little Rascals in my deck when I talk about independence therapy. Uh yes. Yes, absolutely. >> for the modern viewer, there was this early I guess was it even TV or was it like film reels? But there was this thing called the Little Rascals, which was a bunch of like probably nine-year-olds that were just running around They were younger. Younger. Right. Just running around being crazy and uh and and that was it. That was it was completely not even controversial. It was like, "No, this is what childhood is I know I know from um Jonathan Haidt's work and and um and our conversations, but like anthropologically you go around the world and you find little roving bands of Little Rascals. Or at least you used like this is like the shrinking this is like the shrinking part of like all of human history of oh yeah, basically starting around seven like the functional like the age of reason.

Seven to ten, just a roving bands of little hooligans out and about on their own in dangerous streets getting into trouble. And it's like that was good. Like that was or it was at least it was good and bad, but you can't get the good without the bad. And now we've killed that because of the bad, which is to say the fear that you're going to like get hit by a car or nabbed by a kidnapper or sold drugs or whatever.

And there's just one little extra piece to that is that the roving bands of kids were mixed-age kids. So the older kids actually did control the younger kids and Peter Gray will talk about this. And the younger kids would look up to the over older kids about how to act. And that is a crucial part of this independence that is not happening is the the fact that they used to be mixed-age kids. If you liked this clip, we've got so much more where that came from. So be sure to hit that like button, subscribe to the channel, and ring the bell so you won't miss our new videos as they come out each week.

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