

## Lazy Parenting

by Linda M. Clement

originally published in *Peninsula News Review*  
August 26, 2006

Years ago, I was a member of a yahoo email group called LazyBones. While lazy is generally a slander indicating a character flaw, participants on the list wrote eloquently (and briefly) on how life was made better through laziness. I heartily agreed and argue that lazy is no more slanderous than efficient, and that parenting is a particular area of life benefited by the slacker approach.

### **There are three main reasons (there would be 10, but hey! Look at the title) that lazy parenting is quality parenting:**

1. Children learn self-sufficiency as early as they are capable, a key to healthy self-esteem,
2. Time and energy are not wasted on trivia, and;
3. Great joy results from never sweating the small issues.

Again, because I'm lazy, I'm only going to give one example of each...

1. A parent who is quick to help, who jumps in to take the tool out of the struggling child's hands accomplishes two things:

a) a child who learns, right now this moment, that she is incapable, and; b) guaranteed work for many more years to come. Consider the opposite: a half-distracted parent watching with patience and an eye for safety (or for a moment to present itself to give an additional piece of information) accomplishes two completely other things: i) a child who may surprise herself and actually accomplish the task, or a least learn a lot about it, and ii) have the time and energy to do other, self-directed tasks. A third possible bonus for the latter is having a moment of pride and awe, watching someone who came helpless and frail surmount a new challenge successfully.

2. Well, I could of course spend time and energy on, say, my children's beds... their tidiness, whether the bottom sheets are flat, or the covers tucked in. Yup, I could totally do that. Or not. The net effect of me not doing it? Time to do other things and kids who sleep in their own version of comfort instead of some external and irrelevant (to them) set of arbitrary criteria. Besides, I recently found out that dust mites thrive on the moist beds that are all made and tucked in each morning ... and die rapidly in the arid 'aired' (read: unmade) beds in my house. Yes!

Vindication comes to all lazy enough to wait it out! It's the second time, the first was confirmation that it is far more hygienic to air dry dishes than it is to towel dry them... Ha ha ha! In your face! Laziness rules!

3. Over many years studying psychology, health, the human stress response, spirituality, and personality types, I have never, ever found any researcher or expert who declares that fretting, worry or anxiety promote health, create inner peace or contribute in any way to a joyful life.

Here is my deranged perspective: there are millions of stars in this corner of the galaxy...many of which are easily close enough to vaporize our planet, everything on it and the rest of the solar system with it, in the event of a supernova. Not dozens of close-enough stars... not hundreds. Millions. This may seem like nihilism to those who haven't seen the big joke yet, but I find this to be a massive relief. That's the whole worst-case scenario and here isn't thing one I can do about it... Whew! So, what I will do with however much time there might be left to spend? Fret that my kids will mark their bodies with ink, washable or permanent or even sub-cutaneous? Yeah, probably not.

**One suggestion I just love is: look for opportunities to love yourself and others.**

In your spare time, grow things, or

meditate, or make things, or watch tv. Anything, really, is a better use of time and energy than worry. If it's going to happen, worrying won't stop it, and you get to deal with it whether you worried or not.

So, lay back and enjoy the ride. There is just one lesson that must be learned before it's possible:

**It is not possible to control other people, even when they're really short.**

I won't argue whether parents should control their kids (because, really, too much effort), simply that they cannot –not effectively, not really. Can not. Because it's not possible: people do not have the keys to whatever locks out control, or the magical powers needed. Parents can secure what *looks* like control, providing no one looks too closely or notices all the undermining evidence (like lying, rebellion, defiance, resistance, belligerence, sass, forgetfulness, insolence, sulking –the list is really long) that naturally follows even apparently 'successful' attempts.

**It is psychologically natural for humans to resist the control of others...**

What looks like effective control is often apparent compliance, followed in days or weeks with apparently unrelated misbehaviour, willful stupidity, and 'unbreakable' stress-relieving habits (nail biting, hair pulling, thumb sucking, etc.) It is psychologically natural for humans to resist the control of others, and there is no 'too young' for that to start.

Lazy parenting is mostly about relaxing into the natural pace of childhood and maturation. Kids will grow up without being pushed, and

pushing doesn't hurry development, it impedes it. Laziness allows kids to develop at their pace because that is the fastest they can go anyhow. From walking to weaning, from potty learning to reading, no outside force can compel a child to be ready, physically or mentally before he is developmentally ready. Besides, as the epitome of laziness, I figured if I were going to drive any of this, I'd have to do something, and I prefer the motto from the title of Richard Eyer's book:

*Don't Just Do Something...Sit There!*

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Linda Clement is a parenting coach, and writer of many things, working with Raising Parents Inc.  
lindaclement@raisingparents.net  
lindaclement.blogspot.ca  
www.raisingparents.net