



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 3, 2024

The Younger De-generation: Coddling Kids to Spiritual Collapse

Between 2007 and 2017, the suicide rate nearly tripled — for children ages 10-14. No, that's not a typo, but a tragedy. It's also yet another reason to worry about our civilization's cultural and moral trajectory. For the reality is that while Americans try hard to make sure their kids are safer, happier, healthier, and kinder than ever, their efforts are backfiring.

Commenting on this Tuesday, Power Line's John Hinderaker posted a picture (below) that's certainly worth a thousand words.



skynesher/iStock/Getty Images Plus

The below was a playground in 1912, long before we became a bubble-wrap society. Kids weren't as "safe" — but they were far safer from moral hazards and were happier.

pic.twitter.com/yQkldiKJLA

— SL Duke (@SelwynLDuke)
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If you encouraged this kind of activity today, someone would call the cops, Hinderaker then [pointed out](#). Even when he grew up in the '50s and '60s in a small South Dakota town, there was a striking degree of a certain kind of freedom. "Kids played, almost always without parents having anything to do with it," Hinderaker explained. "In some ways, you could say our parents were strict. On the other hand, they rarely had any idea what we were doing. As long as we were home for dinner at six, we were good."

Of course, no one is insisting children must play on 20-foot-high monkey bars without ground padding (though I guess a Darwinian would say it weeds out the weak!). What is clear, however, is that the modern obsession with "safety" — and, to the point here, *emotional* safety — is breeding miserable kids who can't cope with life. As Bari Weiss [recently stated](#) in the podcast "Why the Kids Aren't Alright":

American kids are the freest, most privileged kids in all of history. They are also the saddest, most anxious, depressed, and medicated generation on record. Nearly a third of teen girls say they have seriously considered suicide. For boys, that number is an alarming 14 percent.

What's even stranger is that all of these worsening mental health outcomes for kids have coincided with a generation of parents hyper-fixated on the mental health and well-being of their children.

Take, for example, the biggest parenting trend today: "gentle parenting." Parents today are



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told to understand their kids' feelings instead of punishing them when they act out. This emphasis on the importance of feelings is not just a parenting trend—it's become an educational tool as well. "Social-emotional learning" has become a pillar in public schools across America, from kindergarten to high school. And maybe most significantly, therapy for children has been normalized. In fact, there are more kids in therapy today than ever before.

On the surface, all of these parenting and educational developments seem positive. We are told that parents and educators today are more understanding, more accepting, more empathetic, and more compassionate than ever before—which, in turn, makes wonderful children.

But is that really the case? Are all of these changes—the cultural rethink, the advent of therapy culture, of gentle parenting, of teaching kids about social-emotional learning—actually making our kids better?

Citing the new book *Bad Therapy: Why the Kids Aren't Growing Up* by Abigail Shrier, Weiss answers with a resounding "No." In fact, these changes are partially responsible for the problems.

How bad is the situation? Less than half of Generation Z "would describe their mental health as 'good,' with 42% of them diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder, and 39% going to therapy at least once a week," the *New York Post* [informs](#). "Teens today so profoundly identify with these diagnoses, they display them in social media profiles, alongside a picture and family name," the paper quotes Shrier as stating.

There's much to unpack here. First, while "gentle parenting" may be a new name, it's not a new phenomenon. Permissiveness has long reigned, worsening by the year for a few decades now, and an increased focus on feelings has attended this. This emotion-orientation is destructive but also a logical reaction — given today's prevailing worldview: moral relativism/nihilism.

Consider a point I've made for decades: Someone who believes in Truth — universal, eternal, unchanging, and transcendent *by definition* — will reference it when making "moral" decisions. But what can a relativist/nihilist (who doesn't believe in Truth) use as such a yardstick? Answer:

The most compelling guide he has left is something we all have, something oh-so seductive — emotion.

Such a *modus operandi* is status quo, too. As the Barna Group research company [pointed out](#) after conducting a study finding that *most Americans don't believe in Truth*, people's "most common basis for moral decision-making was doing whatever feels right...." *Feelings are the arbiter*.

One consequence of this is that, as family psychologist John Rosemond put it decades ago, whereas parents once viewed misbehavior as a "moral problem," they now consider it a "*psychological problem*."

Of course. If there's no Truth, there's no morality (properly understood), only "perspective," "opinions," "values." But people are certainly real and their brains are real — so *the psychological is real*. Ergo, parents' ignoring of the moral in favor of the psychological.

Do you see how it all fits together?

This focus also explains teens' display of psychological diagnoses in social-media profiles. No one would boast of having a moral defect; its existence implies a failure to improve oneself. But nobody can help having a disease or disorder (a psychological problem). So it gives a person another opportunity to play



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the victim. The message is: “Woe is me! I have such burdens! And don’t expect too much from me. I’m doing great considering all I deal with!” Another benefit is that one doesn’t have to expect too much from oneself.

This detachment from Truth, from the moral realm, leads to moral confusion — this opens the door to acceptance of evil (e.g., the sexual agendas in schools and elsewhere). This is significant because, as I believe Greek philosopher Aristotle pointed out, living a moral life *is a prerequisite for happiness*.

So is it any wonder that kids today, being seduced into sin from the youngest ages, are unhappy? Sin is psychological poison.

So the point missed is that the moral and psychological are *inextricably linked*. You can’t be healthy psychologically unless you’re healthy morally — and you can’t raise psychologically healthy children without emphasis on the moral.

So why are kids more miserable than ever? Well, consider the message they now too often get, translated:

- There is no God.
- Correspondingly, we’re just a cosmic accident, some pounds of chemicals and water — i.e., organic robots.
- Correspondingly, there is no Truth, no actual right or wrong, just perspective. It’s whatever works for you.
- Correspondingly, there’s no inherent meaning to life; your robot self begins functioning, eventually ceases functioning, and that’s it.

Of course, people nonetheless have an innate will to live, and believing this world is all that exists (no afterlife), they can become inordinately focused on this world. So add to the above the full-throttle indoctrination with the idea that we’re destroying this world by causing climate change, and it’s no wonder many kids are basket cases.

The solution is as simple to understand as it is hard to effect: Restore belief in God and Truth, and recognize, cultivate in yourself, and model for and instill in children [those elements of morality](#) — [the virtues](#). Also accept that feelings are not facts and, unconstrained by a Truth-formed intellect, can be deadly.



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