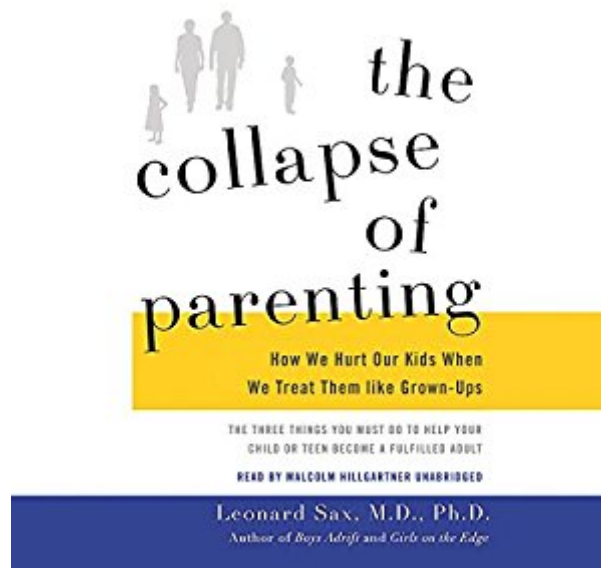


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The Collapse Of Parenting: How We Hurt Our Kids When We Treat Them Like Grown-Ups



Synopsis

In *The Collapse of Parenting*, Leonard Sax, an acclaimed expert on parenting and childhood development, identifies a key problem plaguing American children, especially relative to other countries: the dramatic decline in young people's achievement and psychological health. The root of this problem, Sax contends, lies in the transfer of authority from parents to their children, a shift that has been occurring over the last 50 years and is now impossible to ignore. Sax pinpoints the effects of this shift, arguing that the rising levels of obesity, depression, and anxiety among young people - as well as their parents' widespread dependence on psychiatric medications to fix such problems - can all be traced back to a corresponding decline in adult authority. Sax argues that a general decline in respect for elders has had particularly severe consequences for the relationships between parents and their children. The result is parents are afraid of seeming too dictatorial and end up abdicating their authority entirely rather than taking a stand with their own children. If kids refuse to eat anything green and demand pizza instead, parents give in, inadvertently raising children who expect to eat sweets and junk food and are thus more likely to become obese. If children demand and receive the latest smartphones, tablets, and other gadgets and are then allowed to spend the bulk of their waking hours texting with friends and accessing any website they want, they become increasingly reliant on peers and the media for guidance on how to live rather than their parents. And if they won't sit still in class or listen to adults - parents or teachers - they're often prescribed medication, a quick fix that doesn't help them learn self-control. In short, according to Sax, parents have failed to teach their children good habits, leaving children with no clear sense of the distinction between right and wrong. But, Sax insists, there is hope. To start with, parents need to regain central places in the lives of their young children, displacing same-age peers who can't provide the same kind of guidance and stability. Parents also need to learn that they can't be best friends and parents at the same time. They'll make their children's lives easier if they focus not on pleasing their kids but instead on giving them the tools they need to lead happy, healthy lives. Drawing on over 25 years of experience as a family psychologist and hundreds of interviews with children, parents, and teachers in the United States and throughout the world, Sax makes a convincing case that if we are to help our children avoid the pitfalls of an increasingly complicated world, we must reassert authority as parents.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sax maintains that the children of today are so busy with the Internet and with their various hand-held devices that they neglect everything else. As a result, children lose in terms of academic skill and physical fitness. He regards this as a Twenty-first Century phenomenon. He begins this argument in Chapter 2. I see his point, but this problem began to emerge with the invention of television. If you are interested, read *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* by Jerry Mander and *The Plug-In Drug* by Marie Winn. I have to agree that academic achievement of the children of this country has gone steadily downhill. I have substitute taught in Philadelphia schools, and I have found that there is obviously something catastrophic which has happened to our nation's youth. Any student who can begin a sentence with a capital letter and end it with a period is considered an honor student. In Chapter 9, Sax speaks of parents who work themselves to a frazzle driving their children to dance class, soccer practice, and goodness knows where else. One would expect him to be happy with such families. Dance class and soccer practice are good for physical fitness, aren't they? But no. Sax is still unhappy because those parents aren't at home spending quiet time together. Sax is fighting a force which is perfectly natural. In child development class, I was told that a person in late childhood and adolescence becomes less centered on his or her parents and more centered on his or her peers. I remember undergoing such a development myself, and that was long before the Twenty-first Century. Sax has all the parents in the country caught in a double bind. If you don't pressure your children enough, you lose. If you pressure your children too much, you lose.

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