



# CREATING RESILIENT FAMILIES

## 01

## PARENTS OVER TIME

### TODAY'S PARENTS

Parenting is a different ball game these days. Many children have an abbreviated childhood and enter the world of teenage behaviour well before they reach puberty. Teenagers today start their adolescence earlier, finish it much later and are possibly more influenced by the media than those of a generation ago. Parents have less time, have to juggle more things and have fewer opportunities to discuss with each other ways of approaching child care and teen care issues. Despite this, parents go through a fairly predictable sequence of stages as their children age.

#### Stage One: THE PARANOID PARENT

Having a baby can turn the average, sane parent into a sleep-deprived wreck as they observe every breath the newborn takes. This paranoia initially focuses on the baby until it begins to crawl, and then shifts to the bookcases, curtains, walls and stairs.

#### Stage Two: THE SEPARATING PARENT

Wondered what you would do when the kids went to pre-school? Ha! After recovering from separation anxiety, there is the rush to and from crèche or kindergarten, reading, playing, drawing. Don't worry, you'll get some sleep some day.

#### Stage Three: THE RELIEVED PARENT

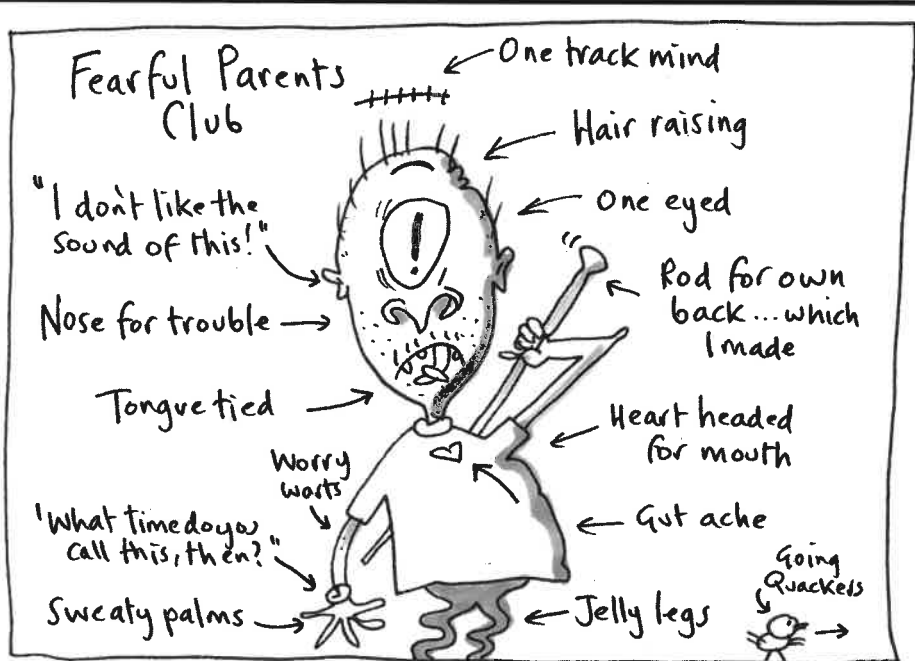
The beginning of primary school marks the beginning of a brief period of serenity for most parents. As long as you can endure hearing the phrase 'I'm not going to be your friend any more', you'll probably be all right.

#### Stage Four: THE ANXIOUS PARENT

The late primary to early secondary years bring with them a dose of concern and anxiety as children shuffle their peer groups, boil the world down into two basic states - boy's germs and girl's germs, and generally get into comparing themselves with everyone else.

#### Stage Five: THE EMBATTLED PARENT

With the onset of the teenage years, a great debate begins. Hold on to your hats and stick in there for the long haul.



#### Stage Six: THE EXHAUSTED PARENT

The mid- to late teen years often see the hassled parent meeting the haughty teenager and the results are not always pretty.

#### Stage Seven: THE DESERTED PARENT

Free at last!

#### Stage Eight: THE INVOLVED GRANDPARENT

Or so you thought! This used to be an optional stage, but with many families having both parents in full-time work and more single-parent families, the role of the grandparent is increasingly important in providing day-to-day care. The risk of this is that as grandparents become more involved in everyday care, they may lose their role as a kind, wise guide to young people who may be battling with their parents.

### IF PARENTING HAS IMPROVED SO MUCH, WHY AREN'T KIDS BETTER OFF?

Times have changed so dramatically that the role of parents has shifted. When children are young, they need structure and consistency. While they still need these things from you when they become teenagers, they are not going to admit it. Parenting has become much more complex because young people are bombarded with messages, information and influences from so many sources. Parents are only one influence on children's development, with peers, school and the media playing an increasingly large role. Even so, parents remain a very powerful force. In surveys of Australian young people asking them who they admire, I often find young people answer 'my parents'. So while it can be tempting to underestimate your influence, power and capacity to shape your child's life course and wellbeing, don't!

**QUOTE FOR THE DAY** *We are an earring to the left of our parents and they are but a haircut to the left of theirs.* 'Things of Stone and Wood'



© 2004 Andrew Fuller