

Cliffs Note Parenting

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**By ANGEL KANE,
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I love when my brother and his family come for a visit. And this past weekend, they were in Lebanon to spend Easter with us. Soon after arriving, we all decided to head to the creek. As we were walking through the woods behind our house, my four year old nephew ran ahead. As he did, my brother yelled out...

“Ryan, don’t go too far, I told you there are dinosaurs in the woods that will eat you.”

I gave him a look. He looked right back.

As we got to the creek and my 6 year old niece jumped in, once again my brother cautioned – “stay close there are crocodiles out there that will kill you in one bite.”

Once again - - his remarks were duly noted.

You see my brother and I believe in parenting through fear. It was the way we were raised. In essence it’s a cliffs notes version of true parenting. Of course, there are good explanations as to why a child should not do one thing or another but my parents didn’t care to explain those reasons. It was easier to scare the bejesus out of us...

Don’t eat hard candy, you will choke and die.

Don't open the attic door, you will fall through the ceiling and kill yourself.

Don't swim in the deep end, there are sharks on that side of the pool.

Don't turn the stove on while we are gone, the whole house will explode.

Don't ride your bike on the road, someone will grab you and kill you.

For most of our young life, my brother and I lived in constant fear that certain death was just around the corner. And that suited my parents just fine ...as we became extremely cautious children who never, and I mean NEVER, strayed.

And because - - everyone grows up to be their parents, today our children now suffer the consequences.

Later, after the Easter egg hunt, my brother and I were rifling through the Easter candy remains to see what we could find.

"Gerry, do you think we scare our kids too much? Maybe we shouldn't be saying the things we do. Maybe we should take the time to explain the real reason they shouldn't do certain things. I mean, I am worried people think we are strange."

"Strange? Really? I never really think about it. Hey! Stop! Don't eat that, it's a Jolly Rancher – you could choke and die!"

That we are strange – a given.

That we are still alive – a miracle!

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