

Cleaning House: A Mom's Twelve-Month Experiment to Rid Her Home of Youth Entitlement

To Download this book in many format Visit :

<https://wocoentala.org/source1/ccf8eb318ff2b17c5215fcac4c64ee68>

Is Your Home Out of Order?

Do your kids expect clean folded clothes to magically appear in their drawers? Do they roll their eyes when you suggest they clean the bathroom? By racing in to make their lives easy, have you unintentionally reinforced your children's belief that the world revolves around them?

Dismayed at the attitude of entitlement that had crept into her home, Kay Wyma got some attitude of her own. *Cleaning House* is her account of a year-long campaign to introduce her five kids to basic life skills and the ways meaningful work can increase earned self-confidence and concern for others.

With irresistible humor and refreshing insights, Kay candidly details the ups and downs of equipping her kids for such tasks as making beds, refinishing a deck chair, and working together. The changes that take place in her household will inspire you to launch your own campaign to dislodge your kids from the center of their universe.

"If you want your children to be more responsible, more self-assured, and more empathetic, *Cleaning House* is for you."

-Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family

Kay Wills Wyma has five kids, ages four to fourteen, and one SUV with a lot of carpool miles. She holds a bachelor's from Baylor University and an MIM from the American Graduate School of International Management (Thunderbird). Before transitioning to stay-at-home mom, she held positions at the White House, the Staubach Company, and Bank of America. She and her husband, Jon, live with their family in the Dallas area. *The Epiphany*

Driving down Preston Road, I was dutifully transporting children to school with my then-fourteen-year-old son sitting shotgun, when I learned how this kid defines the American Dream. As is typical of this particular area in Dallas, we were surrounded by opulence: on our left was a Lexus, on our right a Porsche, and directly in front a silver Maserati.

"Mom." Abandoning his pose of boredom, my son perked up.

"Which one of those do you think I'd look best in? I think the Porsche...Yeah. That's what car I'm going to get when I'm sixteen."

Fighting back nausea, I looked at him. "What planet are you on? And how do you think you will pay for one of those cars?" A question I knew had no answer, since his primary activity involves a screen and remote control.

Who is raising this kid? I thought. Is materialism and money all he thinks about? Where have all my words of wisdom gone? The hours of volunteer service, the countless lectures on being content with what you have, and all the brilliant soliloquies I've delivered on the fact that "stuff" will never really satisfy you-has none of that penetrated his brain?

After dropping him off, I passed through the last school zone on my way home and dialed my sister-in-law, who is also one of my best friends. Not only did I need to vent my frustration, I needed reassurance that I wasn't crazy and that there is a light at the end of this self-centered teenager tunnel. She delivered on the former but couldn't help much with the latter because she has a few slackers of her own. After we exchanged similar stories, I had a sobering epiphany.

"I think I'm raising little socialists," I said, "the serve-me kind that are numb to the benefits of ingenuity and hard work, the kind that don't just need to be taken care of—they expect it."

And why not? That's what I have apparently been raising them to expect. In that moment and in the days that followed, I came to realize that not one of my five children knew how to do their own laundry. Not one could clean a bathroom—I mean, really clean it. Not one could cook, serve, and clean up after a full dinner. I wasn't sure my eight-yearold could even cut his waffles.

Ugh!

To be fair, my children can do a lot of amazing things. They are genuinely great kids. But they'd been getting a sweet free ride, especially in their home life. With me stepping in and doing for them—rarely, if ever, putting genuine responsibilities on their plate—they didn't have a chance to realize their potential.

As I've since discovered in conversations with other parents, ours was not an isolated case. Raising independent kids is countercultural these days. Instead of teaching our children to view themselves as capable, we step in to do everything for them. We start when they're still young, using safety as our lame excuse ("She'll fall if I don't hover"), then we continue "protecting" them ("If I don't help him get As, how will he get into college?"). We pave a smooth pathway, compulsively clearing away each pebble of disappointment or difficulty before it can impede their progress.

By the time they reach adolescence, they're so used to being taken care of that they have no idea they're missing out on discovering what they can do or who they can be.

I was reminded again of how low I'd set the bar of expectations after my eighth grader, the one who plans on driving a Porsche at age sixteen, brought home an assignment from his English teacher to prepare a declamation. The task: select a speech or essay—something quotable and interesting—commit five minutes of it to memory, then recite it in front of the class. Seemed straightforward enough.

And yet, following in his mother's footsteps, my child procrastinated to the point that his teacher finally chose a passage for him. I tried, with little success, to smother my laughter when I learned that my "what's the least I can do to get by?" teenager would be memorizing and reciting Teddy Roosevelt's 1899 address to the Hamilton Club in Chicago—an address entitled "The Strenuous Life."

I kid you not.

Here's a brief portion of what TR said:

In speaking to you, men of the greatest city of the West, men of the State which gave to the country Lincoln and Grant, men who preeminently and distinctly embody all that is most American in the American character, I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife; to preach that highest form of success which comes, not to the man who desires mere easy peace, but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph.

A life of slothful ease, a life of that peace which springs merely from lack either of desire or of power to strive after great things, is as little worthy of a nation as of an individual. I ask only that what every self-respecting American demands from himself and from his sons shall be demanded of the American nation as a whole.¹ Oh, there is much more. And it's all incredibly convicting. TR would climb out of his grave, metaphorical big stick in hand and all thoughts of speaking softly abandoned, if he knew what we have done to the country that he and so many other determined leaders worked diligently to shape. And I'm embarrassed to say that my kids would probably opt for "mere easy peace." They'd most certainly shrink from "hardship" and "bitter toil."

What Message Are We Sending Our Kids?

Incidents like these and countless others brought to my attention a malady that had infected my home. Youth entitlement seems to have reached epidemic proportions in both my family and society as a whole-and I was appalled to realize that I, like many of today's well-meaning parents, am a primary carrier of the germ.

With the greatest of intentions and in the name of love, we have developed a tendency to hover, race in to save, protect from failure, arrange for success, manipulate, overprotect, and enable our kids. Freeing their schedules for sports, school, and increasingly important time with friends, we strive to make our children's lives easier or to make success a sure thing by doing it all for them. We shower them with accolades, proclaiming how wonderful they are-yet we rarely give them the opportunity to confirm the substance of that praise. All our efforts send the clear, though unspoken and unintended, message "I'll do it for you because you can't" or "No sense in your trying because I can do it better and faster."

Those messages are really the opposite of what I want my kids to hear from me. I want them to hear the truth-that with hard work, perseverance, and discipline, they can do anything they put their minds and muscles to.

This realization convinced me of the need to redefine my parenting approach. Instead of communicating "I love you, so let me make life easy for you," I decided that my message needed to be something more along these lines: "I love you. I believe in you. I know what

you're capable of. So I'm going to make you work."

I'm not sure where this entitlement thing originated. I don't remember my parents doing my homework for me or checking every answer before school the next day. They really only helped when I was legitimately stuck and asked for assistance. I don't remember them running in to protest when a teacher gave me a bad grade, warranted or not. I sure don't remember my folks leaping hurdles to get me on the right team at the right school with the right teacher. For the most part, they let the chips fall where they might and expected us kids to adapt and aim for success as best we could. I don't remember getting by with a messy room anchored by my unmade bed. (Okay, so our housekeeper, Beatrice Howard-Bea to me-not my parents, checked our rooms. But she made the chain of command crystal clear: my dad, my mom, and then her. She wasn't there to work for us. She worked for my parents. She was our boss.) We did work Saturday mornings, though, sweeping the garage, mowing the yard, washing the cars, cleaning windows, and such. Our efforts were inspected for quality, because "If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well," as my dad (over)emphasized.

Yet in today's society the primary role of parents seems to be racing in to "help" their kids. We manipulate circumstances to clear a pathway for our children to reach the top and be the best. We might even complete their homework ourselves, just to be sure it's done right. At the very least we check it all.

We impart the message that achievement is paramount. Then we do everything in our power to ensure their success-by sticking ourselves smack-dab in the middle. The result? A group of kids now labeled as "Gen Me," because they behave as if the world revolves around them. Some experts even use the term narcissistic. Is their behavior worthy of a clinical diagnosis? Maybe or maybe not. But evidence clearly suggests we now have a group of overserved kids who are struggling on the other side of education to find their place in life.

A few years ago, a Newsweek article described this group with the brief story of Felicite:

Since leaving college Felicite has changed jobs more than once a year. The 26-year-old Parisian-who didn't want her full name used in case it was seen by her current employers-tends to switch for "excitement" rather than money. Indeed, whenever her latest job doesn't pay enough for her to rent an apartment, she simply moves back into her parents' home in the suburbs. Her latest plan: to quit her position in advertising for humanitarian work overseas.

"I'm still young!" she says. "I just want to have fun in my job." Felicite is emblematic of a growing trend. Around the developed world, more and more twentysomethings are staying home with their moms and dads so they can pursue their interests instead of worrying about secure jobs that will pay off mortgages.² Around the same time the Los Angeles Times reported on a San Diego State University study that pointed to a rising trend of egocentrism: All the effort to boost children's self-esteem may have backfired and produced a generation of college students who are more narcissistic than their Gen X predecessors....

Some of the increase in narcissistic attitudes was probably caused by the self-esteem programs that many elementary schools adopted 20 years ago, the study suggests. It notes that nursery schools began to have children sing songs that proclaim: "I am special, I am special. Look at me."³

More recently, Emily Bennington, a career expert and coauthor of *Effective Immediately: How to Fit In, Stand Out, and Move Up at Your First Real Job*, wrote an article for the Huffington Post in which she described the behaviors she and her colleagues have observed in recent college graduates, the more disturbing of which is kids needing their parents to be present during postcollege job interviews. "Naturally," she noted, "it's easy to blame the students in these situations ("they're too entitled"), but the bigger problem is us. We-as parents-are so eager to shelter our kids and keep them safe from any possible harm that we fail to realize that this in itself is harming them."⁴

Although the parents I know fully intend to prepare their kids to succeed in life, stories like these and an abundance of other real-life examples demonstrate that we undermine our own goals when we race in to ensure our kids' success and happiness. Our "helping" strategy sounds good until we find ourselves immersed in a society of overindulged, underprepared adults who sorely lack a solid work ethic.

Other Books

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff for Moms. In this insightful, practical guide, Kristine Carlson offers proven strategies and techniques that empower mothers to manage their busy lives with less stress, more happiness, and greater harmony within themselves and their homes. She reveals how to: *Be a Mom, Not a Friend Pursue Your Passion, But Not at the Expense of Your Children Balance Being a Woman and a Mom Empower yourself to live the life you dream of*

Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ . more apt to say, "No, I don 't smoke cigarettes or weed" and " I don 't drink alcohol or take pills." It's the kids who are not prepared who simply can't think of any reason not to try these things, and without a parent's loving guidance ..."