

EBOOK SERIES

Your Family Constitution

PARENTING STYLES

www.yourfamilyconstitution.com



Scott Gale

PARENTING STYLES

I've found that there are three basic approaches to parenting: the *Easy Way*, the *Hard Way* and the *Constitutional Way*. Each requires varying amounts of effort. Each generates very different results. Most of us use some combination of all of these styles. We flip-flop back and forth depending on current circumstances and the emotional fortitude of ourselves and our children. We each have a style we rely on most. However, as was the case for me, we don't necessarily lean on the method we most prefer.

The Easy Way

The *Easy Way* is simple. It involves a steady diet of concessions, as well as a permanent blind-eye to misbehavior. This method facilitates temporary peace. However, routine spoiling inevitably breeds unsustainably high hopes in a child, resulting in disappointment, frustration, aggravation and despair for all.

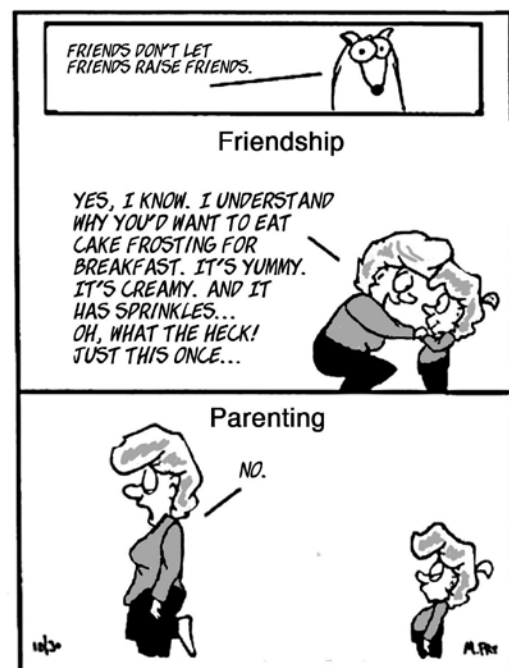
The longer a parent travels down this path, the more difficult and painful it becomes to break from. The *Easy Way* often culminates with a public spectacle. Parents become humiliated while an uncomfortable silence falls over all others present.

WET BATHING SUIT BLUES

I once ended up at the beach unexpectedly with my friend Tom, his son Jerry, and my two boys. Even though the water was cold, the kids really wanted to go in the ocean. We had no bathing suits; so they swam in their shorts.

When they got out of the water, we had no spare clothes for them to change into. Jerry (eight) threw a tantrum because he didn't want to stay in wet shorts. Jack and Max would also have preferred fresh clothes, but they knew from experience that Jerry's approach wouldn't improve their situation. As Jerry cried, Jack and I shared a silent glance and smile to acknowledge my appreciation of Jack's patience.

Embarrassed, frustrated and wanting to avoid a scene, Tom handled the situation the *Easy Way*. He went to a nearby shop and bought Jerry



burst immediately lifted and we carried on with our fun activities.

Tom had successfully quashed a potential problem before it erupted, but Jerry had prevailed in the test of wills. Tom's actions reinforced Jerry's belief that melting down could get him what he wants. This familiar routine is destined to repeat itself again and again until Tom finally abandons the *Easy Way*.

The Hard Way

The *Hard Way* could be the most difficult and damaging method of parenting. It involves a mix of mental combat, idle threats and unchecked emotions. Unfortunately, I subscribed to this frustrating approach for several years.

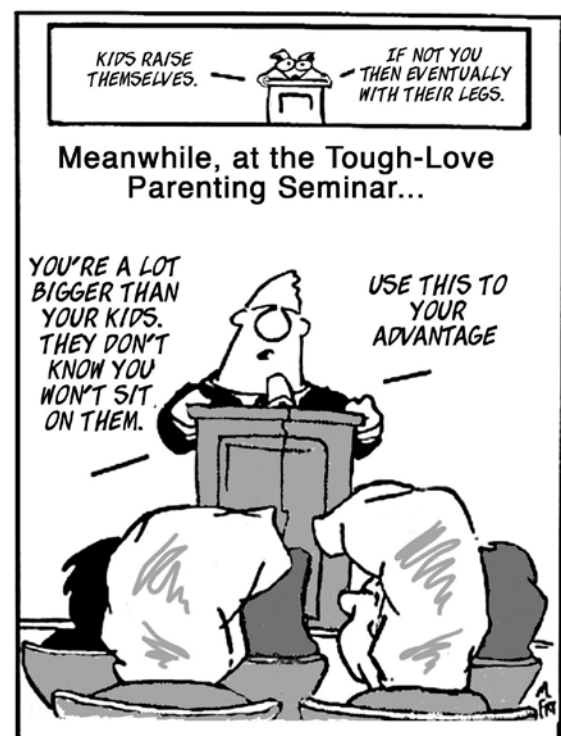
The more I leaned on the *Hard Way*, the farther I pushed my family away. The lessons that I had fought so hard to teach my children couldn't penetrate their emotional barriers. The *Hard Way* paved my road to Rock Bottom.

FAMILY POKER

Family Poker is an integral part of the *Hard Way*. A game typically starts when parent or child throws down an ultimatum during confrontation. A series of bluffs and counter bluffs ensue. The stakes grow in force and effect with each successive bet. Eventually, the person with the losing hand concedes or blows up.

When kids are young, the game is simple and the deck almost always favors the parents. However, as kids get older and more sophisticated, Family Poker becomes more complicated and difficult. The stakes increase. Feelings get hurt. Credibility and self-esteem are put on the line. No one wins. There are just different degrees of losing.

Karen's friend Carol used the "all-in" bluff while trying to correct a problem with her teenage son, Mike. She told him if he couldn't follow the rules, then he wouldn't be welcome in her house. Carol didn't have winning cards and



she couldn't afford to lose. Nonetheless, she pushed her chips out.

Unfortunately, Family Poker doesn't allow anyone to retract their bet. Her desperate attempt resulted in Mike's departure. He went to live with friends and didn't return. The *Hard Way* claimed another casualty on an ill-conceived bluff.

The Constitutional Way

During my first decade as a parent, I leaned heavily on both the *Easy Way* and *Hard Way* parenting methods. These were coping mechanisms. They allowed me to survive in situations when I didn't know what else to do. I couldn't find alternative parenting means. I didn't know where to start.

Since Black Sunday, I've learned to parent through structure, the *Constitutional Way*. This preferred method steers behavioral choices by leveraging mutual understanding, clear expectations and prescribed incentives. The *Constitutional Way* harnesses kids' energy and ideas, rather than dismissing their opinions.

Benjamin Franklin once said "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

The *Constitutional Way* embodies this outlook. Weekly family meetings encourage open and honest communication between members of my family. An annual amendment process prompts us to look forward and anticipate upcoming problems, rather than react to them after they arrive.

Hot Tip:

Manage Results, Not Methods

Within the bounds of our Family Constitution, each family member is accountable for certain responsibilities and standards of conduct. Rewards and consequences get dispensed based on results, not the method of achieving them.

I don't want to have to manage when my kids take their shower or brush their teeth. That should be up to them. All I care about is that by the time they go to bed, they've completed all that is expected of them. If Jack or Max needs help, advice or reminders, Karen and I are happy to oblige, but only if asked.

We argue less with the kids under these circumstances, as we are not interrupting their shows or activities to force them to do something against their will. They manage themselves and make choices based on a very simple formula— get the job done right and reap the associated benefits; ignore responsibilities and suffer the consequences.

The *Constitutional Way* had been available to me all along. I just had to recognize it was there, then reach out and grab it.

POOPER SCOOPER

I recently searched the house for Jack to remind him to clean up after the dog. He hadn't gotten a Drop (our lingo for failing to complete a chore on time) for five consecutive weeks. He was closing in on his eight-week reward, a coveted opportunity to select a family outing. I didn't want to deflate Jack's efforts, as he had worked hard to maintain success. I wanted to help prevent a simple oversight from causing him to return to the beginning. I looked for him to give him a reminder.

As I called his name, he walked through the door. I reminded him to clean up outside, but he had just done it. He had used the checklist I had given him to remind him of his obligations. He wanted to keep his streak going. For the first time that I could remember, chores were *his* priority.

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Thank you for your interest in *Your Family Constitution* Ebooks. If you enjoyed this Ebook and would like to read more, please visit www.yourfamilyconstitution.com to learn about the book, *Your Family Constitution; A Modern Approach To Family Values and Household Structure*, as well as related tools and services to make parenting easier and more rewarding.

Inside *Your Family Constitution*™ you'll learn...

- The four most overlooked signs that your household is becoming “out of control”...and a step-by-step process for correcting problems and appreciating family time.
- How to determine which important traits you most want to pass on to your children....and how to effectively transfer those qualities in a fun and meaningful way.
- How to assess your emotional availability to your family....and how to make adjustments to ensure you have the time for what matters. An in-depth look at the 3C's (clarity, consistency and commitment) that every family needs to run smoothly.
- Inside tips on how to understand what motivates your kids....and how to use this information to find “win-win” solutions that really work.
- Ten fun and healthy activities that your family members can enjoy together...that don't need to be plugged in.
- The keys to anticipating “big kid” and teenage issues....and a method to solve challenges before they become topics of concern.
- Common symptoms of entitlement in today's youth culture....and how to teach your child the difference between “learn” and “deserve” before it's too late.

Thank you again for taking interest in *Your Family Constitution*.

Sincerely,



Your Family Constitution

“Enjoy Parenting to the Fullest and Raise Great Kids”