







## What is trauma?

March, 2007 – February, 2008

Author	Message
<p><b>kaleo</b></p> <p>Joined: 06 Oct 2006 Posts: 209</p>	<p>Posted: Tue Mar 06, 2007 6:02 pm    Post subject: What is trauma?   </p> <hr/> <p>Most everyone here knows I'm the parent of a toddler. It frightens me to read of people's memories of a traumatic childhood without specifics, because trauma means something different to everyone depending on their memories, perceptions, and beliefs. For instance, when I read the spanking debate on another forum, I couldn't believe how many adults who were spanked as kids still support it as a good discipline technique and insisted they were not traumatized, "needed it", etc. Yet who am I to tell someone else how to perceive/define their own experiences?</p> <p>In that vein, I had an experience this weekend that I'd like to share. I took my son to a 3 year old's birthday party at a children's museum-type place. When the presents were opened (a stupid thing to do in front of little kids), my son had an absolute meltdown because he wanted the present we had given his friend, despite having been prepared for this moment all week. We tried to reason with him but ultimately had to leave the party because he could not be calmed down. He was very sad afterward about missing the fun, but we didn't see a choice given the way he was behaving.</p> <p>I know this is not a parenting site, but it is about childhood issues, so I'd like to ask those here how they think a parent should deal with the inevitable lessons in life that must be learned to be a civil member of society. Mirroring and setting an example is not always enough. Perhaps those here can look back on your own childhoods and tell me what you would have liked your parent to do differently in conflict situations. I want desperately to avoid traumatizing my son, but I feel I would also be harming him by not providing appropriate boundaries and consequences.</p> <p>I'll come back and add to this post as I think it out. Right now I just wanted to put the basic concern out there for consideration.</p> <p>Kaleo</p>
<p><b>Daniel Mackler</b> Site Admin</p> <p>Joined: 03 Aug 2006 Posts: 525 Location: New York City</p>	<p>Posted: Tue Mar 06, 2007 8:54 pm    Post subject: Re: What is trauma?   </p> <hr/> <p>Hi Kaleo,</p> <p>Good subject! Just a few quick thoughts, and I'd like to post more on this later when I'm more rested (it's been a long day and I'm mostly fried). Hopefully my post will be rational and non-offensive!</p> <p>I think most people who are traumatized don't even realize it, or at least don't realize the degree to which they are traumatized. I can put myself in that category too... I think it's because the reaction to trauma is to dissociate (and also to deny, rationalize, etc.). These are all unconscious. It's hard to tell how traumatized we are, but there are ways of sensing it, if we are very sensitive to the signs. I think most people, however, don't want to know how traumatized they are, because it's such a vulnerable position to be in. Much easier to see</p>

ourselves as tough, strong, in control, etc.

**kaleo wrote:**

I took my son to a 3 year old's birthday party at a children's museum-type place. When the presents were opened (a stupid thing to do in front of little kids), my son had an absolute meltdown because he wanted the present we had given his friend, despite having been prepared for this moment all week. We tried to reason with him but ultimately had to leave the party because he could not be calmed down. He was very sad afterward about missing the fun, but we didn't see a choice given the way he was behaving.

I wanted to respond to this because it's a fascinating thing, and I've seen this happen countless times. (I am a kid's musician too, and have played at many parties for three year olds.) I think when this happens to kids it's beyond "reason" – that is, reasoning with them usually isn't that helpful, and often makes them feel more alienated. They get attached to the present, and it's nearly impossible for them to part with it. They love the present and it becomes a part of them, and separating from it feels like abandonment and death (perhaps like the "death" of that balloon you mentioned some months back). I think this whole adult idea of showering little kids with gifts is a bad custom – it tortures some little kids. One thing that I sometimes tell parents to do is to buy their own kid the same gift that they're giving to the birthday kid, and even let him open his own version of the present at the same time, so that he's not losing a part of himself. Had that happened I think your son would have been much calmer.

In a way, by expecting a three year old to part gracefully with a beloved toy that he's become attached to is like expecting him to behave like an adult, and not many can handle it – nor do I think they should. After all, three year olds rarely spontaneously give each other precious gifts... (And I know a lot of adults that aren't so different!)

So all in all, I don't think your son's reaction was so unhealthy. Sounds like a healthy kid with a strong sense of right and wrong!

**kaleo wrote:**

I know this is not a parenting site, but it is about childhood issues, so I'd like to ask those here how they think a parent should deal with the inevitable lessons in life that must be learned to be a civil member of society.







I don't see three year olds as having any obligation to be civil members of society. I see it as the job of society and primarily parents to meet their needs (and even anticipate them), and if we do our jobs well enough they naturally mature and become giving, loving, and respectful.

If he had that same response at a friend's party when he was ten that would be a different story – but he's only three!

**kaleo wrote:**

Mirroring and setting an example is not always enough.

Agreed.

	<p><b>kaleo wrote:</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> <p>I want desperately to avoid traumatizing my son, but I feel I would also be harming him by not providing appropriate boundaries and consequences.</p> </div> <p>I don't think consequences are the important thing. I think the important things are understanding and relating to his needs and figuring out how to meet them appropriately. To me that is the essence of good boundaries. And what I've seen is the more a child gets their appropriate needs met, the less they act out.</p> <p>So that's just some quick thoughts – more later – hope this was coherent –</p> <p>Daniel</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>Daniel Mackler</p>
<p><b>kaleo</b></p> <p>Joined: 06 Oct 2006 Posts: 209</p>	<p>Posted: Tue Mar 06, 2007 10:53 pm    Post subject: Daniel - <span style="float: right;"> quote  edit  IP</span></p> <p>I'm on my way out the door, but I'll respond to your post in more detail. For now I want to just say thanks. I do remember what it was like to be a small child and say, not want to hug someone just because they were family, or not want to share, and all those kinds of things.</p> <p>So, I recently visited my dying grandmother in a nursing home with my little boy, and I asked him if he would tell her he loved her. He said (fortunately, in English, which she doesn't understand), "But I don't love her." My initial reaction was sorrow and disappointment, but then I realized he was right - he doesn't even know her, so why should he love her? And I left him alone on it. It was enough for her to see him existing. So I agree with you on the birthday party situation itself being stressful at this age (although here's the twist - he already OWNS the gift he got his friend!). Believe me, he has a strong sense of himself and he lets me know it all the time. I don't want to quash that in any way, nor do I expect him to be a civil member of society now. At the same time, certain things (like jumping hard on the dog, even in play, or sticking a fork in a socket - think Max in "Wild Things"! ) can't be ignored, and let's face it, they do happen.</p> <p>Perhaps I can give better examples. Let me think on it a bit. Again, I don't want to turn this into a parenting techniques discussion, but I do want to explore your idea of what it means to meet a child's needs or rather, as you said, his appropriate needs. I'd also like to discuss what you've said about trauma... For now, I'm off to some much needed dinner -</p> <p>best, Kaleo</p>
<p><b>Dennis</b></p> <p>Joined: 20 Oct 2006 Posts: 140 Location: Sweden</p>	<p>Posted: Wed Mar 07, 2007 4:53 am    Post subject: <span style="float: right;"> quote  edit  IP</span></p> <p><b>Kaleo</b>, I often see parents who project their needs onto their children and it's indeed something very few parents even want to talk about. Birthday parties are these days planned, themed events, where as many kids as possible need to be invited. The parent wants to show off. The kid needs to become popular, because popular people have it easier in society, right? 3-year-olds don't understand the concept of giving a present to a friend (if it's a friend at all, and not just a kid they know), therefore adults buy the presents. Adults make birthdays overly special because I bet when they were kids, it was the day everyone acted nice to them.</p>

You said you had prepared your son all week for this event. What kind of preparation was that? And did you ask why he was angry at the party?

Telling kids that they need to say 'thank you' or 'I love you' to people is basically teaching them to lie. They will express their thoughts eventually, freely, without a person telling them what to say. When I give something to my nephew, I don't expect anything back from him.

You wrote:

*how they think a parent should deal with the inevitable lessons in life that must be learned to be a civil member of society.*

There are no lessons to be taught, there are only needs to be fulfilled. What's a civil member of society? Someone who's obedient, who obeys the rules and laws, who does his work without complaint? A child whose needs are respected, becomes a person who respects his and other people's needs.

Dennis

Yes, there's another forum dealing with Alice Miller's findings...

[www.wallsofsilence.com](http://www.wallsofsilence.com)

**manjushri**

Posted: Wed Mar 07, 2007 8:00 am Post subject:



Joined: 08 Sep 2006  
Posts: 146  
Location: UK

HI Kaleo,

Thanks for giving us the opportunity to think about this situation one which anyone with experience of children will recognise!

Interesting that you say your son already has the toy in question (what is it by the way?) because it makes me wonder if he thought he was giving away his rather than a fresh one bought especially for the other child? At 3 despite the preparations and his involvement in choosing /giving the gift its still quite possible for him to think, he's giving his own beloved thing! As Daniel suggests, if he had cathected the toy as a part of himself being told to give part of himself away a pretty freaky situation. I also find myself wondering who gave him the original toy? If it was you/your husband it might feel a little too much that something which you chose for him was also something you wanted to give to someone else? Just some ideas...

I would agree with Daniel that artificially created consequences for little childrens' 'bad' behaviour aren't really appropriate though if course removing him from a situation he clearly can't cope with might be the kindest thing to do. I always find that empathising with a child and acknowledging their feelings can really help them feel that its OK to have whatever feeling they're having. This can contribute to reducing the trauma of having their feelings (namely their existence for a 3 year old!) denied or rejected or interpreted in a way which is comfortable for adults. Sometimes this can only be done when things have calmed down a little, sometimes just saying to an apparently enraged child that they seem really angry and they did not want to do what you asked them to do allows them to feel OK again.

I'm completely with Daniel about the inappropriate gift giving culture in the end its all about adults needs and nothing to do with the children. I can also see that, as a parent who's child wants to have friends being the one who's parents won't let you give gifts is going to make trouble all round!

I hope this isn't going to be offensive to you Kaleo, I want to respond to the situation with your aged grandmother. Its fascinating how much we can learn about how traumatised we are from interacting with children- after all, what would it be like, as an adult, to be told by someone infinitely more powerful than you who you are 100% dependant on to express a feeling you don't have? Adults do that to children all the time, ultimately they do it because it was done to them as children (just like the parents on the smacking forum you talked about- they can beleive that it did them no harm or was no big deal and like those parents who smack that is exactly the damage it has done -that it made them think its fine to do it! hope this makes sense!) - this is a subtle passing on of the doctrine that children should meet the needs of adults rather than the other way around. It sounds like your little boy was 100% correct in refusing to say I love you to someone he doesn't love, the fact that he felt able to say no and question it means that he doesn't feel its his job to meet adults needs in that way! Great that you didn't feel you had to pressure him to say something inauthentic. Why does a 3 year old need to say I love you to adult anyway? I mean that's entirely to make the adult feel good which is not about meeting a child's needs at all! I always feel a bit strange about hearing little children say 'I love you' to be honest. If they're just mimicking something their parents have said to them that's one thing but given the apparent joy adults get from hearing children speak in this artificial 'adultified' way (Kids rarely say it to each other after all!) there's no way a child can't tell that adults love to hear it and so children should say it, in effect, to please the adult, to meet the adult's need. Love after all is a verb not a noun! I hope this makes sense I think maybe it begins to explore the trauma issue too and how easy it is to ignore things which society doesn't deem as abusive but which nevertheless prevent children from being who they really are in order to be what their parents need them to be. To me that's a form of trauma.

Of course the lessons about electrocution and squashing the dog have to be learnt and you have to explain and explain and explain (till you're blue in the face in my experience!!!) that its dangerous! It can also pay to look at the situation, *the context* in which these things happen- how's he feeling when he does those things and what clues might it give you to whats going on for him?

Thanks for these posts, hope this reply feels OK with you!  
Best wishes,

Rebekah

**Daniel Mackler**  
Site Admin

Posted: Wed Mar 07, 2007 12:18 pm Post subject:



Hi Kaleo,

Joined: 03 Aug 2006  
Posts: 525  
Location: New York  
City

It's a new day and I thought more about my post from yesterday – and agree with some of it but feel differently about some of it. I thought more about these kids' birthday parties and often they end in tears for some of the children – sometimes a "guest," sometimes the birthday kid. You've probably seen this. I think there's so much intensity and hype and projection going on at these parties, and so much expectation put on the kids (and often tons of sugar coursing through their veins), that anything can cause a meltdown. Often it does seem to be around the presents. What's interesting is that it's sometimes the birthday kid, who's received all the gifts, who flips out – so much expectation and tension and letdown.

(Side note: I'm sitting and looking out my window now and see a squirrel in the tree fifteen feet away licking snow off a branch. Never saw that one before.)

I really think these parties are often for the parents, but no one admits that,

and makes it out like it's just for the kid. And there are so many pressured social customs with these parties – especially with the gift-giving. Like if you don't give the right gift you've somehow let down the child/toddler/baby, as if they care!

As a musician who performs for these parties, I see the insanity of the parents so often. Their idea of what makes a good party often corresponds little with what the kids want or need. Thankfully the parents often can be talked into reality, but usually their skeptical until they see their kids having a good time and liking the music. Nowadays, more often than not I prefer to avoid these parties, unless the parents are pretty mature and sophisticated and at respect the kids.

**kaleo wrote:**

So, I recently visited my dying grandmother in a nursing home with my little boy, and I asked him if he would tell her he loved her. He said, "But I don't love her" (fortunately, in English, which she doesn't understand). My initial reaction was sorrow and disappointment, but then I realized he was right - he doesn't even know her, so why should he love her?

Good story! It's also interesting that an adult might be disappointed that a child who doesn't even know her – and whom she presumably doesn't know at all in return – doesn't love her. Suggests again about adult expectations – that there's an intense subtext in the world that children are expected to love their parents and other adult figures. Also, to me a child's version of love is totally different from adult love.

A healthy child's love: loving an adult who meet his needs

A healthy adult's love: nurturing

When children don't get their proper love needs met by mature adults that's when their conception love becomes twisted, and they have to nurture the adult first to get the adult to meet their needs... The dynamic of conditional love from adults thwarts and twists them.

These thwarted children grow up to become adults who retain a twisted sense of love, and still have hidden ancient unmet childhood needs – and can only conditionally love others. Their adult love is unhealthy and really is all about need.

**kaleo wrote:**

... I agree with you on the birthday party situation itself being stressful at this age (although here's the twist - he already OWNS the gift he got his friend!).

That was my error in posting last night – I realized afterward that I risked oversimplifying a complex situation, as I didn't have all the pieces... So easy to dispense quick advice without knowing the bigger picture...

**kaleo wrote:**

Believe me, he has a strong sense of himself and he lets me know it all the time.

That's awesome!

**kaleo wrote:**

I don't want to quash that in any way, nor do I expect him to be a civil member of society now.

Great! Hopefully the risk you took in posting about your son on a forum such as this was a worthwhile one. I don't want to pick your life or relationship with your son apart – but you provide such fascinating and relevant information...

**kaleo wrote:**

At the same time, certain things (like jumping hard on the dog, even in play, or sticking a fork in a socket - think Max in "Wild Things"!) can't be ignored, and let's face it, they do happen.

Agreed.

**kaleo wrote:**

Again, I don't want to turn this into a parenting techniques discussion,

Agreed – and my post last night went a bit in that direction. In hindsight I want to avoid that. The material you shared is so personal, and it's hard to discuss it, however – even theoretically – without me also getting personal, that is, sort of getting into your business... After all, the subject you are opening up is so incredibly near and dear to my heart... Hopefully you know that even if I stepped on your toes a bit, I am coming from a good place...and really doing my best, as the forum's title states, to "side with the child..."

-Daniel

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

**manjushri**

Posted: Wed Mar 07, 2007 1:54 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Joined: 08 Sep 2006  
Posts: 146  
Location: UK

HI Kaleo & Daniel,  
thanks for your post Daniel.

I realise I may have fallen into a similar reaction though I remembered your openness to challenge Kaleo- so I just wanted to add that I hope its helpful or at least thought provoking and not too much!

Rebekah

**Daniel Mackler**  
Site Admin

Posted: Wed Mar 07, 2007 2:08 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Joined: 03 Aug 2006  
Posts: 525  
Location: New York City

**Dennis wrote:**

**Kaleo**, I often see parents who project their needs onto their children and it's indeed something very few parents even want to talk about.

Yes – it's so hard to talk about, because it's essentially an unconscious process. So often I hear parents talk about how unconditionally they love their children, even when their love is overtly and drastically conditional. They truly cannot see it – because if they could it would open some ugly and painful doors.

**Dennis wrote:**

Birthday parties are these days planned, themed events, where as many kids as possible need to be invited. The parent wants to show off. The kid needs to become popular, because popular people have it easier in society, right?

That's about says it. It's too bad, because a good low-key birthday party – even for little kids – can be a really fun and enriching event.

**Dennis wrote:**

Telling kids that they need to say 'thank you' or 'I love you' to people is basically teaching them to lie. They will express their thoughts eventually, freely, without a person telling them what to say.

I think expecting little kids to say “thank you” and “I love you” is inappropriate, and that if they get their needs met appropriately they will naturally learn to express their gratitude freely. The problem is, so many kids don't get their needs met and become very confused and troubled, and their needs become age-inappropriate and twisted.

I can't say I like hanging around nine year olds (or 29 year olds) who never say “please” or “thank you,” though my dislike is not because of their lack of social niceties (that doesn't bother me much at all) – it's because of the infantile neediness below the surface, and the entitlement and rage and frustration they exude because of their history of having had their appropriate needs thwarted.

On the other hand, I think it's bizarre and sad when very little kids say “thank you” and “please” – it rarely feels spontaneous and natural and I guess it's usually a sign of inappropriate parenting.

---

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

**kaleo**

Posted: Thu Mar 08, 2007 6:41 pm Post subject:



Joined: 06 Oct 2006  
Posts: 209

Hello all -

It's taken me a while to respond here because I've given myself time to sort out my thoughts. I don't want to feel or sound defensive. After all, I'm here soliciting your thoughts, though that's a bit scary, as I'm sure you can imagine. As a parent, I get all kinds of unsolicited, gratuitous, often contradictory advice about how to raise a child. I don't there there's any other area of life where anyone and everyone feels free to tell you what to do, whether you've asked them or not. Anyway, I'm here to learn and discuss, not to argue (as I mentioned in another thread, that's too draining). Yes, it's risky putting my own experiences on the line, but I don't consider it a threat or challenge to me for people to express genuine concerns as they see them; it's more of a learning opportunity. I don't see a way to get any meaning out of discussion in this particular section of the forum without examples.

Dennis, I agree that parents project onto their kids and do not love them as unconditionally as they believe. I have certainly been guilty of that at times, though I hope far more able to catch myself when it happens thanks to this forum. You'll see where Daniel and I have discussed this in some earlier posts on the forum. I think you know what I mean by a civil member of society. I

don't want to argue semantics, but I'm pretty sure you know I don't mean I want my son to be an obedient rule-bound drone or an Orwellian worker chained to his desk. I'm talking basic "no hitting, no throwing hard objects" kind of things. Do you think children simply learn these concepts by having their needs met? It may be that they do, and it just takes time.

Daniel, I really appreciate that you work with children, especially in the context of music, and know the reality of kids today. I don't think a birthday party has to be an orgy of presents and one-upmanship on the parent's part. We have been to a few so far, and this is the first one that's not gone well for my son. I agree the stress level and expectations can be too high for a 3 year old. At the same time, it's hard to miss out on a potentially fun and enjoyable day. You don't always know how things will go, because kids are after all subject to the same ups and downs as we are, only less able to express it sometimes. One thing my sister told me is that at the kid parties she's been to in NY, they simply do not open gifts at the party. A good example of anticipating a need (not to be stressed about gifts).

I agree with both Daniel and Rebecca's analysis of why my son couldn't handle the present-giving situation - he's simply not ready. But with no models of how to raise a child differently than what's out there now, I'm really winging it and going on faith that a child whose needs are met - nothing more (in the way of discipline or consequences, all the old school parenting stuff), and nothing less - will be the least traumatized. It makes TOTAL sense and I fully believe it, but in day to day life, it is HARD and requires much thought. And I'm trying to apply it in a world that really doesn't get it. Again, the birthday party situation - do you simply not take him, do you remove him, do you try to talk it out, do you go out and buy him that item, do you simply let him know it's okay to be sad...? What is his need in that situation?

More generally, what does it mean to *meet a child's needs* in the context of this forum's focus? We've deliberately chosen a life in a place where we can opt out of much of the parental competitive madness of French lessons, skating, karate, etc. But who knows if our son will look back and feel tormented by the fact that we spent all our weekends at a cabin in the woods instead of at the mall? I think not and I HOPE not, but there's what I worry about.

Rebecca, thanks for your honest input. I do look at context, of course. Generally, he's smacking the dog in a state of overexcitement (sort of like Lenny in "Of Mice and Men"! ). He starts out patting gently and then can't help squeezing her the way you want to squeeze anything cute. Fortunately our dog is extremely patient and tolerant. Yes, I am often blue in the face.

Perhaps I need to go back and read Daniel's Better Late Than Never essay. In any case, I hope people will not hold back for fear of stepping on my toes and appreciate the honesty.

Kaleo

manjushri

Posted: Sat Mar 10, 2007 4:21 am Post subject:



Joined: 08 Sep 2006  
Posts: 146  
Location: UK

Hello Kaleo,-

**Quote:**

It's taken me a while to respond here because I've given myself time to sort out my thoughts. I don't want to feel or sound defensive. After all, I'm here soliciting your thoughts, though that's a bit scary, as I'm sure you

can imagine. As a parent, I get all kinds of unsolicited, gratuitous, often contradictory advice about how to raise a child.

I just want to say that feeling defensive sometimes is good, - its a useful clue that one is trying to keep safe since if one feels exposed before one's ready to deal with something one naturally wants to hide again! (which is what feeling defensive is I guess). Putting personal information about your experiences with your child out there, especially on a forum where people have VERY strong and unorthodox ideas about child rearing is pretty risky after all and I'd imagine it takes a lot of nerve to expose yourself in this way.

**Quote:**

I agree with both Daniel and Rebecca's analysis of why my son couldn't handle the present-giving situation - he's simply not ready. But with no models of how to raise a child differently than what's out there now, I'm really winging it and going on faith that a child whose needs are met - nothing more (in the way of discipline or consequences, all the old school parenting stuff), and nothing less - will be the least traumatized.

Again takes a lot of nerve! A child who's needs are met will definitely be less traumatised than one who hasn't had this. I think its incredibly tough to try and do something completely differently from how society tells you to do it . To be honest a lack of community of even partially enlightened parents is one of the things that stops me having children. Winging it is, as you say, all you can do! Its not a completely uninformed winging it though, after all hearing the perspectives of people here and reading Miller can help! When it comes to the day to day- 'he's about to suffocate the dog' stuff one thing you can do is forward plan- anticipate his needs! You seem to have sussed out that there's a point where everything's fine and then...Lenny takes over! Maybe giving him a soft and squeezable toy to suffocate before the Lennylike glint appears in his eye, could work! A 'stroking gently is for dogs and squeezing tightly is for soft toys' lesson!!

**Quote:**

It makes TOTAL sense and I fully believe it, but in day to day life, it is HARD and requires much thought. And I'm trying to apply it in a world that really doesn't get it. Again, the birthday party situation - do you simply not take him, do you remove him, do you try to talk it out, do you go out and buy him that item, do you simply let him know it's okay to be sad...? What is his need in that situation?

I agree that the practical applications of these ideas is really tough, especially in a stressful situation. There's a book I enjoyed called something like 'parenting from the inside out' by Daniel Siegal which I found really useful in working through some of this stuff. Have you checked out the natural child website? They have some quite interesting stuff about practical advice from an attachment parenting perspective which might also be helpful...I know this is a bit of a stuck record but in the end I guess its trusting yourself (which can only truly come through understanding & healing the ways in which you were hurt as a child) that is your best guide! Good thing Bday parties don't happen everyday right!! Since few (if anyone) have done what you're attempting with your son we don't *know* about how things will seem to children who've had their needs met in the future but it'll be amazing to find out!

**Quote:**

I hope people will not hold back for fear of stepping on my toes and appreciate the honesty.

Happy to hear that its been OK so far!

Best,  
Rebekah

'To be disillusioned is better than being under an illusion!'

**rosie\_g**

Posted: Wed Mar 14, 2007 5:36 pm Post subject:

 quote  edit  IP

Joined: 06 Jan 2007  
Posts: 7  
Location: UK










Hi Kaleo

I can remember all too well the difficulties in trying to be a responsible parent to my child in a situation with other people who just didn't get it. I still think the most important stuff is about dealing with your own issues. There are many incidents and moments that I can remember about being a parent but I think it was all the unconscious things, the things I thought I was getting right but wasn't, that caused the most pain to my child and which I only began to recognise when I started really dealing with my own injured inner child.

Sometimes it can feel like an impossible choice in that there can be consequences for your child, directly or indirectly if he and his parents don't conform (in school, at birthday parties, in any situation out there in the world) and sometimes you can feel that to do what you would do in a more ideal environment (with other like minded people), would in itself have negative consequences, directly or indirectly for your son. People can be vicious towards and about children. They can react negatively in both obvious and subtle ways towards parents and children who don't behave in ways that are regarded in our society as healthy and normal.

I have some friends with young children who are the best parents I know and the happiest family I know not fully enlightened but more than most). They do conform to a degree and their children go to the local school and mix with other children but my friend and her husband discuss their children only with one another and occasionally with people who they feel share their own ideas. They never apologise for their children even though they would show concern and offer reparation if the children accidentally broke something in a shop or if another child was upset by something they did, like taking a toy of another child. I think the point is that children can get upset and sometimes they cannot have what they want but we can understand how they feel and do our best to care and respond to that. If other people don't like it I think you simply have to be steadfast in the face of that. Your son is very young and even in a year or two he will naturally develop more tolerance of those situations you have described. Another thing my friend does is that she suggests things to her children rather than coaxing them, she might say 'wouldn't it be nice if you shared that with Sam', but she doesn't force them to and they don't share any less than other children of their own age, but when they do share it is voluntarily. Of course there are always situations when it isn't so straightforward but I think you have to trust yourself and if you get it wrong then learn from it.

Given that you don't feel fully enlightened and live in a far from enlightened world, what can you do but your best with your child by working on your own inner child. Daniel and other's here quite rightly set the bar high but if you don't achieve that with your son, you are at least doing it better than you might otherwise have done it. That must feel like a very untenable position for you but all you can do is grow as a parent as best as you are able as you keep doing the work with yourself.

	I always like to read your posts Kaleo.
	Rosie G
<b>kaleo</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Posted: Wed Mar 14, 2007 5:55 pm    Post subject:  quote  edit  IP
Joined: 06 Oct 2006 Posts: 209	<p>Rosie -</p> <p>I'll respond to you in more detail when I have time, but for now I just want to thank you, as your post was very comforting to me somehow, knowing you can look back and understand where I'm at in life. I can't tell you how much I appreciate that. More later -</p> <p>Kaleo</p>
<b>eve</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Posted: Tue Feb 12, 2008 12:17 pm    Post subject:  quote  edit  IP
Joined: 12 Feb 2008 Posts: 6	<p>I'm the mother of two children (god, help them). When my youngest was 4, she became upset at a birthday party when she realized that the presents weren't for her. I left the party with her and went next door to a stationary store. I let her pick out her own present (a chipmunk beanie baby). We then went back to the party. At the time, I had several choices- let her cry, leave the party, or do what I did. What I did was the only thing that seemed to make sense to me. I did pay a price, however. The other parents looked at me with hate. It was hard for me to see their disdain; it scared me - I even felt scared for my daughter. It felt like what I did was going to make other people dislike her. I know it was my drama (that was my beanie baby on some level.) I guess what I'm trying to say is that I feel like I did the right thing, but I don't know if it was for the right reasons. It left me feeling exposed and fearful that I may have been causing my daughter some future suffering...unresolved trauma is expressed in a myriad of ways....it's mind boggling.</p> <p>Eve</p>
<b>Daniel Mackler</b> Site Admin	<input type="checkbox"/> Posted: Wed Feb 13, 2008 9:54 pm    Post subject:  quote  edit  IP
Joined: 03 Aug 2006 Posts: 525 Location: New York City	<p>Hi Eve,</p> <p>Welcome here! Nice to read your posting, and who knows, maybe you've sparked this message board back to life!</p> <p>I've been away from posting for a while - and probably won't be posting much in the near future due to extreme workload on a lot of fronts, but I just wanted you to know I read your posting.</p> <p>I remember writing elsewhere on this forum that I've been to lots of little kids' birthday parties and have seen many situations like the ones you describe. Painful. It's like one child gets to be the grand winner and all the other kids have to just sit back, swallow their discomfort and pain, and behave like "adults," and just be happy for the birthday kid. AAAH!</p> <p>I think if I had had a child at that party I would have gotten them a present in the way you did. Sounds like a very reasonable solution to me... Other parents looking at you with hatred? Ah, they sound clueless - so often the case - so little empathy for the emotional reality of children.</p> <p>And yet they become parents...</p>

I'm thinking more and more that if I could summarize my point of view into one pithy, political phrase, it would be that parenting is a privilege, NOT a right. Imagine if the majority of the world held this attitude?

To me it's a lovely thought...

Best,  
Daniel Mackler

---

Daniel Mackler

<http://iraresoul.com>

**eve**

Posted: Thu Feb 14, 2008 7:22 am Post subject:



Joined: 12 Feb 2008  
Posts: 6

Daniel,  
Thank you for your response. I am intrigued by your writings. I hope it's not because I hate myself so much (and they feed into that.) Yikes.

I remember when I had my first child almost 19 years ago. I was very young (21 yo). He was not planned, as I came from extreme trauma. And yes, he did "save" me (which I know now was so unfair and believe me, I have apologized...which I know is nice but still doesn't undo damage.)

But, I do remember thinking two things.....

1. That it was over for me.....my childhood had come and gone....I didn't get it and I was never going to. Now, I had this child and I would have to devote myself to him. I could not use him to give me the childhood that I never had. I knew this consciously. I got sober in my first month of pregnancy with him and thankfully, have remained so. A clear mind does help you focus. It doesn't mean you won't do damage, but perhaps, less than you would have if you were in a chemically altered state.

And

2. I remember thinking that he was a gift....not really mine. I felt as though he was a gift that I would be able to see and know for 18 years. I, therefore, couldn't make him be me, because he wasn't mine. Of course, even this comes out of much trauma.... fear of connection.

So, I may have been a bit more enlightened...I knew I was damaging...I even apologized for it. It's just that I am still guilty because even that was too much information for my children to have to process. They deserved innocence. They deserved ignorance of adult issues.

So when these beautiful beings say, "Mommy, I love you. You are the best." Inside I cry because I know that I told them (on some level) that I needed to hear that....and it was never their job to have to say that.

So, all I can do is keep telling them...."You don't have to save me. I may have put that message somewhere in your subconscious. Let's erase it. Call me a f...ing b.tch.....it's all my fault."

Somedays they say, "Oh mommy don't be silly." and some days, "OK...you are a f...ing b.tch.

Either way, it's ok.

So we can do damage. I want to believe we can un-do it, too. I'm not sure if we can. That's really up to the one's we have damaged.

The road to hell is (sometimes) paved with good intentions.  
Eve