

Cherish Our Children

Denise A. Nisbet

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The balance of responsive caring and reasonable demands is essential for children's good mental health.

Split the difference between the arch-authoritarian of *The Great Santini* and the hands-off permissiveness of Courtney Love. In the very center the good parents strive to maintain a balance. *Cherish Our Children* stakes out territory in the mainstream of the Cognitive approach and draws much identity-centered psychosocial theory from work pioneered by Eric Erikson. Advocating for an Authoritative model for parenting Doctor Denise Nisbet focuses on unhappy adults and unsuccessful parents linking their current errors to particular strategies their own parents used. The assertion of Cognitive therapy is that once a patient can clearly define a problem and place its origin they can consciously establish new thought and behavior patterns that lead to healthier living. In this case they can become better parents. "The secret to good parenting is knowing what we are doing as parents and why we are doing it."

The book's eighteen chapters each close with a set of summary points; in a show of the author's style the bullets are little smiley faces. Specific case-anecdotes illustrating various mistakes or ineffective approaches are the backbone of the book. Factual claims are appropriately cited but the tone is conversational and down to earth. The ideas are more conventionally sensible than revolutionary. Though the chapters build in a progression it isn't crucial to read straight through. Beyond the ever-present spirit of Erikson James Marcia's Four Identity Statures are also called into use. The work of Diana Baumrind in the area of preparing children for competence bolsters Dr. Nisbet's position against Reactivity. Reference is made to William Styron's *Sophie's Choice* Chaim Potok's *My Name is Asher Lev* and even George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Working backward from distressed adults the author has met in treatment there is no hesitation to delineate causation: parent type X will generate child type Y. The most motivated readers may very well be unsure of themselves and can draw comfort from that declarative certainty. However the author's relative lack of qualifying disclaimers can cut both ways. She leaves herself open to challenges from other developmental psychologists who subscribe to competing theories. The efficacy of redirective therapy on parenting style is noted honestly as hit and miss from one individual case to the next.

Dr. Denise A. Nisbet is a Senior Clinical Psychologist in Australia. She received her graduate education from Southern Illinois University. *Cherish Our Children's* guarded optimism enhances readability. This example-driven book will be of greatest benefit to struggling people who have been unable to classify the nature of their parenting difficulties.

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