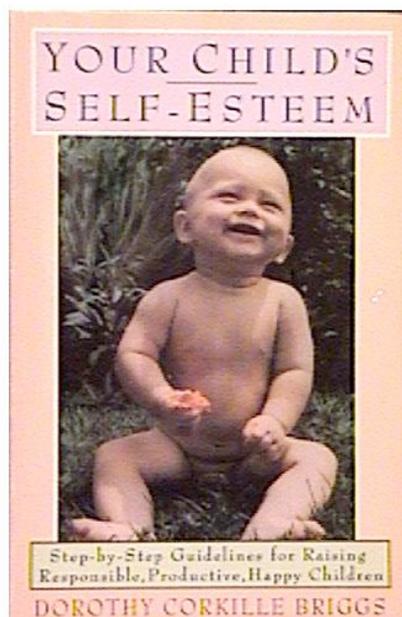


Your Child's Self Esteem
Dorothy Briggs



I was on duty, cruising the city in a detective car, when a call came over the police radio of a student out of control at the local high school. The fifteen-year-old freshman had refused to stay in his seat and was defying the teacher's instruction to sit down. As if he wasn't causing enough disruption in the classroom, he began calling the teacher vulgar names, stating that the teacher had no right telling him what to do. He was advised by the teacher to refrain from using profanity in the classroom. The student continued. When ordered to leave the room, the student refused. The teacher, using what is called in the educational environment, a "supportive touch," attempted to guide the student out of the room. The student, obviously not happy with being touched in a supportive manner, attacked the teacher. Screaming "you can't touch me", he pummeled the educator with his fists. Other school employees, upon hearing the ruckus, arrived to assist the teacher being assaulted. The student wrestled with them briefly, then broke away and jumped out the classroom window to the ground, where he was met by police officers who had been called to the scene by the principal. Not fearing the law, he fought with the officers before being handcuffed and driven to the station, all the while trying to kick the windows out of the police cruiser.

It was my job to compile all of the information regarding the student and the assault. This wasn't my first encounter with Paul, an out-of-control teenager who had become very familiar to the entire police department. My first stop was the school counselor. She was a soft-spoken woman, whose attitude towards the punk who just beat up her co-worker was not exactly what I expected. "You know," she said, "Paul has very low self-esteem!" Uh-oh, here we go with the "I feel bad about myself" syndrome. "What do you mean?" I asked. "What does that have to do with Puncher Paul beating up a teacher?" She replied "Self esteem is everything!"

The current cultural obsession with the self-esteem of today's children has turned into a

religion. Parents are being encouraged to bolster their child's positive evaluation of themselves whether or not the "I am a good person" feeling is deserved. You can see this direction in every aspect of our culture. The movement toward Outcome Based Education where grades are eliminated is one example of the effort to eliminate the chance that any child will ever feel less adequate than another. Even though this movement to instill a feeling of high self-esteem in every person is receiving much publicity, there is as much research that indicates that there is a "dark side" to high self-esteem.

In 1996, the American Psychological Association published a study in the *Psychological Review*. In this study, Doctors Roy Baumeister, Joseph Boden, and Laura Smart discovered something very ominous about high self-esteem. These researchers asked the same question that I asked of the school counselor who was trying to explain how Punched Paul's violent action was a result of low self-esteem. The doctors questioned why many researchers "summarized observations that depicted aggressors as egotistical and arrogant, but then added the conventional supposition that these individuals must be suffering from low self-esteem." I really couldn't have asked the question any better myself.

This report also includes the findings of a study of juvenile delinquency by Glueck and Glueck (1950) that compared juvenile delinquents against a matched sample of non-delinquent boys. This study discovered "The pattern of findings offers little to support the hypothesis that low self-esteem causes delinquency. Delinquent boys were more likely than control boys to be characterized as self-assertive, socially assertive, defiant, and narcissistic, none of which seems compatible with low self esteem." The study also states "Aggressors seem to believe that they are superior, capable beings. Signs of low self-esteem, such as self-depreciation, humility, modesty, and self-effacing mannerisms, seem to be rare (underrepresented) among violent criminals and other aggressors." This conclusion should be common sense. The study also states "In plain terms, egotists might be more likely to assume they will win a fight, and so they would be more likely to start it." Could this be a reason why more kids are physically assaulting their parents?

So when I was looking through the books in the parenting section of the bookstore, I was intrigued by the title of a book written by Dorothy Corkille Briggs, called *Your Child's Self Esteem*. The subtitle states "Step-by-step guidelines for raising responsible, productive, happy children." The first paragraph in the first chapter sets the stage for the author's claim that for years, parents have developed generations of mentally ill, dysfunctional, children. The author writes,

For decades psychologists have focused on mental illness and its cure. But the pervasiveness of psychological disorders is so extensive that there are simply not enough professional people to handle the afflicted. One study of 175,000 people in New York showed that only 18.5 percent were free of the symptoms of mental illness. This is a staggering indictment of an unfortunate oversight in our culture: we parents are not trained for our job. Vast sums are spent to teach academic and vocational skills, but the art of becoming a nurturing parent is left to chance and a few scattered classes.

According to Dorothy Corkille Briggs, 81.5 percent of our population is mentally ill. The

reason that the wing-nut population has reached epidemic proportions is the way parents have raised their children. There just are not enough classes to teach parents how to raise their kids. I am amazed at this type of thinking that believes parents need “classes” to learn how to raise their children. When this subject comes up during my lectures, I like to refer parents to a statement made by Dr. Ray Guarendi, a psychologist from Canton, Ohio, who hosts a daily show on Catholic Family Radio. During one of his recent speaking engagements in Minneapolis, the claim was raised that parents need to be “trained” to raise their children. He replied, “If this is so, God was shortsighted. For thousands of years, parents raised children without the benefit of certified experts training them. Did God go, ‘You’ll just have to muddle your way along until the late 20th century and I’ll send you a bunch of experts?’ You know how they did it? They did it through love, through common sense, and through moral standards.”

Briggs thinks differently. She believes that parents have damaged their children for thousands of years to the point where the “experts” are having a hard time fixing them. But that doesn’t mean that they are not trying. All you have to do is look at what I call the “over diagnosing” of today’s kids. I assume that included in the masses of mentally disturbed children are those with modern day maladies, such as Attention Deficit Disorder, or “A.D.D.” I remember when I was in the sixth grade, I had A.D.D. I remember daydreaming in class one day, and as I stared out the window watching the clouds, I failed to hear the teacher call my name. The rest of the class watched eagerly as the teacher nonchalantly walked to the back of the room, talking as she walked. When she reached the back of my desk, Whammo! Right on the back of my head. The rest of the class roared as I sat up to take notice. My teacher didn’t know anything about the drug, Ritalin. But she did know how to make the kids in her class pay attention. I paid attention from then on, if for no other reason than to make sure the teacher didn’t sneak up behind me again.

There is another new “mental illness” in our society today. Have you heard of “Oppositional Defiance Disorder” or O.D.D. for short? This disorder evidently causes children to do the opposite of what they are asked to do by their parents. I had O.D.D. also when I was a child, but not for long. My dad had a cure, and it wasn’t Valium. It was a strip of leather about one inch wide and about thirty-six inches long, and it fit perfectly around his waist. With only limited use, hearing that leather coming out of dad’s belt loops “cured” me of my oppositional defiance disorder.

Briggs tries to explain how utterly dreadful it is like for a child to grow up with parents who set rules and restrictions on the child’s behavior and punish the poor kid for wrongdoing. This fictionalized story is titled, “The tragedy of the lost self” The section begins by giving an example of the youngster who is criticized by his parents.

A fifteen year-old boy, living with parents whose standards were rigid, authoritarian, and in no way appropriate to his nature, said, “I’m completely reigned. There’s nothing I can do about my parents. I can’t get them to change, so I’m going to have to change. Anything I feel or want to be . . . well, it just means trouble. I really have only one choice; I have to go their way.”

“Of course, other kids are completely ruled by their folks, so I won’t be the only one. But y’know something? I think something in them kinda dies. You know, I died a time ago . . . I guess I died when I was born. The way I really am couldn’t

please my family or anybody. How do you get rid of what you are?"

This young boy sadly resigned himself to the path he must follow. Never questioning his parent's expectations, he reasoned it was he who was off-base. His is the tragedy of the lost self.

Yet he was poignantly aware that a psychological death occurs when youngsters make this decision. He was willing to commit this "suicide" for the safety of outward acceptance and a veneer of peace. But in his immature naivete he was movingly aware of a profound psychological truth; many children do not psychologically survive the tyranny of the parental image!

When expectations cut across a child's grain, they force him into the dilemma of whether to be or not to be himself. If he chooses to fit our images, he rejects himself; and for as long as he denies his true self, he is a hollow person - a carbon copy of the expectations of others. Then he is robbed of becoming the one person he was created to become - himself!

Let's examine this scenario of the fifteen-year-old boy who was fortunate enough (or unfortunate, as the author implies) to have parents "whose standards were rigid, authoritarian, and in no way appropriate to his nature." To the psychologist, parents who impose rules are detrimental to the child. We have to agree that the nature of the child is what is in question here, not the standards of the parents. We have shown how the nature of the child is rebellious.

Imagine this, the author of this book convincing a parent that if they continue to push their values onto their child that the child will commit "psychological suicide" as he conforms to their rules. The author states that this child is "willing to commit this 'suicide' for the safety of outward acceptance." The author states, "Never questioning his parent's expectations, he reasoned it was he who was off-base. His is the tragedy of the lost self."

Since the child's self esteem is considered to be paramount, any act which would make the child feel less than perfect must be eliminated. The author makes it clear that she is against the "rod" of correction.

Every spanking fills a child with negative feelings that may be translated into further misbehavior. Whether the resulting anger is turned outward or inward, the fact remains that children have feelings about being spanked, and these feelings work against the best interest of parent and child.

Spanking does not teach inner conviction. It teaches fear, deviousness, lying, and aggression. No matter how we slice it, spanking is a physical assault of a bigger person on a smaller one.

We can all smile at the apparent contradiction of the mother who slaps her child, saying, "I'll teach you not to hit!" Yet, studies show that youngsters subjected to overt parental aggression are far more likely to be physically aggressive and hostile in their relations with others.

Notice that the author feels that a mother is contradictory if she spanks her child for hitting someone. Is the judge contradictory for sentencing a kidnapper to imprisonment? Are the courts contradictory for imposing a fine on a convicted extortionist? The author also implies that

“studies” show children who are spanked are more aggressive. The anti-spanking bunch continues to claim that spanked children turn out to be aggressive and anti-social, when it is the complete opposite of the truth. Yet this author is safe in referring to “studies” that have been conducted by anti-spanking researchers whose agenda has determined the results of their studies. Often using corrupted data, the “results” of these “studies” are useless.

Briggs suggests that parents begin apologizing to their children for spanking them. She writes,

Mrs. T. used to spank her children for misbehavior. Then, she decided that spanking was a method she wanted to avoid. Sticking to her resolution for quite a while, one day she reverted to the paddle. Immediately, she regretted her act, and she dared to be open with her daughter.

“Tilly, it wasn’t fair for me to hit you, especially since I won’t let you hit me. I’m awfully sorry. I wish I’d handled my feelings some other way.” Rather than disillusioning children, openness draws youngsters to us. It makes us seem less like distant gods and more like real people.

This is exactly what Briggs is hoping to accomplish, to eliminate the perception by the child that the parent possesses any type of authority. Her statement that the parent seems less like a “distant god” says it all. The author feels that the parent should be just another one of the “real people” in the child’s life.

Briggs also is against the use of “reproof” as a form of correction. Imagine not being able to tell your child that they are wrong so as to not upset their self-esteem.

Scolding is another device for control. It ladles out rejection, shame, and humiliation. Verbal assaults blast self-esteem. As captive audiences to endless spiels, children may tune us out in self-defense. Lectures help us unload but they burden children or land on deaf ears.

What did the author say? I’m not sure I read that correctly. Lecturing a child on what is right and what is wrong is helpful to the parent because it helps them to unload, but it is useless to the child? If I had known this, I would have been lecturing that tree over there more often to relieve stress!

The author also believes that the self-esteem of the child will be irreparably harmed if privileges are withheld. She writes,

Withholding privileges is another popular device for control. Every time Billy misbehaves, his parents take away his motor scooter. They use the one thing he loves to keep him in line. Even if it makes him mind, this builds resentment and emphasizes helplessness. It makes a child long to escape the clutches of those who pull their rank. And it can make him hunger for power.

So far, the author is severely curtailing the parent’s ability to reprove the child for any misbehavior. No spanking, no lectures, and no withdrawing of privileges. The parent is running

out of options. The author then goes one step further. This “expert” evidently does not even believe in time-outs.

Isolation is yet another way to enforce rules. It may be desirable to remove a child from a situation, but it is always preferable for an adult to stay with him while he works through his feelings. If behavior is deteriorating, the chances are the child needs a booster shot of confirmation, understanding, or recognition. Isolation asks a child to repress feelings or to work them out alone - a job he may not be up to.

What we have here are parents without authority. Obviously, the author doesn't recommend any type of punishment! Without the authority to punish the child for wrongdoing, the parent eventually loses all control over the child. Parental authority is frowned upon by this expert. Basically, the term “authoritarianism” is one adopted by the NSA to cast a negative light on the thought of a parent controlling their children's behavior. In the section *Effects of Authoritarianism*, the author writes,

Behavior controlled by outside authority usually lasts as long as the authority figure is present. We've all seen children from the authoritarian homes run wild as soon as they escape the watchful eye. Some children are convinced that they need to follow the autocrat's rules when his back is turned, but not all of them reach this conclusion. The authoritarian is never fully free to take a leave of absence. Rules imposed from on high are not likely to be embraced emotionally - from sincere inner conviction.

A profound disadvantage is that authoritarianism encourages dependency. It says, “Listen to me; I'll tell you what to do.” A child's confidence is then not in himself but in outside authority figures. It clearly teaches children to put their center of gravity in others. In addition, dependency creates hostility and surely none of us wants such a harvest.

The author claims that it is the children of authoritative parents who are the ones that “run wild.” I would contend that the opposite is true. The author also claims that the child of an authoritative parent is more confident in an outside authority than in himself. The author is correct! Children do feel more secure when someone who is stronger and wiser is in control. Briggs continues to make her readers believe that children need to be “set free.”

If you are sufficiently highhanded, you can break a child's spirit. Authoritarianism is great training for children who will live under dictatorships, but far from adequate for children who will be expected to think independently.

The most damaging aspect of authoritarianism is its effect on self-esteem. It literally instructs youngsters not to trust their own capacity to reason or judge. It is daily proof of our lack of faith in their capacity to work with us on the limits that make for cooperative living.

A “youngster” will never be able to “reason” and attend school every day without a parent forcing them to do so. We have already discussed the reason kids join gangs. They are looking for someone to control their lives. Every juvenile gang member comes from a home where the parents have not set restrictions on their behavior. Children cannot “trust their own capacity to reason or judge.” That is the reason that kids with no supervision get into trouble! Briggs continues.

The child convinced that father knows best is hardly full of self-confidence. Being treated as a second-class citizen unworthy of a voice in his own affairs eats at self-respect. The youngster living with authoritarian discipline can conclude, “My ideas aren’t worth much; I need regulation by others far wiser than me.” Such convictions work against emotional maturity, intellectual growth, and self-respect.

Again, the author implies that a child should be on an equal level with the parent. Briggs refers to a child who is subject to the authority of his parents as a “second class citizen.” The agenda of the NSA to strip parents of all authority is evident in this text. In reality, every child needs “regulating by others far wiser” than themselves. Yet Briggs claims that such control works against the child. To even think that children can survive without the wisdom of their parents is ridiculous. The author writes,

Because the autocrat focuses on overt behavior, he can produce children who conform outwardly but seethe within. Hostility, resentment, and guilt are a few of the feelings authoritarianism fosters. We’ve all read accounts of model children who suddenly cut loose in rebellion. Some youngsters don’t seethe inwardly; they rebel openly right from the start. In the long run authoritarianism is risky business.

I have never read any accounts of model children who have suddenly cut loose in rebellion. I am probably in a better position than anyone else in this world to confirm or dispel this claim made by the author. During the nineteen years that I have been a police officer, most recently in charge of the juvenile crime unit, I have NEVER seen any “model children” go berserk. On the other hand, I have seen countless children who have been “left to themselves” who go berserk in the home, in the school, and in our jail.

Briggs tries to convince her readers that the “experts,” after much research, have concluded that there is a better way to raise children. She writes,

As evidence accumulated about the damaging effects of authoritarianism on mental health and emotional adjustment, experts in child guidance began advocating an entirely different method of discipline.

Briggs, along with many other non-spanking proponents, advocates a democratic household. The family meetings and equal votes for each parent and child are common in many of these publications. Briggs is also big on allowing children an equal voice in family

government. In the section *Democracy in Discipline*, she writes,

Democracy is anchored in the belief that people deserve a voice in determining what happens to them. We adults appreciate living in a democracy, but we may overlook that children are equally as eager for a voice in the issues that touch their lives.

Few of us would willingly live under a dictatorship or in a state of anarchy, yet we may be guilty of establishing such conditions in our homes. This may sound rather harsh, but we must face the facts: too often we insist in democracy for ourselves but deny its benefits to our children.

The benefits to family living and the impact of this method of discipline on a child's development are worth examining because democracy strengthens self-esteem, self-reliance, intellectual growth, creativity, and responsibility.

In *Your Child's Self Esteem*, Briggs attempts to convince the reader that there must be a real democracy where each family member, including children, have an equal voice. Briggs gives an example of parents who believe they are communicating with their children, but instead are destroying their self-esteem.

"We use democracy in our home," said Mrs. A. "We hold weekly family councils and each person airs his grievances. My husband and I listen carefully and try to make rules that consider those gripes that are reasonable."

Here is an example of a family who truly considers the feelings of their children. They listen carefully when their children are upset, and consider the children when they draw up the final rules. To me, these sound like parents who are considerate of their children, but are in control because they are the ones who make the final decision and make the rules. Briggs doesn't think that these parents have gone far enough. She writes,

Does the existence of a family council ensure democracy in the home? Definitely not. Yet, countless parents mistakenly believe it does. The A's children live in a benign autocracy. Their needs are aired and considered, but in the final analysis, their parents drew up the rules. This is not a democracy.

Discipline is democratic when parents share power, when adults and children work together to establish rules that protect the rights of all. In democratic homes children have an equal part in working out limits. The family works as a unit within those limits. When conflicts arise, those individuals involved work them through together to everyone's mutual satisfaction. The democratic approach is founded on mutual respect, trust, and faith.

For those of you who try this approach to child rearing, be prepared for an eventual hostile takeover by the immature, unwise, naive members of your family, namely the children. This child rearing "expert" has taken the same path as many others listed in this book. The movement to liberate children to the status of the adult is permeating the world of psychology. Briggs

expounds on her thinking further on in this section.

Democracy works better when you see your child as neither an extension nor carbon copy of you. This means that you don't see yourself as owning your children - you see them as owning themselves and their feelings. You don't see them as objects to manipulate but rather as *persons distinct in their own right*.

The entire concept being promoted here is that the child is “left to himself.” When God’s word directs the parent to “Train up a child in the way he should go,” this author directs parents not to “manipulate” their children.

What about the time consumed attempting to operate this “democracy?” Have you seen parents trying to solve a problem with the child by discussing the pros and cons and pounding out an agreement like it was a union contract? Briggs thinks the time is worth it.

Some parents object that the democratic process takes too much time. Granted, it is quicker for adults to lay down the law. But consider the hours needed to get children to follow authoritarian edicts, to say nothing of the problems of enforcement and the total effect on self-esteem. Rules nagged about are most often those imposed without giving children a voice. They are the ones likely to be broken when your back is turned. The time needed for the democratic process is short, indeed, when you know the benefits it brings.

Briggs criticizes the time it takes to “train up a child.” She claims that there are “hours needed” to get the child to “follow authoritarian edicts.” She implies that there are “problems of enforcement.” And let’s not forget the “total effect on self-esteem.” According to Briggs, the time invested in making rules and enforcing consequences is time wasted. Imagine this philosophy introduced into all of society. Without laws, there would be no restrictions on our behavior. Millions of tax dollars would be saved that would otherwise be spent on the salaries of policemen, sheriffs, and judges. No matter how democratic we are, people still break the laws. Millions of people would do what they wanted to do, rather than what is best for society as a whole. Crime would run rampant. Children, generally naive when it comes to what is best for them and for the family, react in much the same manner. The child who throws the temper tantrum because he is not allowed to run into the street does not understand why he is being made to “follow the authoritarian edicts” of his parents. But to say that the parent should not impose a rule that the child will not run into the street because of the “problems of enforcement” is ludicrous.

All of the NSA, when cornered on this subject, has to admit that there is a problem with the democratic type of parenting technique. Most parents will argue that the child who places himself in a position of extreme danger needs to be “controlled.” Briggs, realizing that her democratic approach to parenting doesn’t work when the child places themselves in danger or when the child is selfish or strong willed, attempts to address this issue.

There are times when you have to say no, and flatly. If your preschooler wants to play with a friend who has the measles, you have to say no unless you

want him exposed. Far more often than we realize, however, we can find acceptable solutions for his urges while remaining true to our convictions and responsibilities.

Briggs concedes her that there are instances when a parent has to put the clamps on their child. Notice that the restrained party here is a “preschooler.” What about the fifteen-year-old boy who is six foot two and weighs two hundred and forty pounds? How do you then say no? If the fear factor has not been instilled in the child by the time he reaches the teenage years, the parent may not be able to “say no, and flatly.” But doesn’t this contradict what the author has been saying about the “authoritarian” parenting technique? According to Briggs, aren’t we damaging our children by ordering them around? She goes on to explain how to repair this obvious violation of your “convictions and responsibilities” that you have just committed.

No matter how justified you may be, your child will probably have feelings about you retaining your power. Your best recourse then is to listen emphatically to his disappointment, frustration, or irritation toward your limits. (Keep in mind that he has the right to these reactions even when they differ from yours.) Resorting to authoritarian control once in a while doesn’t damage irreparably.

I see. Making rules and imposing consequences “once in a while” doesn’t cause any damage to the child. Look folks, authoritarian parenting either harms the child or it doesn’t harm the child. The NSA promotes many theories in their attempt to eliminate parental control. When common sense makes one of those theories seem ridiculous, they concede that violating one of the NSA’s rules “once in a while” will not do any harm to the child.

I have no problem with a parent allowing a child to voice their disappointment over a restriction on their freedom if done in a respectful way. I allowed my children to say, “I feel bad that I’m not allowed to do that.” I did not allow them to voice any derogatory remarks that questioned my authority. I do not agree that a child has a “right to those reactions” when the reactions are disrespectful.

There is another result of corporal punishment that the NSA has a hard time refuting. Briggs, like most of the NSA, has to contend with the fact that when a child is spanked for misbehavior, the child almost always stops whatever they are doing wrong. Although there are some “experts” who contend that spanking has absolutely no effect, the rest of their advice on child rearing becomes questionable based on the fact that they have to be blind not to see the immediate results of spanking. Briggs realizes that spanking a child for a defiant act immediately stops the defiance. Parents who try spanking become aware of this correlation immediately. So the NSA attacks the results of spanking in another manner. Briggs writes,

Paul’s parents are unaware that tantrums disguise lost controls. They see “bratty” behavior; consequently, they spank. What are the results of this treatment?

Put yourself in Paul’s shoes for a moment. Now he has a whole new set of feelings to deal with: hurt from the slap; *frustration* at not being understood; *resentment* that his folks don’t help; *helplessness* to retaliate directly; and *fear* of

further punishment. The result: more negative feelings than ever.

“But,” counters father, “when I slap, he stops the tantrum - and right away!” Sure, the *symptom* stops, but why? It stops out of fear. On the surface, the slap looks effective. But what happens to all the feelings that caused the tantrum? And what does Paul do with all the new feelings generated by the slap? He may repress them, but eventually they come out in any of the countless ways that hidden feelings make their presence known. Paul gets a lesson called “Better to Repress than Express.”

Are there times in our lives when it is “better to repress than express?” I have brought prisoners before the judge who had never been taught that it is better to repress than express. I have seen children whose parents followed Briggs’ line of reasoning go berserk in the courtroom. In 1998, a seventeen-year-old girl who was hauled into juvenile court in my jurisdiction on an unruly charge didn’t want to hear what the judge had to say. He was trying to tell her that her actions were unacceptable in our society. The child, obviously feeling that her self esteem was being damaged by what the judge was saying, suddenly punched the prosecutor, jumped the defense table, and charged the judge, spitting at the bench. The penalty for “expressing” her feelings? Two Sheriff’s deputies hauled her off kicking and screaming to the detention facility. Better she had “repressed” her feelings in front of the judge.

Briggs follows the lead of other NSA “experts” and contends that authoritarian parenting hinders a child’s intelligence. The NSA has tried desperately to convince parents that if they spank their child, the child will grow up in a state of mental retardation. Briggs writes,

Democratic discipline fosters intellectual growth by stimulating involvement, reasoning, creative thinking, and responsibility. Sharing power in rule making plays a genuine part in fostering mental competence. The Fels research study found that those children whose IQ’s continued to rise over the years reached out for more and more self-reliance. In short, they bore the trademarks of high self-esteem.

Dominating parents breed hostility, dependency, and inadequacy - feelings that block intellectual functioning. IQ’s dropped for those children who were dependent, less sure they were loved, less able to become involved in projects of their own, and who needed a great deal of direction. Their characteristics describe children with low self-esteem.

We discuss in other areas of this book about the child’s ability to make decisions that are in his or her best interest. Children are incapable of making such decisions. If every student in the high school is given the choice to attend school on Friday or stay home, the overwhelming majority will elect to stay home, even though they know it is in their best interest to go to school to get an education. If you allow your child to decide whether to attend school or not, it won’t matter how high the child’s IQ is, without an education he will be a loser in life.

Perhaps this is another exception to the democratic discipline rule! Perhaps the permissive parenting bunch doesn’t really mean that they will allow their child to make their own rules. Perhaps those parents will make another exception to their theory. Oh, that’s right. We read

earlier in this chapter what Briggs said about situations that didn't exactly fit the democratic discipline plan. This is another case where "Resorting to authoritarian control once in a while doesn't damage irreparably."

Briggs also appears to be in favor of stripping children of any gender identification. Briggs makes the claim that raising a girl as a "girl," and a boy as a "boy," limits the child's ability to be "all that it wants to be." She writes,

Tying a person's sexuality to set ways of feeling and behaving is now challenged as limiting potentials. Increasing numbers of adults see children as persons first and foremost and only secondary as males or females. This challenge to role definition is giving children the go-ahead that allows boys to cry, let their nurturing potentials develop, etc. It is freeing girls to express their assertiveness and choose activities once reserved only for males.

Briggs is right on one account. There is a "challenge" to traditional roles occurring in our society, but it has resulted in a generation of confused young people. In an effort to be politically correct, even the military has lowered its standards in order to accommodate women who simply want to do what they want to do, whether or not it is practical or safe. No country that wants to win a war will draft an army of women! I have personally observed this ridiculous notion that women can compete on an even playing field with men in the police department. Most women are not as strong, either physically or emotionally, as men. I have watched female officers avoid a physical confrontation with a criminal, placing their fellow male officers at risk, due to the passive nature predominant in the female of the species. I wonder how Dorothy Corkille Briggs would react under fire in a foxhole next to a male soldier?

It was imperative that Briggs would touch on the movement towards Outcome Based Education in this country. Obviously, she would like to eliminate grading, since a D or an F might lower the student's self-esteem. She writes,

As a parent who cares, actively support educational movements that work toward the removal of restrictive school practices: grading by which one child is compared to another, uniform teaching, overcrowded classrooms, and heavy reliance on teacher-related activities. More parents and teachers need to be aware of the role that self-esteem plays in the lives of children. Education must concern itself with children's emotions and self-attitudes or it does not deal with the whole child.

What about the child who works very hard in order to excel and maintain a high grade point average? What about that child's self-esteem when grades are eliminated and there is no comparison to others in his class? Did you notice that Briggs wants to eliminate "teacher-directed activities?" Remember, she doesn't think parents should lecture the child, why should she feel a teacher should lecture the child? Remember, showing a child "direction" is taboo! In fact, according to Briggs, we should not be judged on our actions. Because we simply exist, we are good! She writes,

Unfortunately, we live in a "perform-or-perish" culture. We are often valued for

what we do rather than because we exist. If you think of your value only in terms of behavior, it is probable that the important people around you as you grew up sent you this message.

You are right Briggs; my parents taught me that just because I exist, I am not good. In fact, my parents taught me that people will evaluate me by my actions. Not too many people respect Adolf Hitler simply because he existed. Charles Manson existed. Was he good? I am glad that my parents not only lectured me on how to conduct myself appropriately in our society, they punished me when I misbehaved. That structure and discipline molded me into a productive member of society, not because I “exist,” but because of my actions.

In closing this chapter, I would like to look at self-esteem from a purely logical standpoint. There are numerous examples of how an unwarranted, inflated self-esteem is connected to violence, but one makes more sense than any other. Everyone has encountered the intoxicated party animal, if not experiencing the feeling themselves. Alcohol has many different effects on different people, but in most cases, being in a state of intoxication elevates our self-esteem. When drunk, we feel more confident about our ability to accomplish tasks than when we are sober, and would doubt our success. Drunks will make passes at members of the opposite sex, an act that might be avoided while sober due to our fear of failure. Because of the introverted man’s elevated self-esteem while intoxicated, he feels better about himself, and as a result, believes the attractive woman on the other side of the room will feel better about him also. A slap in the face may not even deter persistent efforts to convince the woman that he is a regular Don Juan.

In my nineteen years as a police officer, I have often observed another side effect of intoxication. Just ask any cop what happens every night in the bars around town, and they will tell you that fights are a very familiar byproduct of the drunk. Why does someone fight when they are drunk that would never think of doing so when they are sober? It is because intoxication elevates that person’s self-esteem and self-confidence. Remember we said that a person is more likely to start a fight if they think they will win it! A person with low self-esteem who becomes intoxicated, resulting in a temporary elevation of the self-esteem, is more likely to become involved in violent activity than if they were sober with low self-esteem.

The movement to instill a sense of high self-esteem that is undeserved into our children is a dangerous direction to travel. If a child is acting in a manner that is totally unacceptable knowing that they are violating the rules, are they not being bad? According to Dorothy Corkille Briggs, we should never tell a child he is bad. My question is, why not? Children need to associate bad behavior with a bad feeling. The child who possesses an inflated self-esteem is headed for disaster. Briggs is another “expert” who feels that she knows more than God, who instructs us in Philippians 2:3, “Let each esteem others better than themselves.” Remember that there was a member of God’s government that had an inflated self-esteem. Lucifer, the second most powerful being in the universe found out too late that “pride cometh before the fall.” This is the message that needs to be taught to our children!