

MY JOHN ROSEMOND PROBLEM

What is it about John Rosemond? That hugely popular self-proclaimed child rearing expert. His photo perches above his weekly syndicated column glaring disapprovingly at you, looking like he's sucking on a lemon. How does he do it with such assurance, week after week, advising – no – *ordering* us frustrated, worried, frightened parents to just *take charge*, seize control of our mischievous, misbehaving and demanding children. And he does it with such gusto. Like recently when he said how wrong and bad it was for a mother to help her child learn his spelling words. John said, “That’s the child’s responsibility.” Wow. Wish I’d consulted John when my kids were younger. They are great spellers now, but I guess they’ll be living at home with us till they are in their 40’s. John told a frazzled working couple to just keep ignoring their children for 30 minutes each day when they get home from after-school care at 6 o’clock so the parents can have time to themselves. Later, feed the kids dinner and spend a half hour helping them get ready for bed. Don’t keep your kids up too late, John warns: “Bedtime is for the *parents*’ benefit.” Good point John. Why should kids need more than 30 minutes a day with their parents – not counting a very quiet and respectful frozen dinner? Got a kid who won’t stop banging her head everywhere, day and night? Not to worry, says John. “She is not likely to hurt herself.” Just tell her, “We have decided you need a special place to bang your head. You can bang it on anything you want in your own room.” Why not, just buy her a motorcycle helmet and let her rip? Kids need freedom too.

How does John know so much? I mean, I have been to college for 16 years – that’s college – and I can’t figure out the stuff John can. How did he get to be such an “expert” anyway? Maybe it’s like my friend Mike who is a trial lawyer says: “An expert is somebody who proclaims himself to have expertise in something.”

What doesn’t John know? John said, “It is *not* true that learning disabilities are transmitted genetically.” (Emphasis in the original). To think, I had it wrong all these years! And according to John, “Learning disabilities are not permanent. They are correctable by *retraining an LD child’s central nervous system.*” (My emphasis this time). Where did John learn that -- at the General George S. Patton School of Child Development and Parenting Studies?

I have been a social worker, psychologist, and psychoanalyst for over 30 years. I often continue to get stuck when folks ask my advice about parenting problems. Maybe that’s because after all this time I still can’t bring myself to swallow the John Rosemond point of view; I am not only concerned about kids’ *behavior*. I worry about their feelings too; stuff like whether they are happy and secure affects me. Do kids go around full of rage and hatred? Will they develop the capacity to care and love? Those kinds of details. And I don’t get it: If parents are interested in spending just 30 minutes a day with their kids, why did they have them in the first place? You wouldn’t spend just 30 minutes a day with a dog you bought at the flea market.

But John doesn't worry about these things. He worries about parents making sure they never ever feel "controlled" or "manipulated" by their kids. And John doesn't care how controlled and manipulated kids feel by the grown-ups in their world. He doesn't care how much our kids might hate us for pushing them around or neglecting them. He doesn't worry either about whether parents or professionals put him down or complain about his parent-as-thug mentality. He likes it when people criticize him. In fact he boasts about it in his columns. John Rosemond is a man who loves to be hated. Take it from John: That's all you really need to be a good parent the John Rosemond way. Your kids will obey you. Scared and nervous parents will hang on your every word and make you rich while they do it. Because as Freud himself said, "Never underestimate people's craving for authority."

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All quotes and refernces are accurately derived from John Rosemond's published works.
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