

## Then Came The Internet...



Send her mail.

*"Love Perspective" is an original column appearing every other Thursday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Serenity. Serenity is the mother of 4 boys and both a recovering mainstream parent and statist. She seeks to share what she has learned along her journey to voluntarism, radical unschooling, and living a counter-culture lifestyle. Archived columns can be found [here](#). LP-only RSS feed available [here](#).*

When my first son was born in 1994, I remember the very moment I saw his face, with his huge eyes looking up at me. I literally felt something inside me shift; I'm sure it was all psychological, but it felt physical. Looking into those sweet eyes, I became a new person, someone utterly transformed by love like I had never before known or imagined. My world tilted on its axis, and everything changed.

While meeting my son was life altering in many positive ways, I was also overwhelmed with absolute terror as the enormity of what had happened set in quickly. I understood that I could barely take care of myself, and now I had to not only take care of myself, but also this amazingly beautiful, small, helpless, fully dependent child whom I loved beyond measure. I wanted his life to be everything mine wasn't. I wanted his childhood and beyond to be *amazing*. I wanted him to someday see himself the way I saw him - an incredible human being having unlimited potential with endless possibilities, being inherently worthy of all goodness, and undoubtedly loved without restriction.

So began a journey, a mission, a determination to fulfill my promise to my son, which was, "I will never do to you what was done to me." But I quickly realized that *not* doing what was done to me left a void - I could choose to not hit or yell, but what should I do instead? My programming, my knee-jerk reactions, my life's messages were deeply ingrained, and they were almost overwhelmingly negative. Nobody had demonstrated unconditional love and acceptance to me, so I didn't know what that looked like. I didn't have anything on which to model my lofty goals because I hadn't done anywhere near the work necessary to overcome what had been done to me. I was, for all intents and purposes, still a hurt child who was now challenging herself to raise a child who would *not* carry that legacy.

Realizing I didn't know what to do was the first step, so I turned to books. Unfortunately, the books I found reinforced mainstream society's ideals on parenting, and I felt a great

deal of disconnect from what I was reading and what I instinctively wanted to do (co-sleeping, long-term nursing, not allowing my son to cry himself to sleep). What I was not getting and could not find was support for what my maternal instincts were telling me to do in caring for my child. So I buckled. I caved into the pressure. I accepted that my instincts were broken and the advice of my pediatrician, mother, and mother-in-law must be better than anything I knew. What a colossal mistake. I bought the mainstream way of parenting hook, line, and sinker, and my son was the one who suffered the most because of it.

With the advent of the Internet came a plethora of information on everything imaginable (and many things I do *not* want to imagine!). Unfortunately, after so many years of society telling me I could magically transform my child's behavior by counting to 3 before issuing a punitive consequence and religious leaders & well-meaning friends telling me I should "calmly & lovingly" hit my children to force their compliance, I spent my first few years online belittling people who advocated gentle parenting (non-spanking) practices. After all, \*I\* was spanked and was not a serial killer; thus I believed I was *fine*. Besides, how else was a parent supposed to get compliance of wayward children? How else could they convey the seriousness of the message and communicate, "I'm in charge"? Who were these hippy dippy people who had obviously either spawned the most compliant children on the planet or who were so high on illegal substances that they didn't have brain cells left to *care* about how their children were acting?! Who were these awful people who were going to raise a generation of spoiled rotten, misbehaving, miserable children?!

Well, I'll tell you who they were. They were people who had learned how to parent without resorting to physical force. They were not drug addled morons with minds so open their brains had fallen out. They were people who had tapped into a *deep compassion* and found ways to work in harmony with their children through creating homes full of love and respect. Their mission was *not* one of compliance; it was about mutual respect. And there was no need for them to resort to physical consequences *when the goal was no longer about compliance and blind obedience*. These parents had learned a plethora of ways to work *with* even the most stubborn, strong-willed, strong-minded of children without using force or physical punishment. When you change the goal, you change the way you see everything. When you put relationship above compliance, amazing things start to happen.

(For those who believe hitting a child is biblically necessary, please consider digging deeper and doing more research on the original words and intent of the passages in the bible which are being falsely used to encourage this type of parenting.)

Do you remember the first time you saw your child's face? Can you imagine doing anything *but* loving that child and treating them like the precious blessing they are? Keep that in mind. When you say, "This hurts me more than it hurts you," know that there are ways to parent without *anyone* being hurt.