

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



The NEW strict parent - is this you?

The definition of a strict parent has changed over the last decade. Do you fit the bill?

'Your parents are so strict!'

Some parents in years gone by wore the label of **'strict'** parent like a badge of honour. It signified parents who were willing to stand their ground with kids.

Strictness was reserved for parents who put boundaries in place and made sure they were adhered to, such as being home on time, or not watching too much TV.

There's a now a **NEW** definition for a **'strict'** parent.

A **'strict'** parent today is now someone who makes children do things for themselves and insists they help at home. They insist their children put their dirty clothes in the laundry, and maybe even wash their own clothes. They insist kids make their own lunches in secondary school. They insist that their kids set the meal table without giving them a cent in return.

'Strict' now refers to getting kids to help rather than placing restrictions on them.

Many parents tell me that they get funny looks when their children help them with the supermarket shopping. When their kids walk a kilometre home from sports or a leisure activity they are made to feel like neglectful parents. How bizarre!

New normal

The **new parenting normal** is for parents to do a lot for your kids, rather than kids do things for themselves. Anyone who strays from this new normal and develops real independence in their children can be made to feel guilty ... because they are strict!

Nobody feels like doing chores, but tackling hard things such as doing chores when you don't feel like it builds character. It develops a bit of grit that kids can draw on later when they will *really* have to push against adversity.

Do less, not more

The job of parents is to make themselves redundant for their kids – not in a relational sense, but in a managerial sense.

There is nothing revolutionary about this idea. It's been the aim of parents since the dawn of time. That means we spend a lot of time teaching kids self-help skills (now known as life skills), which are the ordinary gist of life.

These include teaching young children to tie their shoelaces and helping primary-aged kids to ask for what they want from adults. They also include coaching teenagers to negotiate their way safely on public transport and to problem-solve relational issues they may have with teachers at school.

These are not the activities of **'strict'** parents. Rather they are the activities of parents who understand that one of their key roles is to equip kids to stand on their own two feet in the world outside the family home.

The fact is that the best place to do this is within the family. And the best time to start developing independence is from a **young age** ... when kids are up for it developmentally.

Don't wait until your children are 18 to develop self-help skills. If you introduce self-help then, my bet is they won't think you are strict ... they'll think you've been a soft touch all along and they'll now battle you all the way!

But that's a story for another day.

In the meantime, if the definition of **'strict'** has changed then I urge you to be strict! Your kids will thank you ... later on, when you've equipped them with the problem-solving and independence skills needed to negotiate the wider world without you.



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