

5 worries of 21st century parents

Raising kids successfully today can feel a lot like going to Mars. No one has actually done it before, but there are great minds plugging along and we hope it may actually be possible.

Parenting in the 21st century does look a lot different than it did when we were growing up. It can feel overwhelming, scary and just plain hard. There are times caregivers have to just shake their heads at the madness of it all and hope for the best.

Here are a few things that keep today's parents up at night, and some things we could stand to learn from the parents who went before us.

We worry more about safety.

Some safety advances are huge improvements - like car seats! After all, when you know better, you can do better. And keeping our kids safe inside moving vehicles is something we can actually do better now than 30 years ago. (We love [Safer Cars as a resource](#) to learn more about choosing the correct car seats for your kids.)

But there is also tons of misinformation about keeping our kids safe. And this information is everywhere - from online chatrooms to the evening news to conversations with other moms in the library. To make matters worse, anyone could share information on the Internet and claim to be an expert.

There may be more information out there, but it's still as important as ever to trust our own parenting gut. You can (and should) keep your kids safe - but it's also necessary to fact-check all the advice out there and make the best decision for your family. (That also means doing your own research.)

We worry more about technology.

There's no doubt that our kids are growing up fully immersed in technology. While their parents may have fought over the three computers in their grade school classroom to play Oregon Trail, our kids are proficient with tablets, gaming consoles and computers before they even enter kindergarten. It's not unusual for young kids to troubleshoot their parents tech problems! (Built in tech support!) But all that technology comes at a risk. Kids are, after all, still kids. That means that parents still need to keep a watchful eye on what they are doing online or how much they are using technology.



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We worry more about entertainment.

Have you ever tried to explain to your kids how television used to work? You know, when television shows were only available at certain times and if you missed them, there wasn't an easy way to watch them on DVR or the internet?

Kids believe that all entertainment should be on-demand, and are used to being entertained at all times. That means television shows, educational apps and games, and loads of toys and activities. It also means that parents become the de-facto means of entertainment for kids, which is a lot of pressure.

But we can learn a lot from our parents. When we were bored, they told us to find something to do. They weren't in charge of entertaining us every waking minute, and that meant we had to learn important life skills ourselves.

So, give yourself a day off. Let your kids explore and find their own entertainment. And instead of trying to keep kids entertained with loads of gadgets at dinner, try having a conversation about their day (remember to use open ended questions!).

We worry more about extracurriculars.

From the time our kids are walking, we are encouraged to enroll them in music classes, swim lessons, soccer teams and Spanish courses. We worry that a late start could spell disaster for their college applications and future careers.

But the truth is, kids need time to be kids - to play and explore and learn and grow. There's plenty of time for structure later. That means that you don't need a lot of money or fancy classes to have an impact on your child's brain development. The things that we grew up with - quality time with family, reading books and safe home environments are still some of the keys to a successful childhood. (Oh, and it may be true that emotional intelligence could be even more important than many of these extracurriculars.)

We worry more about connection.

With all the distractions today, it can be hard to stay connected to your kids. When everyone in the household has their own mobile device, it's easier to stay glued to a screen. And when every night means a different activity, it can feel like the entire family is moving in separate connections.

But just as was true 30 years ago, there's few things that are more important than staying tuned into your family.

This means talking to your kids, asking questions and being invested in them. It means spending quality time together, screen-free. And it means being the safe harbor your kids can always count on. No app or television show can trump that.

And don't forget the support you also need from others as a parent. Today, it's more important than ever to find and rely on your tribe.

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Amid all the worries parents have today, there are ways that raising kids will never change. This means focusing on what's really important - like the love we have for our kids.

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It's a possibility that astronauts may someday go to Mars. And it's even more likely that parents can raise a great generation of kids in lieu of all of today's worries. We just have to support each other and stick together.



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog 8/31/16. The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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