

My Son the Spin Doctor

On one cold brisk winter morning in small town America, the doctor announced to the parents, "Congratulations, you have a baby boy! He's a perfect blonde hair, blue eyed, All American boy." Joey Jr., the son of Mr. and Mrs. Average American Family. How fortunate to have just what they dreamed of, life was good.

In the eyes of his parents, Joey could do no wrong, and even if he did, never fear, Mighty Mom and Devoted Dad would swoop in and help make everything better.

Joey learned at a young age, that if he cried, whined, or lied Mom and Dad would come to his rescue without question. "It's okay honey, let Mommy fix it".

At the age of two, Joey had a revelation. It started when his sister took her favorite doll away from him. With a cry and a point of a finger the toy was returned with a scolding, "don't take toys away from your little brother, he's just a baby and he's not going to hurt it".

"Ah what a concept," thought the little rug rat. "I can just make a noise, blame someone else and get whatever I want."

When Joey started school, he found that sitting in a classroom and sharing was not as enjoyable as playing at home where he had 24-hour room service.

When middle school rolled around, Joey preferred taking his schoolwork home at night so that he could spend his recess and study hall time hanging with friends. Study time at home was wonderful and memorable resembling a picture painted by Norman Rockwell. Joey always preferred to study after dinner when it was quiet and the family was settled for the evening.

After dinner and just before bedtime, Joey would pile the books on the kitchen table. Mom would bring milk and cookies for the hard working scholar and Joey would commence to study. "Look at him, he is so handsome and smart, I just know he is going to be a doctor or even a movie star someday," Mom would sigh.

After about five minutes, or when the cookies were gone, Joey would begin his ritual of sighs, whining and confusion. "What's the matter, son?" his parents would ask.

"I can't do it", he would say with a sense of urgency, "I just don't understand it, this work is so hard".

Again, his parents would swoop in with the determination of superheroes and save the day as they were very tired and needed to get to bed. "It's okay son, let us help, you know that Dad is a math wiz". With a sigh of relief and a smirk on his face, Joey assisted Mom and Dad in earning their second high school diploma.

As years went on, Joey, an accomplished actor, added laziness, vandalism and stealing to his box of tricks. Joey also had magical powers; he once burned down a billboard without even being anywhere near the area. The crime was blamed on one of his so-called "friends". Dad was so grateful that his son was a pillar of the community and Joey was not like the hoodlums that destroyed towns welcome sign, he was a natural born leader. The All American Family didn't like

some of Joey's friends but they lived in a small town and there weren't many boys in his age to hang out with. They figured he could at least be a good influence on them.

Graduation and college came fast for Joey, the family was so proud. In fact Joey would be the first child in the family to graduate from college! Nevertheless, Joey did not go to medical school as his parents had planned. Instead, he decided to go into a different career, sales to be precise.

Soon after college, he received a six-figure tax-free salary from a local drug company. In fact, he was fortunate to have an office free of overhead based in the trunk of his car.

Unfortunately, one day a crafty man came to Joey's "office" on the corner of Ridge Road and Outer Main Street to sample his latest shipment of pure nose candy. After the purchase the ungrateful man, who then identify himself as an undercover cop, took Joey to jail. Now Joey was facing a sentence of seven to ten.

Never fear, Joey thought as he sat in the dark cold cell at the county jail. He knew Mighty Mom and Devoted Dad would bail him out, get him a lawyer that could get the sentence reduced and he would be free to go, it always worked before.

But little did he know that there were rules, laws, and expected behaviors. That without ever having to be accountable for his actions, he had never learned to respect himself or others. He was shocked to find that his reign had ended. The golden boy who was destined for a future in medicine had become a spin-doctor.

Poor Mr. and Mrs. All American Family, "were did he go wrong, we gave him everything, we just don't understand".

Parenting is a tough job. We want to give our kids everything, but privileges must be earned, people and things must be respected.

Numerous studies show that privileged children that are bright and confident are struggling in today's society. As parents, we must find the solution to emotionally balance our troubled "stars" and to teach them to understand and cultivate an authentic sense of self worth.

We do this by teaching tolerance, respect and of utmost importance accountability. There are no bad kids or bad parents, only bad parenting skills taught out of love and privilege. So often, we do not want our children to struggle as we might have and end up "doing for them" what they should be learning to do for themselves.

Madeline Levine, Ph.D., NY Times Bestselling author of *The Price of Privilege*, talks about how parental pressures and material advantages are creating a generation of disconnected and unhappy children. We cannot afford to trivialize the problems arising from giving our kids everything they want.

Two things that you never can give enough of is your knowledge and love, everything else is a lesson.