

BRINGING UP GEEKS

GENUINE, ENTHUSIASTIC, EMPOWERED KIDS

how to protect your
kid's childhood in a
grow-up-too-fast world

MARYBETH HICKS



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A breakthrough parenting book that redefines the meaning of 'geek' and inspires parents to free themselves and their kids from the 'culture of cool.'

In a world of superficial values, peer pressure, and out-of-control consumerism, the world needs more GEEKs: Genuine, Enthusiastic, Empowered Kids. Today's 'culture of cool' has changed the way kids grow up. Rather than enjoying innocent childhoods while developing strong, authentic characters, today's kids can become cynical—even jaded—as they absorb the dangerous messages and harmful influences of a dominant popular culture that encourages materialism, high-risk behaviors, and a state of pseudo-adulthood.

Author and mother of four Marybeth Hicks suggests an alternative: bringing up geeks. In this groundbreaking book, she shows parents how they can help their children gain the enthusiasm to pursue their passions, not just the latest fashions; the confidence to resist peer pressure and destructive behaviors; the love of learning that helps them excel at school and in life; and the maturity to value family as well as friends, as well as make good moral decisions.

With a foundation like that, kids will grow up to be the coolest adults.

Bringing Up Geeks: How to Protect Your Kid's Childhood in a Grow-Up-Too-Fast World Details

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Chris says

I started reading this book but could not finish. It isn't that the book was not interesting. I just have too much going on right now. I identified with everything in the opening of the book and the first couple chapters. I would like to go back and finish the book some time, but I need to get some other things off my list like "playing with my own GEEKs". I thank my own parents for bringing up GEEKs and hope I can do the same.

Joanna Weissen says

I enjoyed this book and agree with much of the advice in the book. However, just because I agree with it doesn't mean I thought this was a well written book. My major problem with it is the sheer number of times the author said she wasn't an expert. It started to make me wonder why I should listen to her at all. Much of the book seemed to be convincing the reader that this was a good idea and not enough time explaining what it actually means to implement it. Too many of the examples and stories were about the author's kids. It would have been nice if, as she kept implying, other parents were following this advice that there were examples from all these other families. The short asides in parentheses got tiresome and ceased to be cute after the first chapter or so.

All that said, there are bits of valuable advice and ideas throughout. The tips at the end of each chapter seem useful and are handily broken down by age.

Brooke Shirts says

Hicks' parenting guide has some of the best advice regarding childrearing, especially concerning kids and electronic media. I agree with most of her common-sense parenting, but I was rather dismayed by her style of writing. Hicks is a newspaper columnist, and her essays in this book have that same kind of slapdash, written-quickly-on-deadline feeling. Her guidelines for parenting are based almost entirely on what has worked for her own family, and she conducted very few interviews. She admits freely that most of her research was conducted "via internet" -- at one point she references a poll from *USA Today*, egads -- and the book seems kind of insubstantial because of that. Too often, she indulges in long bouts of sarcasm when criticizing childrearing experts and other parents whom she disagrees with. As much as I love her advice, her lack of polish caused me to put the book down.

Larry says

"Raising Geeks" was a difficult book to read and not at all what I expected. It validated some of my parenting style, made me unearth some deeply-held anxieties, and truly made me think -hard- about a lot of parenting issues I had so far left undecided. Although I definitely did not agree with all her assertions, reading this book made me a more confident and forward-thinking parent.

However, I hesitate to recommend this book for many, many reasons. For one thing, it was very conservatively-biased, but then, that was kind of her point -- protect your kids' innocence. Reading a very different viewpoint, however difficult it was at times, made me strengthen my own beliefs.

Beyond that, though, the book was poorly written. Her interjections of "(Duh!)" and sarcastic remarks often made it difficult to take this book seriously. There were a few nights where I had to put the book down in anger and frustration at her arrogance and flippant writing. Despite these setbacks, the book is very serious, and I read it cover to cover. It was difficult work, but the difficult journey strengthened me.

All I can say is "keep an open mind" and "caveat emptor."

Mark Dodson says

I found myself agreeing with many of the general principles discussed here, but it could have been more concise and somewhat less opinionated. In some chapters, there was just too much ranting about or pointing out examples of bad behavior, rather than discussing ways to deal with it (i.e., chapters on bad manners and over-reliance on technology). More suggestions about managing or balancing kids tech (which for better or worse is here to stay) rather than so much contempt for it would have been helpful. The second half of the book was better, where there was more about interacting as a family and engaging with kids who are somewhat older. Definitely some good ideas and tactics here, but the author is quite opinionated and tends to drive her points home pretty aggressively. Perhaps referencing other sources or research would make it stronger and more convincing.

Marjorie Ingall says

I don't read parenting books. I have parenting books on my shelves by FRIENDS I keep meaning to read and haven't. (Sorry, friends.) But I picked this up because of the title. I thought it was going to be a book about nurturing your kid's geek tendencies. Not the biting-the-heads-off-chickens kind of geekery; the confidently-obsessed-with-something-brainy-and-self-directed kind of geekery. I was hoping for specific strategies to help my kid find her passion, nurture that passion and deal with kids who think her passion is supa lame. I was hoping for discussion on good geekery vs bad geekery, making sure our geeks have social skills and empathy, preventing bullying.

The author defines geek with an acronym: Genuine, Enthusiastic, Empowered Kid. Hey, that too sounded promising! But I shoulda paid attention to the subtitle: How to Protect Your Kid's Childhood in a Grow-Up-Too-Fast World. THAT'S really what the book is about. It takes as a given that you want to keep kids away from pop culture and that parenting means making kids do the activities YOU want them to do. I was hoping for a book that encouraged self-direction, not obedience. And as a fan of popcult, I was hoping for guidance in finding the good stuff and talking about the bad stuff, and walking the line between banning and discouraging crap.

FYI, the book also has a strong Christian gloss -- as a Jew it didn't really trouble me, but someone raising kids without religion is likely to have Issues there too.

This book's more Nerd than Geek. True geeks know what I mean.

Sarah says

Since I've independently concluded that being kind of a dork in high school is predictive of adult coolness, plus is protective against being an asshole as well as lots of other traumatic things like STIs, I was eager to read this book. However, Hicks took an interesting concept and some pretty solid parenting advice and made it nearly unreadable by using only herself and her kids as examples, much like an unfathomably self-righteous Kathie Lee.

Colette says

Oh, this is a good one. I love everything I've read so far. This author is on a mission to 'save the innocence' of childhood. I love it!

Marie says

The subtitle of this book is "How to Protect Your Kid's Childhood in a Grow-Up-Too-Fast World," and defines geeks as Genuine, Enthusiastic, Empowered Kids.

This book made me feel validated as a parent. As if we are actually doing not too badly as we decide how to raise our children.

The author, a parenting columnist and mom of 4, has 10 rules for raising "geeks":

- Rule 1: Raise a brainiac
- Rule 2: Raise a sheltered kid
- Rule 3: Raise an uncommon kid
- Rule 4: Raise a kid adults like
- Rule 5: Raise a late bloomer
- Rule 6: Raise a team player
- Rule 7: Raise a true friend
- Rule 8: Raise a homebody
- Rule 9: Raise a principled kid
- Rule 10: Raise a faithful kid

Nonreligious readers should probably avoid Rule 10, because it talks about the importance of spirituality in a child's life...and how that helps them cope with some of the stresses of being a "geek."

While I was reading this book, we were dealing with an issue my middle schooler told me about (regarding some inappropriate behavior going on at school), and we made the decision to talk to the teacher about it. My middle schooler was not happy about this, but I explained to him that sometimes doing the right thing is not the popular thing.

I highly recommend this book for parents who want to raise children who are individuals and do not just go

along with the hip and cool kid culture.

Beth says

Although this book wasn't what I expected -- it's not about intellectual geeks but unpopular "goody goodies" -- I liked much of the opening chapters of this book. And Hicks is straightforward that the book is primarily about her own subjective experiences, not research of factual evidence. She argues for traditional authoritarian parenting, the importance of teaching good manners, sheltering children from media influences and rejecting materialistic values. The problem is that she takes this philosophy to the point of seeing social rejection as proof of her family's superiority. She also makes sweeping negative generalizations about popular culture which were oversimplistic. And while I share many of her values, ultimately, I found her parenting philosophy too rigid and controlling.

Nicole says

A book that makes you go "Duh!". 3rd graders shouldn't have cell phones, 3-year-olds should not own video gaming systems, and high school kids shouldn't be on their laptops 24/7 playing World of Warcraft while their iPod earbuds are jammed in their ears and their quick-text cell phones are at the ready. But all this seems normal in today's culture, which is why most parents don't think twice about indulging their kids' rude, materialistic attitudes. While reading the chapters with titles like "Raise a Late-Bloomer", "Raise a Faithful Kid", and "Raise a Team Player", this book reaffirmed that Dave and I are doing the right thing by only allowing 2 TV shows a day (and those shows are limited to Curious George or Little Einsteins, or a train or tractor DVD), not buying them LeapFrog and VTech games (they'll learn to read the same way we did- from our parents reading to us!) and by not teaching them to use the computer at the ages of 3.5 and 21 months (there ARE kids Chris's age who have computer time every day! I've seen it!) Obviously, it's going to get harder to resist the "culture of cool" as they get older, but this book teaches to say "That's not appropriate for someone your age", "You're worth more than that", and "We're doing this because you are special and we love you very much". Hopefully, my kids will grow up to be geeks like their Mom and Dad!

Debbie says

I have loved this book so far - nothing new to me - this is how I have been raising my kids - 6 down 2 to go. I am trying not to slack off with the last two kids - it is difficult not to relax and let them raise themselves - since so much of their influence has been their older siblings -- but now that we are down to just the last two at home it is going to be harder. They will need more attention from me and their dad since they will not be getting it from older sibs. I especially like that all my hard work to stay butted into my kids lives is exalted in this book as being a good thing. Also that I demand that my kids be nice to me - after all I control the car keys, food on the shelf, and ability to make their lives miserable!! OK, that part is probably not in the book - but my idea of parenting is to take bits and pieces of all the different parenting styles and combine what I like and what I can do and make it work for our family. So hurrah for geeks - we have 6 so far and the last 2 are well on their way to being truly geeky! I'll let you know if I change my mind as the book goes on - I'm about half way done.

Ellie says

Anybody who knows me would look at this title and think this would be right up my alley. However, I found the style haphazard at best and offensively arrogant at worst.

From the very beginning where she explains that there are categories of parents in the world, it put me off. Even though I would wager my own parenting choices are very close to the authors, the way she labels other parents is arrogant and ill informed.

I tried to give her the benefit of the doubt, but the whole book just left a bad taste in my mouth.

To make things worse, it ended on spirituality and I found myself actually flipping off the book. It is grotesque to say life as a moral and ethical human would be just too hard unless you have spirituality. I have managed much better as an ethical and moral human since I let go of trying to be religious.

I should have put it down and backed away as soon as I realized the lady was unaware that categorizing parents is not all that different from the labels of popular, geek, brainiac, etc. with which she supposedly wants to help kids cope.

Elisha Condie says

Well, this isn't the type of book I would normally pick up but my sister in law loves it and so I requested it and it came right away.

I like a lot of the author's ideas about how little kids don't need every gadget and gizmo out there (she seriously hates iPods), and kids need to have a strong sense of who they are and be comfortable with it.

Yes, yes, that's all good. She thinks kids who aren't trying to be cool are geeks, and that's what we should all hope our kids grow up to be. Happy, secure, intelligent, well rounded geeks.

But this author started to really drive me insane - she's so *smug*! She'll reference childhood development experts (which she always puts in quotation marks) and then say things like "Well, I'm no expert but that is just NOT true. My kids do the opposite and they're great!". Tra la la. She paints such a rosy picture of her home life that it just really started to make her lose credibility with me. She touches on how some rules make her kids angry - but only briefly. They soon come around to see how right she really is. *Really*, Mrs. Hicks? So, I give this book 3 stars because I liked the ideas, although it could have been a lot shorter and I am pretty sure that everything isn't as easy as she makes it seem. I like people to be *honest*.

Brandi D'angelo says

If you are feeling a like a ship without a rudder in the sea of parenting, this book will help. You may not agree with each 'rule,' but there is a lot of sage advice on managing electronics, encouraging reading, boosting brain power, instilling morals, building faith and more. I appreciated that **Marybeth Hicks** gave concrete advice and examples. For example, in the area of electronics (Chapter 'Rule #2'.) she lists 9 of her family's rules such as no instant messaging, no electronics until homework & chores are completed, etc.

Obviously, parents with compliant, easy, "geek" children, will probably not read this book, so those of us who have more challenging children will find some of these recommendations very tough. However, I think this book will serve as a helpful guidepost.

