

# 'Reasonable' Is The New Black - Finally!



By *Jamie Wells, M.D.* — October 20, 2016



Did the sea part? The Earth spin off its axis?

Or, am I just dreaming that the rebirth of joy and humor and common sense and reasonableness could be the latest trend in parenting? Pinch me, please.

What's next? Strangers will start to assume I actually look like a doctor?! Well, a girl can dream. But, I digress.

After more than a decade of practicing pediatric medicine in Manhattan, I can speak ad nauseam to the generalized anxiety many new mothers suffer due to the constant and endless barrage of scaremongering messages leveled at them.

It's like daily, even hourly, dodgeball today. With no recess! No free play.

Luckily, some groups are standing up to the non-stop panic produced by companies selling products, or groups selling beliefs, all designed to keep moms terrified they aren't doing a very good job at raising kids if they allow this food or that sippy cup in their homes. I was at the event for one of them, [Reasonable Moms Unite](#) <sup>[1]</sup> sponsored by the [Independent Womens Forum](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, and I have to tell you it was refreshing to see moms Julie Gunlock, Jenny Splitter, Bethany Mandel and Lenore Skenazy assuring other moms that it's okay to be sensible.

Naturally, when you have a child, you carry a whole new weight of worry not previously known. Sleep deprivation, lifestyle adjustments and a noble, compelling drive to create a perfect world abound.

There is the twenty-four hour news cycle reporting constant threats. Social media. Mommy chats. Infant classes that start at zero months. Inane product saturation. Over scheduling. Preschools verifying financial statements and recommendations. Lotteries for applications to

those preschools.

Sifting through the limitless fear-generating information can be paralyzing when motivated by the desire to do the absolute best for one's child at all times. In fact, this demographic of new mother is perpetually exploited. Fear sells. "Could you be hurting your baby" is a go to sentiment for the profiteers.

You are unsafe in your house. Leaving your house. Eating. This is evil. That is toxic.

Chasing fads is often the greatest actual risk. It prevents living.

No, you don't need a "dream team" to come train you to put your child to sleep for an obscene fee. Speak to your pediatrician - the person who knows you and your child. No, you don't need the perfect diapering technique by every caretaker every time. If the urine and poop don't leak out, then good enough!

Sometimes there are problems to every solution and not the other way around. Penis teepees for the off chance your son squirts you with urine need not be a separate purchase. Placing the diaper over the area for cover is more than good enough! And, if unsuccessful, what a gem of a story you can torture him with later in life?! That's the good stuff.

The moment she puked on you in the grocery store line and other customers pitched in to help is the good stuff. This is the memory you will laugh at one day during a moment a laugh is desperately needed.

"Rightness" doesn't get a special reward. Sparing all hurdles and exposures will not guarantee an Ivy league acceptance and extraordinary or contented adult.

"Don't do anything wrong" is a mantra in need of maligning. There is no panacea. There, I said it. What is "right" for one child and one family, is not necessarily so for another.

Classes about classes. Prevention of prevention. Educating about education. "Revolutionary" and "disruptive" marketing terms to demand moms fit into a specified box. One-size-fits-all identity-driven CEO-level mothering is suffocating families.

Let's be clear: The attributes requisite to run a fortune 100 company are not necessarily transferable to raising a well-adjusted, independent child replete with considerably healthy coping skills and a capacity for lifelong happiness.

Helicopter Parenting. Free Range Parenting. Tiger Mom. Will we ever start to embrace the label-less dress? News Flash: Every child need not be (and cannot be) precisely parented. Individualism is okay. No mother is the same. No moment is either. Circumstances warrant hovering while others laissez faire. Extremes in moderation.

The consequences of these societal Debbie Downers is not to be underestimated. First, succumbing is an expensive endeavor. Second, [chronic high stress](#) [3] has physical and mental costs which I have extensively written about [here](#) [4]. For parent and child. Third, doctor's office visits are being hijacked by debunking falsehoods instead of emphasizing how to nurture a resilient and adaptable child into adulthood. The list goes on...

Thinking and behaving always in absolutes is often referred to as “splitting” in psychiatry. Dr. Marcia Kraft Goin, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry & The Behavioral Sciences at the Keck School of Medicine of USC, once wrote “Splitting, archetypally imbedded in a patient’s psychic structure, acts as a powerful unconscious force to protect against the ego’s perception of dangerous anxiety and intense affects. Rather than providing real protection, splitting leads to destructive behavior and turmoil in patient’s lives, and the often confused reactions manifested by those who try to help.” (1)

Our current culture demands definitive answers and narratives (e.g. sound bites) that rarely tell the full story and perpetuate untruths at rapid speed. Our instant gratification obsession does us a tremendous disservice in getting a clear picture of events, understanding concepts and aptly informing us.

I applaud the Independent Women’s Forum for sponsoring the “Reasonable Moms UNITE” event I attended in Washington, DC last night. The talk was entitled “How to fight the culture that demands we worry about everything!” Their mission is to reject the “good mom” and “bad mom” labels and eliminate shaming by invoking “The Reasonable Mom” new umbrella brand. (2)

Sometimes it’s ok to take a breath. Being comfortable in the stillness catapults anxiety from your present. Obviously, be sensible. But, don’t forget every now and then to step back and appreciate the big picture. The wondrous ride of parenting is fleeting— so, try your best to enjoy your child’s childhood.

It is not a race or competition. You will surpass many personal expectations while not meeting others. If you are open to it, then the serendipity that results might even be better than what you imagined.

Here’s to hoping reasonableness and moderation go viral. It might just be the therapeutic intervention we need.

#### NOTES:

(1) <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/borderline-personality/borderline-personality-disorder-splitting-countertransference-0> [5]

(2) In the spirit of my motto that often laughter is the best medicine, ACSH's fearless President, Hank Campbell, tweeted this photo from last night's event captioning it: "You know who's a downer? Anti-science scaremongers. You know who's fun? Reasonable Moms!"



**WE DECLARE NO  
CONFLICT OF  
INTEREST IN THIS  
PHOTO**

**FOR  
ORGANIC FOOD**

**WE ARE SHILLS  
WE EAT GMOS  
WE VACCINATE  
EXPECT IIS**

**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2016/10/20/reasonable-new-black-finally-10333>

**Links**

[1] <http://iwf.org/reasonable-moms>

[2] <http://iwf.org/>

[3] <http://acsh.org/news/2016/09/30/hillary-clinton-vs-donald-trump%C2%A0-who%E2%80%99s-got-stamina-10234>

[4] <http://acsh.org/news/2016/10/13/don%E2%80%99t-go-breaking-my-heart-literally-10291>

[5] <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/borderline-personality/borderline-personality-disorder-splitting-countertransference-0>