



## TCS: It Is Rocket Science!

Submitted by Alice Bachini on 26 September, 2003 - 17:15

### Alice Bachini



Take two families.

The Cool family happen to be not rich, but phenomenally clever. They have TVs. They have computers. They have playstations. They have a vast and fascinating social circle of people of all ages and interests and ideas. They have a beautiful home (maybe it's a caravan, whatever). They travel the world, they are genius cooks, builders, technologists, businesspeople, mathematicians, boat-builders, whatever. They make me sick, but that's my hangup: really, I want to be like them. I'm going to make friends with them and pick up a few ideas about how it's done.

OK, then there's the Rubbish family. They live in a trailer-park called 8 Mile. Except, they don't have a trailer, just an old leaky tent. Their twelve kids live on pizza-remains garnered from the rubbish bins. They don't know how to do anything at all. They can't even heat up baked-beans properly, even if they had a cooker. They're all-round generally useless, whatever.

Right, so, now let's make the Rubbish family TCS, and the Cool family extremely coercive evil bigots about children.

The Cool family bans their kids from playing with everything except a box of organic crayons, homeschools them via correspondence study courses they hate, chained to their desks in the garage, and forces them to do slave-labour (chores) until bedtime. The Rubbish family helps their kids to find better slices of pizza in the trailer park garbage bins. They encourage their kids to learn things from local friends who know interesting and useful skills, such as how to make up rap songs and mend cars. I'm having trouble here... there's not a lot of creativity around in 8 Mile. Some of their friends have TVs – that's good – and a few books. The parents, being totally and utterly ignorant, despite their good intentions, basically have to find other people to teach their kids things they don't know themselves, such as... reading. Except, they're crap at socialising, too.

The moral is: even if you live in a trailer park and know nothing, you can start trying to improve life and helping your kids. But even if you are rich and laden with creative opportunities, if you deny them to your kids, they're not going to benefit from them.

Actually, that's not the moral I was intending to set out at all. The moral I wanted to set out was, it's one thing to start trying to improve life, and quite another to succeed at that enterprise, and establish a routine for your whole family where everyone is creatively growthful and satisfied. Kids rummaging all day for old pizza crusts are not going to be having as good as life as kids who have access to the best that human knowledge has to offer. It's a complete lie that children get as much fun and learning out of a couple of pieces of balsa wood as they do out of a Playstation. Six weeks of crust-hunting are enough for anyone: eventually, one wants to move on. And if parents have no idea how to facilitate that, it ain't gonna be easy making it happen.

Now let's say the Cool family is the TCS family. Hey! Their kids have a great life! No poverty, dry clothes every morning, nobody getting shot outside their front door, no drunk abusive neighbours threatening them and proper delicious food to eat!

Knee-jerking to every problem one's child presents as it happens is not enough. Pro-active parenting is about building plentiful creative systems for growth, not just not-preventing kids from accessing such systems as there happen to be by coincidence already. How do we do that? To some extent, we already are, of course. We find gym classes, help promote childhood friendships, look for toys they enjoy, seek out good things they will love in ongoing ways. We work out how to help them eat, sleep, stay healthy, in ways which don't involve hurting them, and we work out how to help them learn as well. As many and as good ways as possible, in every aspect of their life that they are liable to want to explore. We build good, communication-rich, close friendships with them, which enable us to understand their preferences better and help them increasingly effectively. And the more and better we do this, the further we grow away from the kinds of problems that we used to find impossible to solve; the problems that occurred in creativity-poor situations.

Pro-active parenting means helping kids before they are in any danger of being coerced: it's about establishing a great life for them to explore and enjoy, in the form of family institutions (habits, customs, knowledge, systems, social network) which they will, of course, grow beyond (and help to grow!) themselves, as time goes by. Happily occupied kids are not bashing each other. Bashing isn't a happy occupation.

Or, as Johnny English said, "You won't get stuck if you just keep moving, I can assure you." If the first stage of TCS is for parents to keep helping kids when they're stuck (at risk of being coerced),

the second stage of TCS is for parents to enable kids not to get stuck (at risk of being coerced) in the first place. Is this easy? It's about as easy as it was for humans to get to the moon for the first time ever. But the way to get to the moon isn't just to wait for things to get in the way and then work round them one by one (although, that's important too): it's by building a spaceship and making it work.

Well, what are you waiting for? Pass the dilithium crystals!

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## Comments

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*Submitted by Dollar Store Kyle (not verified) on 7 January, 2005 - 04:41*

Well, I don't have much to comment on this so far. I certainly agree with the philosophy TCS is trying to communicate through this article here. My only input on this is that I hope that in this article there isn't any sort of attempt to stereotype that families that work on TCS will be the most successful and that parents whom don't take heed to TCS are 'extremely coercive evil bigots'. I wouldn't be surprised if that were often the case, and this program is highly effective, but I still don't think that gives any justification to stereotype (in case that was what you were doing). I could be misunderstanding something, though.

Please visit the dollar store, -Kyle

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