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## The Taking Children Seriously List

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 11 July, 2003 - 10:43

**Sarah Fitz-Claridge** (<http://www.fitz-claridge.com/>).

The Taking Children Seriously List is a forum for the discussion of TCS parenting/education theory and practice, and for the support of parents trying to improve their lives and the lives of their children in part by making their interactions with their children consensual (that is, consensual in the sense of wholehearted *consent*, not ‘*consensus*’).

All parents ideally want their interactions with their children to be pleasant and consensual, and all parents coerce their children only when (they think it) absolutely necessary. The problem is that we all disagree about when it is necessary, as we discovered when we conducted the **TCS Survey**. On the TCS List, we try to create new knowledge and improve our ability to solve problems in ways that everyone involved positively prefers. “Everyone involved” includes the parents too, not just their children. TCS is not about parents gritting their teeth and self-sacrificing for their children. It is not about compromise, in which each person gives up something and no one is very happy with the outcome, it is about creating something better.

That is what is so exciting about TCS: those moments when we succeed in creating a better idea, a better frame of mind, a better atmosphere, a better action, a better way of being together, can be mind-blowing as you suddenly see something you could not see before.

Sometimes, of course, being the fallible human beings we are, we start feeling terrible guilt, the more we realise all the ways we have harmed our children. If you start to feel terrible about past mistakes, remind yourself that the fact that you can see what you could not see before means that you are objectively a better person than you were before. **Sarah Fitz-Claridge** (<http://www.fitz-claridge.com/>).

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OK, so now you feel guilty because even though you can see that you have been doing x or y that has been harming your children, you have not been able to change x or y. If it were that easy to make such changes, there would be no need for TCS in the first place. Seeing something in theory, as it were, and making changes in practice, are two different things, and changing the practice involves a lot more knowledge creation. It is difficult. Don't beat yourself up for not being able to jump instantly to a state of perfect knowledge in all things. All any of us can do is to start from where we are and keep striving to improve in every possible way. See [this article](#) for more on this.

Please be aware that although the TCS List is not a public website, we have no way to make it *securely* private, so please assume that anything you post on the TCS List might be permanently available on the internet. Take great care not to write anything that might embarrass your child later when he or she is running for President of the United States or whatever. In many cases parents themselves have later regretted bitterly having posted something. You will not be able to delete something you post later, so do not post unless you are in a calm state of mind. Delay posting for as long as it takes for you to be in a calm state of mind. That way you will be less likely to regret having posted later.

The TCS List has been very controversial over the years, because we welcome criticism. Being fallible human beings – and in many cases horribly sleep-deprived and frazzled as well as desperately wanting to be the best possible parents for our beloved children – we parents can find even the most kindly-meant criticism deeply painful. It is so difficult to bear the thought of harming our children, and we all try so hard to do the right thing, that criticism can feel very wounding. Please understand that the intention of the criticism posted on the TCS List is to help us improve as parents and try to take it in that spirit. Sometimes, it helps to come back to criticism after a few days or a week or a month or more. Sometimes, the second or third time you read it, you can ‘hear’ it better than the first time you read it.

When reading the TCS List, keep in mind that those criticising your posts are, in their own lives, making many mistakes. Don't imagine that those criticising have perfect lives, perfect relationships, are perfectly non-coercive in all things, have a halo over their head, and certainly never ever do the wrong thing. We are all in the same boat. It is just sometimes much easier to come up with better ideas when you aren't in the thick of things. It is easier to see others' mistakes than it is to see your own. That is true for all of us. That is why we try to help each other by offering criticism.

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