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Bike Riding And Present Wrapping

By Mac Bledsoe

A little examination of two behaviors, which are learned almost universally by all Americans, reveals some shocking information about the effectiveness of some of the teaching techniques that we choose to use to educate our children.

In the last six months we have been conducting a little informal survey as we travel across America, and it has yielded some very interesting and very thought provoking data. We hope that sharing this information with you might stimulate some serious thought about what you choose to teach your children and especially some thought about some of the techniques that we all use in teaching life's important lessons to the next generation.

During this six month time period we have asked literally tens of thousands of Americans if they know how to ride a bicycle and we have found only two women and one man whom cannot! We have also asked that same large sample of Americans if they wrapped presents at Christmas and gave them to loved ones, and we have found only thirteen men and seven women whom did not perform that loving task! (And it was not because they did not know how, but rather because they had decided not to for moral or religious reasons.) So, you say, what has amazed us about this data? Simply this... bike riding and present wrapping at Christmas are both learned behaviors! You are probably still saying, "so what?" Well, it appears to us that we, as a society, are doing a masterful job of teaching both of those behaviors with almost total universality! We have succeeded in teaching almost everyone in America to ride bikes and wrap presents at Christmas. And yet, we have left other, seemingly much more critical behaviors like honesty, integrity, teamwork, compassion, reliability, respect for private property, respect for diversity, diligence, love, manners, and many other critical behaviors, to be taught much less universally and much less effectively!

It has occurred to us that it might be interesting to examine both of those behaviors (bike riding and present wrapping) to see why we are so successful in teaching those activities. And, more importantly, perhaps we could learn a little bit more about being more successful at teaching life's more critical lessons.

Bike Riding And Present Wrapping

How do we teach kids to ride bikes? They do not learn to ride bikes by reading a manual. They do not learn to ride a bike by listening to us talk about how to do it. And, they surely do not learn to ride a bike by watching us do it! Kids learn to ride a bike when we put them on the seat and turn them loose! They learn by experience and they want to learn because we paint such an exciting picture of how great it will be when they do learn. And what do we do when they tip over or fall down? We pick them up, dust them off, give them encouragement and instruction and put them back on the seat to try again. Sometimes we might give them some training wheels or run along beside them to offer occasional assistance but the learning comes because they are on the seat with the handlebars in their hands.

How well do you think that kids would do at learning to ride bikes, if the first time they fell off we ran to them, scolded them for falling off, and then told them how disappointed we were with their failure, took the bike away, grounded them for three weeks, and sent them to their rooms to think about how to ride a bike. Do you think that technique would bring about a society with only a few people in thousands who can not ride bikes? We sincerely doubt it.

Why, then, do we think that we can teach responsibility by scolding kids, grounding them and taking away further chances for being responsible and sending them to their room? Shouldn't we "put 'em back on the seat?" Should we not "pick them up, dust them off, give them some encouragement and instruction in responsibility and then, as soon as possible, give them another chance to be responsible?"

Should not a child who has acted cruelly to another child be given instruction in kindness, encouragement that we believe in their kind nature, and then, immediately be given another opportunity to be kind?

Now, let's take a quick look at present wrapping and gift exchanging at Christmas. Why are we so successful at teaching this rather complex and wonderful act of love, kindness, joy, and sharing? We succeed at this task for many of the same reasons that we succeed in teaching kids to ride bikes... we let kids learn by experience. Even before they are old enough to understand much about what is happening to them, we begin letting them experientially know about gifts by giving them some. We continue to let them have experience by giving them gifts every year and then as soon as possible we let them experience the thrill of giving from the other side of the coin by helping them to wrap gifts for others. On top of all that experience, we make present wrapping into a huge pageant of excitement. We start counting down the days until the big day... "Only 72 shopping days left." Our whole society talks, with excitement and anticipation, about the Christmas spirit and the magic of the upcoming event. And, SURPRISE, they all end up gladly participating in the behavior every year.

What if we, as a total society, were to celebrate ethnic diversity with the same degree of joy, ceremony, anticipation, and enthusiasm as we assign to giving gifts at Christmas? Interesting to ponder what might happen in the next generation.

We believe that a simple adjustment in priorities by our society might bring about some amazing and welcome changes in the behavior of the youth in America. (Hey, it might even bring some welcome changes in adult behaviors.) We believe that we as parents, and as a society as a whole, can do this if

we choose to, but communities like yours all across this great land must commit to it. What behaviors would you like to see being taught universally in your community?

Mac Bledsoe, founder and President of Parenting With Dignity®, lectures to parents organizations, youth groups, in schools and churches across America. Mr. Bledsoe and PWD have been featured on the TODAY Show, ABC's 20/20 show, and on numerous national and local radio and television programs. Visit PWD at:

<http://www.parentingwithdignity.com/>

The 10 Bike Shop Customer Etiquette Commandments

By Levi Bloom

This article was inspired by all those things customers do that really irritate bike shop owners and employees. I decided to create this list of commandments for you to follow.

1. Thou shall buy from nowhere before your local bike shop.
2. WD-40 shall not be applied as chain lube.
3. Keep frequent thy visits to the local bike shop.
4. Thou shall not park your Mercedes in front of the store and then attempt to haggle the price on a \$350 bike.
5. Thou first bike may come from Wal-Mart, but that is it.
6. Thou wert never "just riding along."
7. If thou wert "just riding along," do not expect thou crumpled frame and bent wheels to be covered under warrantee.
8. Thou shall not request solid tubes or at least ask for them to be fixed.
9. If thou wish to get a good deal on a tube by talking to "Rick," maybe you should just see Rich. (If you happen to be in Lincoln, Nebraska, that is.)
10. Thou shall not quote mail-order catalogs in the shop.

If you are a customer, don't be offended, I am partly joking! What fun would a bike shop be without some funny/odd/amusing/stupid events every day?

Thanks go out to Bloom Bike Shop, The Bike Barn, and Bike Pedalers bike shops for their input.

Bike Riding And Present Wrapping

This article was written by Levi Bloom in 2004 and originally appeared on

<http://bloombikeshop.com>

Check out his site for more bike and health related information.

The 10 Bike Shop Customer Etiquette Commandments

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