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Mutants or Clones?

By Jeffrey D. Murrah, LPC

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In a single dose of children's television, I was bombarded with themes of mutants, cyborgs, evolving and the digital world. These words intimidated me at first, until I learned what the shows were talking about. I wondered how this prepares children for living in the 21st century. The answer hit me when I came across the saying, "Don't Clone...Mutate."

For those not familiar with the new language, a few definitions are in order. A clone is an exact replica of the original source. Clones are trained to mindlessly conform. Success and failure are based on how well the clone conforms rather than on the clone's accomplishments and abilities. A mutant is someone or something that has changed from the original source. Mutants are evaluated on their abilities and accomplishments.

In raising children, some parents behave as if training clones. There are some ways to tell if one is raising clones. Children are expected to engage in sports and activities just because their parents did. Children are expected to have the same taste in music as their parents. Phrases like "it's my way or the highway" are frequently heard. Teens are steered toward specific vocations because that is what their parents did. Personal needs and preferences of family members are set aside to 'keep the peace.' Children report feeling 'invisible 'or 'like a robot.' Children are viewed as smaller versions of the parents. Problems within the family are never solved, but rather avoided. In some cases, there are no new problems, but the same one occurring over and over again. Children's efforts at independence are met with predictions of catastrophe.

The way to stop 'cloning' is to train children to mutate. 'To mutate' means to be able to adjust to change, to be flexible or resilient, to become an individual. Some of the steps parents can take to 'individuate' or 'mutate' are: Encourage children to try 'new' things. This could be new sports, food, books or adventures. Encourage your child in developing a hobby of their choice. Show an interest in developing the hobby. Don't just pay it lip service, find out about the hobby. From my sons, I have developed my knowledge of baseball, sharks, trains, and wildlife that I would not otherwise have.

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Allow your child to make choices appropriate for their age. Practice working through problems rather than imposing solutions. Use the question "What other solutions could there be to this problem?" Confront setbacks with "Failure is something you do, not who you are."

Raising children to change and adapt to change is threatening to some parents, because it emphasizes responsibility rather than control. Adapting to changes means taking the risk of 'letting go' of some of the control. I often use the metaphor that it is easier to steer a car in motion, than one sitting still. Likewise, it is easier to direct your children when they are trying new things, than when they are behaving like a robot.

Jeffrey D. Murrah, LPC, LMFT, LCDC is The Results–Oriented Therapist specializing in marriage and family conflicts. Visit

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New X Men Movie Rounds Out Series Well

By Jonathon Hardcastle

The new X–Men movie, X–Men: The Last Stand, has caused quite the stir among comic book enthusiasts and the average moviegoer. While many rabid X–Men comic readers found some dislike in the film, someone who is just out looking for a good way to spend two hours can find some serious entertainment value in this trilogy–ending film.

X–Men: The Last Stand picks up exactly where the last film left off. Jean Gray, played by Famke Janssen, is dead following a confrontation in a remote military base. This leaves Cyclops, played by James Marsden, distraught and unsure if he can continue leading the team of mutants. To the delight of many fans, Wolverine is back, with Hugh Jackman delivering a performance well worthy of the series he helped form. Also returning are Patrick Stewart as Professor X and Ian McKellen as the anti–hero Magneto. New to the films are the heroes Angel and the Beast. These characters help to add a dynamic to the X–men, with Kelsey Grammar delivering a stellar performance as the Beast.

The main conflict throughout the film is the development of a new drug that 'cures' mutants, causing them to lose all of their unique abilities and allowing them to be completely human. While this is a breath of fresh air for some mutants, such as the young Rogue who wants to be able to touch others, other mutants that are led by Magneto feel that there is no need for a cure, and that they, in fact, are the cure for humanity. This ignites a war over the philosophy of whether or not the drug should be an option for mutants. It is a rather deep underlying theme for a film that you would expect less from. Action–packed, the film weighs in at under 2 hours, which may be one of its few short–comings. There's barely any slow parts to the film, and you are instead barraged by scene–after–scene of high intensity.

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There's a lot going on in this film; the filmmakers could've easily stretched it into a 3 hour epic. A standout performance is given by McKellan, since through his acting you can truly see the struggle that the villain faces, showing that Magneto's ideals truly do have some consideration underneath them. While the movie isn't perfect, its as close to perfect as you can hope for from a series that only seems to get better each and every film.

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