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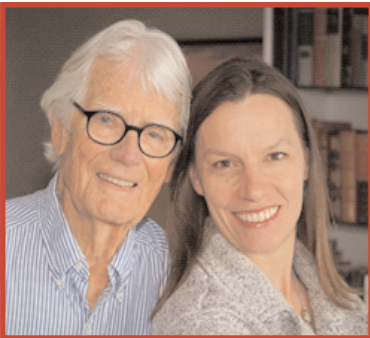
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The Doctor Game Millennials Opting Out of Having Children

W. Gifford-Jones, M.D. and Diana Gifford-Jones
A Moroccan proverb claims, If a man leaves little children behind him, it is as if he did not die. A Sanskrit saying translates as, A house without children is only a cemetery. Having children may be central to sustained human life. But over the past several years, there has

been a crescendo of voices arguing for restraint. The most fervent views are expressed by women concerned about climate change.

We know some couples decide on a childless marriage in exchange for personal freedom. Others worry about the risk of a difficult child or the effect of a child on an unhappy marriage. And there are other reasons people opt out of parenthood. As Napoleon Bonaparte concluded while in exile on the island of St. Helena, Children are always ungrateful.

The BirthStrike Movement is an activist group choosing to forgo having children to protect them from worsening social, economic, and environmental conditions. They may be right that deciding not to have children is possibly one of the most effective way individuals can cut their own carbon emissions. According to analysts at Morgan Stanley, Having a child is 7-times worse for the climate in CO2 emissions annually than the next 10 most discussed mitigants that individuals can do.

There does seem to be a trend among Millennials away from having children. But aside from the activists, do young people have a generalized concern about the consequences of climate change, enough to change the urge for children? Or has something else happened?

It is undoubtedly a great injustice to subject innocent children to the hazards of a polluted, poisonous planet. Can you blame would-be parents for opting out when scientists raise alarms that their children will encounter more floods, droughts, fires, tornadoes, and famine, fight wars over water, land and other resources, and that economic crises will lead to social chaos?

There are other considerations that affect fertility rates. For instance, having a child can send a woman's career into the abyss. A study from the University of Massachusetts examining data from 1979 to 2006 found that, on average, men earn 6 percent more when they had children (and lived with them), while women earn 4 percent less for every child. More recent studies show the same. In 2019, a study using data from the US census found mothers earned 71 cents for every dollar earned by fathers. Women have a justified right to complain.

Friendships can also take a hit. A survey of 1000 parents revealed almost half of moms and dads had fewer friends after children were born. In addition, there was less marital satisfaction.

CivicScience, a polling platform, adds another depressing note. They analyzed one million responses and concluded that non-parents lead healthier lifestyles, sleep longer, exercise more, drink less coffee, smoke less, avoid fast food restaurants, and were less overweight.

But what about the health benefits of parenthood. There is good news for women, including decreased risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding lowers the chance of type 2 diabetes. And a University of California study reports that for children born to mothers over age 25, there's an 11 percent greater chance of living to 90.

Finally, does having children mean parents are happier and less lonely later in life? Researchers in Germany found that parents tend to be happier than non-parents in old age, but this only holds if their kids have moved out! Older people without children get similar rewards to those having children, it seems, by maintaining any close social connections that share their issues and concerns.

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TAXPAYERS' OMBUDSPERSON RECOMMENDS WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION FROM THE CANADA REVENUE AGENCY



The Taxpayers' Ombudsman, Mr. François Boileau, released The Lockout: Communication Was the Key. This report examined the communications the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) provided to taxpayers after it locked out some users from their CRA accounts in mid-February 2021 in an effort to protect accounts that could have been compromised. Many affected taxpayers expressed concerns about the lack of clear and timely communication from the CRA.

When CRA account users were locked out, the CRA should have been ready with a clear and useful communication strategy to address the concerns of confused, worried and frustrated taxpayers. As a result of the lack of communi-

cation from the CRA, our Office opened an examination to analyze the CRA's communication approach and to determine whether there were opportunities for service improvement. Clear communication should have been the CRA's primary concern after safeguarding taxpayer information. Our aim is to ensure that a similar situation does not happen in the future.

The report includes five recommendations to the Minister of National Revenue and the Chair of the CRA's Board of Management:

The CRA should review its communications processes to make sure it proactively inform Canadians about issues that could affect them.

The CRA should ensure its web page alerts always provide current information.

The CRA should ensure that it always provides a link for more information to a Government of Canada web page from its social media posts.

The CRA should make the information it provides to media outlets available to Canadians at the same time.

The CRA should make sure it has adaptable plans to communicate emerging issues effectively.

The Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman works independently from the CRA. People can submit complaints to the Office if they feel they are not receiving the appropriate service from the CRA. Our main objective is to improve the service CRA provides to taxpayers and benefit recipients by reviewing individual service complaints, as well as service issues that affect more than one person or a segment of the population.

The Taxpayers' Ombudsman assists, advises and informs the Minister of National Revenue about matters relating to services provided by the CRA. The Ombudsman ensures, in particular, that the CRA respects eight of the service rights outlined in the Taxpayer Bill of Rights.

"Being transparent with Canadians is incredibly important. When affected CRA account users were locked out, the CRA should have been ready with a clear and useful communication strategy so worried and frustrated Canadians would not have needed to call the CRA. Situations like this should not happen in the future." Mr. François Boileau, Taxpayers' Ombudsman

Direct Answers

from Wayne & Tamara

UNALIENABLE RIGHTS

Five years ago I married someone wonderful. Two years ago I had my son, our first child. I gave up my job to stay with the baby, and now I am a full-time, stay at home mom. My son is wonderful, but I feel cheated and upset that I'm no longer independent. I now have to ask my husband for everything, including money for underwear, which I find upsetting. He sees nothing wrong with this. I've handled my own money from the age of 15, and I'm now 27. Everything he wants seems important and needed, whereas what I want is second or not important.

A month ago, I asked for money for new clothes. He said the amount was outrageous, and he had things around the house that needed to be done. I haven't said anything since. A few weeks ago, he told me he's having a rack made for his Jeep. Is this at all fair?

It seems all I'm here for is to cook his meals and look after our son. I feel neglected and taken for granted. I was told by my mother-in-law that my place is in the home caring for my husband and son. I am lost as to my purpose in life. Every time I try to talk about how I feel, my husband says I'm being negative. I feel I'm about to go completely mad.

Raine

Raine, each of us needs to grow and expand, to express what is in us. If we cannot do this, our feelings and frustrations will surface in ways which are destructive to ourselves and others. You are not being negative. You feel your husband is trying to keep you in a diminished or child-like role. We understand just how vital this issue is for you. First, decide what your goal is. Do you want a certain amount of money to spend at your discretion? To return to work? Or to have joint decision making about all expenditures?

Once you have decided, tell your husband how important this issue is to the survival of your marriage. You need to make your husband face this issue because your happiness, and his, depend on it. The Declaration of Independence says that among the unalienable rights of men are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." People need to find happiness. There is nothing trivial about finding fulfillment. It is in our nature to do so.

All the pain in this world is caused by unhappy, thwarted, frustrated people. Happy people don't hurt other people. They enrich the planet and bring fulfillment to others. That is why your happiness is so important.

Wayne

WRONG NUMBER

A good friend stood me up one night after I changed plans for him. I got mad and prank called him about four times on my phone. He will ask me why I did this. What do I respond? I am thinking of lying and making up some story or changing my cell phone number. What should I do?

Kim

Kim, you had good reason to be angry, and there is nothing wrong with the honest, appropriate expression of anger. You might have gone to a driving range and driven golf balls until you vented your feelings, or thrown darts at a dartboard, or kneaded bread dough until you felt the anger subsiding.

But you didn't. You took out your feelings in a way which was directed at the person who deliberately stood you up. Don't lie or change your phone number. Let your friend know it was you, and why you did what you did.

It would have been better to speak to your friend directly, but when we are upset, we often don't take the wisest course. However, I would not apologize. When you apologize, you minimize what he did and make it more acceptable.

Wayne & Tamara

Write: Directanswers@WayneAndTamara.com

Wayne & Tamara are also the authors of Cheating in a Nutshell, What Infidelity Does to the Victim, available from Amazon, Apple and most booksellers.