

# Better care beats 'Don't care' every time [CA]<sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Jacobs, Mindelle

**Source:** Edmonton Sun

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 21 Apr 2001

## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Those noises you hear - the screaming and stomping and flinging things across the room - mean there are temper tantrums all over the neighbourhood.

Loud, angry hissy fits. Sniping and snivelling. Swearing and sulking. And it's all because of day care.

Except it's not kids who are whining. It's their parents who have finally blown a gasket because they're fed up with so-called experts telling them how to raise their children.

The latest study, released this week, says that the more hours toddlers spend in day care, the more likely they are to exhibit behavioural problems.

"Not only were these children more likely to engage in assertive, defiant and even disobedient activities, but they were also more likely to bully, fight with or act mean to other children," reported the researchers from the U.S. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

But wait. There's more. The study also found that kids in day care showed better language skills and short-term memory by the age of four than other kids the same age.

Oh, dear. What are hard-working parents trying to balance careers and family supposed to do? Put the kids in day care and end up with bullies with superlative language abilities? (That could make for interesting playground brawls.)

Or have one parent quit work to raise the kids at home and nurture children who are nicer but lag behind in those all-important 21st-century communication skills?

Choices, choices. Which route is less likely to mean the kids will end up unemployable, drug-addicted or in jail? It's enough to drive any parent around the bend. Let's try another study. Put a bunch of parents in a room with a gaggle of day-care researchers and see what happens. When the dust settles, I figure, the researchers will have gotten the message loud and clear: Enough with the guilt trips.

If day care can sometimes be bad for a child, so can raising a child at home. Yes, there are day-care centres with unqualified workers, poor child-staff ratios and high turnover. There are also stay-at-home moms who plunk their kids in front of the TV all day and ignore them.

Child-rearing is not a one-size-fits-all job. Full-time parenting may suit some mothers but drive others into depression.

Just because a woman wants to work doesn't mean she's a bad mother. Who's the better parent - the woman who stays at home but resents every minute of it or the woman who has a job she loves and is a happier person for it?

Yet the rabid anti-day-care contingent would have you believe that if mommy doesn't stay home to raise little Joey, she's just plain selfish. Any alternative to the stay-at-home method of child-rearing is practically considered child abuse.

For some parents, though, there is no choice. For a single mother, it's often a matter of day care or welfare. For other families, having both parents work is the only way to fend off poverty. Perhaps one parent is going back to school. There are a myriad of reasons people choose day care and they don't care to be told they're bad parents.

They'll be happy to know, then, that this latest study is not as dire as it might sound. While kids who spend most of their time in day care are more aggressive, it's in the normal range, the researchers found.

Go figure. Kids in kindergarten can be demanding and disobedient. What a surprise. "I don't want to create a mass hysteria when I don't know what explains these results," the project's co-ordinator told the New York Times.

Gee, let's think about that for a minute. Could it be that day care itself doesn't turn some kids into bullies? What's happening in the kids' family lives? Maybe dad's beating mom. Or there are financial problems. Or the kids are watching too much TV. Or aggressiveness happens to be a family trait. Perhaps little Joey would turn out to be a bully even if he was raised at home.

So let's give poor parents a break and stop bashing day care. Here's a thought. How about making it better instead?

-Reprinted from The Edmonton Sun.

**Tags:** quality <sup>[2]</sup>

child development <sup>[3]</sup>

---

**Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/06/better-care-beats-dont-care-every-time-ca>

**Links**

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/06/better-care-beats-dont-care-every-time-ca> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/child-development>