

Returning to basics

Family psychologist Rosemond to present parenting workshop

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Today's parents may be having more difficulty raising children than previous generations because they are too obsessed with making their children happy.

That's the conclusion of parenting guru and nationally syndicated columnist John Rosemond, who appears every other Monday in The Advocate.

Rosemond is the featured speaker at a parenting conference Friday and Saturday at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Baton Rouge.

He is a family psychologist but doesn't agree with many of the parenting approaches offered by others in his field.

"Today's parents unwittingly subscribe to a lot of psychobabble," Rosemond said.

"They're very cautious in applying discipline. They think so much that they fail to act."

Rosemond said he favors the attitude of previous generations.

He discourages parents from making children the center of the family. Parents make the rules and strictly enforce them.

Their goal should not be building up their child's self-esteem, but rather creating adults able to function successfully in society on their own, he said.

"My philosophy is very traditional," Rosemond said. "It's a very back-to-basics, biblically based approach."

"I say that," he added, "but I don't thump the Bible."

He said his advice is applicable to everyone: secular parents and spiritual ones, married parents, single parents and stepparents. It's the same advice you might hear from grandparents or great-grandparents, he said.

He has been criticized, however, for many of his views, including those on spanking, attention deficit disorder and potty training.

In a recent Rosemond parenting column published in The Advocate, Rosemond addressed a research study on temper tantrums in children older than 3. The study looked at whether these tantrums were a sign of "psychological disturbances" within the children.

In the column, Rosemond said he believes tantrums should not be tolerated beyond the third birthday.

He sums up his feelings on this matter and mainstream psychology in general in one quote.

Rosemond writes, "... common sense has since drowned in a tsunami of psychobabble. It's no longer unusual for children as old as 6 to still be acting like little lunatics when they don't get their way. Thus the study."

Rosemond said that while "kings, queens, demigods and dictators" were once prone to tantrums, "Today the emperor/empress wears pull-ups."

Rosemond's humorous style has helped him become one of the most in-demand speakers on parenting and family issues in the country.

In fact, at the last parenting conference held at First Presbyterian Church in 2006, Rosemond led two segments. The rest were led by other experts from around the country.

Attendees wanted more of Rosemond, said Cheryl Lott, director of children's ministries at the church.

So, that's what they will get this weekend.

On the opening night of the conference, Rosemond will talk about "Assuming the Power of Parenthood."

The second day, he leads two sessions: "Parenting the Strong-willed Child" and "Parenting the Strong-willed Teen."

"The definition of strong-willed is you want your own way," Rosemond said. "Parents think it's a new thing, but Adam and Eve were strong-willed.

"They're just normal kids," he said.

Although he doesn't include a question-and-answer session when he speaks to larger groups, Rosemond said he will be available before and after his talks to speak individually with attendees.

Jill Rigby, Baton Rouge author of two parenting books and creator of "Manners of the Heart," a social training program, also will speak to conference attendees. Her topic is raising unselfish children in a self-absorbed world.

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