

## **Humor Me**

By Ronald P. Culberson

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### **“Do as I say, not as I do”**

Put some clothes on or you'll catch a cold. Take your feet off the coffee table; you weren't raised in a barn. You're going to put someone's eye out with that.

I grew up in the Land of Parental Clichés and Admonitions. No matter what I did, my parents churned out a never-ending repertoire of cautions and rebuttals. Yet their behavior did not always match their words.

Today, I have returned to the ways of my homeland. While I try to fight it, the genetic forces are too strong. I just can't walk the parental talk. I only hope that when my children are older, their therapists will help them understand that in spite of my best intentions, it was simply out of my control.

### **“Don't be such a baby.”**

I counted out five one-dollar bills as my son Ryan massaged the five-sided welt on the side of his face. It was a pay-for-performance arrangement.

Ryan, age 12, has always been a timid soccer player, overly concerned about getting hurt. He's fast as a cheetah (his favorite animal coincidentally) and has excellent ball skills but he slows and flinches if he thinks an opposing player might kick the ball into his face. So, to remedy his aggressophobia, I told Ryan I'd give him five dollars every time he got kicked in the face.

Last Sunday, he took a direct hit. Oh sure, he was stunned and temporarily left the game but later he returned more aggressive than ever. I plan to show him Mike Tyson videos next.

Fast forward six hours. I was showing a bunch of teenagers a trick in which I appear to smash my knuckles against the table. Accidentally, I smashed my knuckles against the table. The next day, I showed my wife my swollen and slightly purple fingers. She was unimpressed. I led her to another room with better light where I twisted my hand at just the right angle. She said she could “almost see” the disfigurement. She bet me five dollars that I couldn't go a week without showing her my knuckles again. I didn't need the money anyway.

### **“Don't talk with your mouth full.”**

Growing up in the south, mannerliness was next to Godliness. Yet, my son inherited a more Yankee style of dining. We constantly remind him to use a napkin, slow down and wipe the food off his face – since his underdeveloped facial nerves are apparently not alerting him of the need to do so. One night, after a particularly stressful day in the humor business, I watched my son describe his day while stuffing his mouth full of food.

I exploded. “How many times do I have to tell you? Don’t talk with your mouth full!”

At that very instant, half of a green bean slipped out of *my* mouth and fell into my lap. Luckily, he didn’t notice. I palmed the green bean and shoved it into the pocket of my jeans as my wife just shook her head. In case you’re wondering, green beans will actually meld with denim if left in your pocket for more than two days.

### **“Be respectful of your elders.”**

I’ve always told my children to respect those in charge. Whether a parent, teacher or volunteer soccer coach, I believe it’s important to respect authority. In fact, when my daughter was eight years old, I witnessed several girls mocking their coach while he tried to teach them a new skill. I said that if I ever saw her doing that, she would be grounded until college.

Last month, during my daughter’s soccer game, the head referee kept allowing an illegal throw-in even though the sideline referee continually raised his flag to signal the infraction. I yelled, “Side arm throw-in, side arm throw-in” several times alerting the ref to the missed call. After my third “reminder”, the ref walked over to me and said, “I make the calls. Now be quiet or you’re getting a red card.”

On the way home, my wife suggested I should be grounded. She thought that was very funny.

### **“Do as I say, Not as I do”**

Until my kids are out on their own, I won’t really know if my behavior has undermined the effectiveness of my words of wisdom. I can only hope that I’ve planted seeds which will one day sprout into the knowledge of doing the right thing.

Last night, my daughter said, “There’s nothing on TV.”

I said, “I’ve told you a million times not to exaggerate.”

Until next time, just humor me.

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