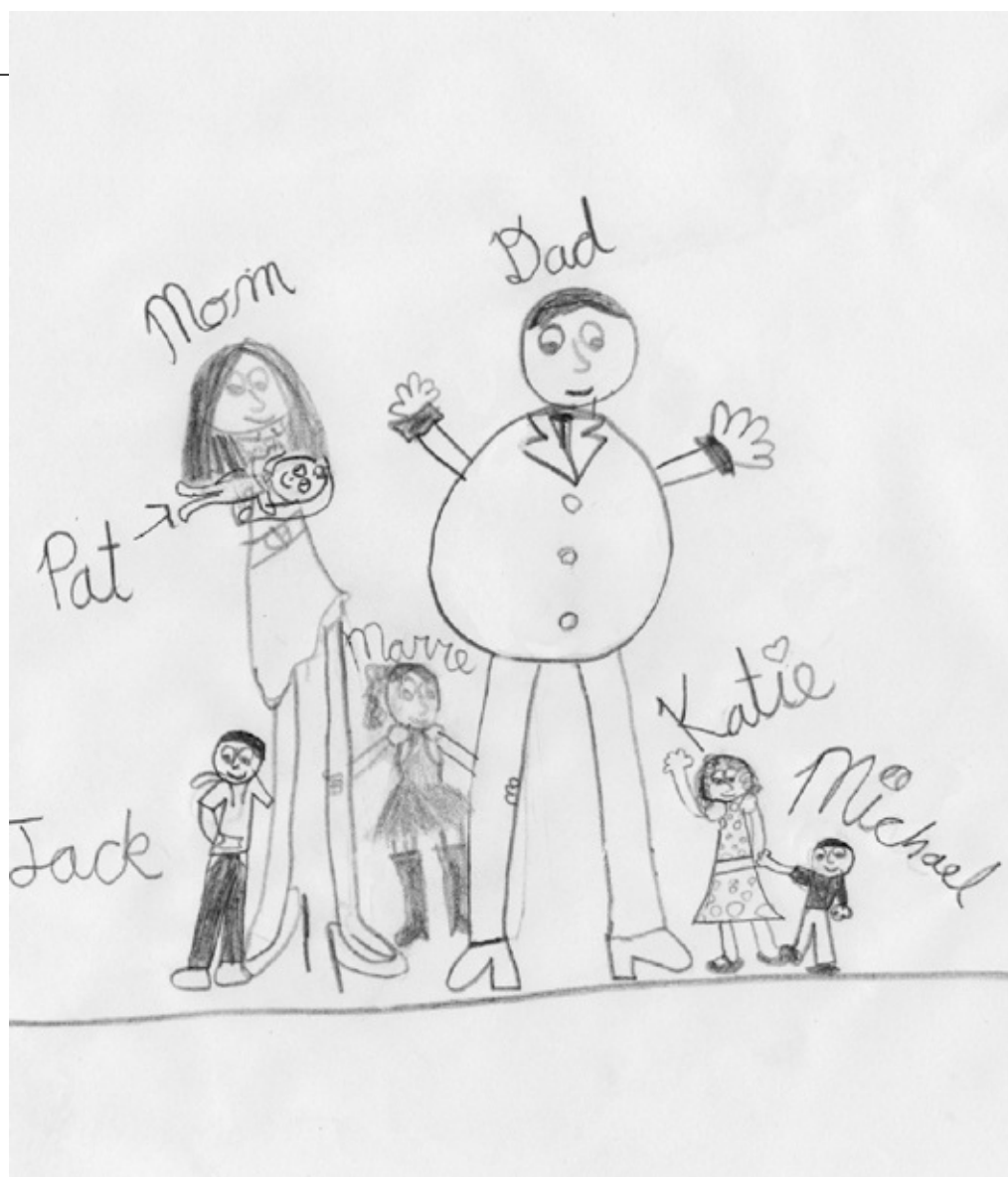


JIM GAFFIGAN

DAD IS
FART



DAD IS FAT

JIM GAFFIGAN



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Dedication and Acknowledgment

This book is dedicated to Jeannie.

For me it feels silly and possibly insulting “dedicating” this book to or “acknowledging” Jeannie here. It doesn’t do justice to Jeannie’s participation in *Dad Is Fat*. This book really was *our* book. Jeannie not only made me a father and a better comedian, she made me an author. Yes, she is a magic Jeannie. If you are a fan of Jeannie, you will hear her voice in this book. For your sake, I removed all of the yelling. The image of Jeannie sitting at her computer turning my insane drivel into coherent essays while breastfeeding newborn Patrick will stay with me forever. I don’t know how I got so lucky to have Jeannie as a writing partner, lover, and friend, but I scored big. She really has ended up being a fantastic first wife.



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Foreword

Jim Gaffigan wrote a book? Isn't he the Hot Pocket guy? I bet he regrets doing that joke. Hoooo Pooooockets! I guess that's funny to some people. Why would he write a book? Why would they let him write a book? He doesn't even seem like he's read a book before. Well, maybe a cookbook. Actually, he seems too lazy to cook. Maybe an eating book. I guess they let anyone write books now. That is if HE actually wrote this book. He probably just talked to some ghostwriter and they turned it into something readable. He looks like a ghost. Is he really that pale? I don't know what's going on with the cover and title. Dad Is Fat? I mean, obviously he's fat. Wait, is this the guy with like ten kids? Either way it's just weird to have so many kids today. I hope this isn't one of those complain-about-your-kids books or, even worse, one of those sappy "I love my kids" books. Ugh. Funny, I never say "ugh." Oh, I see what he's doing. He's talking for me, the reader. That's why it's italicized. I certainly wouldn't do that in the foreword of a book.

Letter to My Children

Dear Children,

I am your dad. The father of all five of you pale creatures. Given how attractive and fertile your mother is, there may be more of you by the time you read this book. If you are reading this, I am probably dead. I would assume this because I can honestly foresee no other situation where you'd be interested in anything I've done. Right now, you are actually more interested in preventing me from doing things like working, sleeping, and smiling. I'm kidding, of course. Kind of. I love you with all of my heart, but you are probably the reason I'm dead.

All right, you didn't kill me. Your mother did. She kept getting pregnant! I don't know how. Don't think about it. It will give you the willies. At one point, I was afraid she got pregnant while she was pregnant. She was so fertile I didn't even let her hold avocados. Anyway, this is a book all about what I observed being your dad when you were very young and I had some hair back in good old 2013.

So why a book? Well, since you've come into my life, you've been a constant source of entertainment while simultaneously driving me insane. I felt I had to write down my observations about you in a book. And also for money, so you could eat and continue to break things. By the way, I'm sorry I yelled so much and did that loud clapping thing with my hands. I hated when my dad would do the loud clapping thing with his hands, so every time I do the loud clapping thing, it pains me in many ways. Most of the pain is because that loud clapping thing actually hurts my hands.

You may be wondering how I wrote this book. From a very early age, you all instinctively knew I wasn't that bright of a guy. Probably from all the times you had to correct me when I couldn't read all the words in *The Cat in the Hat*. Hell, I find writing e-mails a chore. (Thank you, spell-check!) I wrote this book with the help of many people, but mostly your mother. Your mother is not only the only woman I've ever loved, but also the funniest person I know. When your mom was not in labor yelling at me, she made me laugh so hard.

Love,
Dad

P.S. How did you get that hula hoop into that restaurant Easter 2011?

Who's Who in the Cast

Jim Gaffigan (*Dad*). Jim feels honored to be playing the title role of Dad. Prior to being cast in *Dad Is Fat*, Mr. Gaffigan also had the title role in the long-running show *Mediocre Uncle*. He is thrilled to be given this opportunity to work with the fine cast of *Dad Is Fat*. “He has virtually no training, skills, or instincts on how to play this role.” —*New York Times*

Jeannie Noth Gaffigan (*Mom, Director, Producer, Costume, Hair & Makeup Design, Casting Director, Technical Director, Catering, Music & Lyrics, Usher, Choreographer, Additional Music Lyrics*). Ms. Noth Gaffigan also coaches Jim Gaffigan in the role of *Dad*.

Marre Gaffigan (*Oldest, Ensemble, Founding Member of the Dad Is Fat Company*). Mi Gaffigan is an eight-year-old third grader and an amazing dancer. Off-Broadway: *I Once Had My Own Bed*.

Jack Gaffigan (*First Son, Ensemble, Sound Design & Special Effects*). Jack was last seen *Yelling for No Reason at All*. He is six and would like to thank God for his incredible good looks, which earned him the leading role in the hit show *I'm Too Cute to Punish*.

Katie Gaffigan (*Middle Child, Ensemble*). Katie is three years old and was the inspiration for the song “You Are My Sunshine.” She would like to thank the creators of *Scooby-Doo* and the color green.

Michael Gaffigan (*Gateway Baby, Ensemble*). Michael is one year old and has been dazzling audiences since his 2011 debut. He would like to thank everyone who encouraged him to pursue his childhood dream of playing with a ball.

Patrick Gaffigan (*Newborn, Ensemble*). Patrick is the newest cast member. A truly tireless performer, he has been with the company for only weeks but has already won the award for *Most Colicky Newborn* (2012).

Setting: Present day. A tiny, crowded two-bedroom apartment on the Bowery in downtown Manhattan.

There will be no intermission. Ever.

Rue the Day

When I was single, I was convinced my friends who took the plunge and had their first babies were victims of an alien abduction, because they would disappear from the planet and reappear a year later as unrecognizable strangers. Of course, that may have been because I was way too into *The X-Files*.

When I initially started dating Jeannie, the notion of settling down and having children became a feasible reality for me. Coincidentally, I was invited to visit one of my closest childhood friends who had been abducted by aliens—I mean, who got married and had a kid—about a year earlier.

My friend, his wife, and their one-year-old baby had settled in the Southwest. I was working in LA, so a weekend visit was totally doable. I thought it would be great if I brought Jeannie. We could see what it would be like when we got married and had a baby.

My friend Tom (name changed to protect his identity and possibly preserve the friendship) suggested that we could drive out and hike the Grand Canyon, which to me sounded unnecessarily difficult and way too outdoorsy, but I knew active Jeannie would love it.

Jeannie and I arrived at night. We were much later than expected, due to a flight delay. As we entered Tom's darkened house, we were instructed to please be quiet so as not to wake the baby. I felt like a teenager sneaking back into my parents' house after a missed curfew. We silently tiptoed into a guest room, giggling. "I feel like we're in trouble!" Jeannie whispered. Once we settled in the room, Tom came in and said good night, announcing that we would be leaving around 7 a.m. for the Grand Canyon, so he wanted to get a good night's sleep. As Tom shut the door, Jeannie looked at me confused and said, "I thought you said we would have dinner or something." I looked at my watch: it was 9 p.m. I thought, "Well, he's a parent. I guess this is what parenting involves. This must be what grown-ups do. They skip their second dinner."

The next morning, at the crack of 7 a.m., we set off to make the long, scenic drive to the Grand Canyon. Tom's Saab was seated with men in front and the ladies in back, with the one-year-old in the car seat between them. I suppose the first really big red flag of the trip was the fact that there was one CD allowed to be played in the car. It was explained to us that this CD was meant to soothe the baby. The volume would be occasionally adjusted based on the baby's needs. Um, okay.

So we drove and drove, talking and listening to songs with lyrics like "Ding-a-ding-dong, ding-a-ding-dong." If you haven't driven through the Southwest, the only thing more awe-inspiring than the beauty of the landscape is the absence of people. You can drive for hours and never see another person. Restaurants are scarce, expensive, and provide little selection. When we stopped for an early lunch, I ate my first and hopefully last taco salad, with Fritos as the main ingredient. We drove past a drive-thru beef jerky store. Not just a store that only sells beef jerky, but a *drive-thru* store that only sells beef jerky. I guess the drive-thru makes sense, because if you're eating beef jerky, you're probably so busy that you don't have time to get out of your car to buy beef jerky. At one point I started improvising what the owner of the drive-thru beef jerky store was thinking when he came up with the idea for the store. In

ridiculous voice I said: "Fur all dem folks that are in a rush and ain't got time to park de pick-ups and shop fur some quality jerky ..." It was kind of funny. At least Jeannie and Tom thought so. Tom's wife, Barb (another name change), politely informed me that the voice was doing was upsetting the baby. I looked back at the baby, who was sound asleep. I didn't know what to say. I just shut up. We drove the rest of the way to the Grand Canyon in complete silence, listening to the soothing baby CD: "Ding-a-ding-dong, ding-a-ding-dong."

We arrived at the Grand Canyon around 1 p.m. The government runs the Grand Canyon "hotels," so they feel more like army barracks. We were standing in line for our housing assignment when Tom's wife announced that the baby needed to go outside. The baby didn't actually say he needed to go outside, but somehow Barb knew that the baby needed to go outside. Either way, Jeannie and I stayed behind to stand in line. Before escorting Barb, who was escorting the baby who wanted to go outside, Tom told me that our reservation was for two side-by-side rooms and to make sure they confirm the rooms were side-by-side. After waiting for another half hour, I reached the counter and was informed that if we wanted side-by-side rooms, it would be an additional hour-long wait. I said that wouldn't be necessary. We would take rooms in different areas.

As they were handing me the keys (actual keys, I might add), Tom approached: "Are the rooms side-by-side?" I explained that, no, if we wanted that, we would have to wait for another hour. Hearing this, Tom got really agitated. He seemed incredibly disappointed in me and demanded that the lady behind the counter give us side-by-side rooms and that we didn't mind waiting. I minded waiting, but again I kept my mouth shut.

After wasting an hour, we unloaded our stuff in our side-by-side rooms and set off to hike the Grand Canyon. Tom and Barb had lived in the area for a while and were experienced hiking around the Southwest, so they came prepared. Tom gave us special backpacks filled with water, and the baby was secured in a backpack with a sun guard on Barb's back. I felt like we were smuggling the new Dalai Lama out of Tibet. Gear secured, we were all set, and off we went. Twenty minutes into the hike, the baby squeaked a little. Barb immediately announced, "Well, we have to go back. The baby needs a nap."

For a moment, I thought she was joking, but I then realized something horrific. The thought we were going to go back, too. It had taken us longer to get the unnecessary gear off than the time we had "hiked." I looked at Jeannie, who was clearly disappointed that she had traveled so far to visit the Grand Canyon for the first time and the day was about to end. She just looked at me like, "Well, I guess we have to go back." In a rare moment of chivalry, she blurted out, "Well, we're going to go on. This may be our only time to do this. That's cool, right?"

After a pause that took way too long, Barb said, "Of course. We'll just go. C'mon, Tom."

Tom seemed frazzled again and asked, "How long do you think you guys are going to be?"

I looked down at the long, winding path, trying to get a glimpse of the Colorado River miles below. "I don't know, an hour or two?"

"Well, please knock at our door when you get back." Wow. I mean, I'm not that out of shape.

After they left, I realized that Jeannie and I had not had a conversation alone since beginning the trip. "I don't know what's going on," Jeannie said, "but I grew up around a lot of babies, and normally babies will nap wherever they are." Not wanting to gossip about m

good friend, I just assumed we were ignorant about how daunting the task of having a one-year-old would be. I gave Tom the benefit of the doubt.

Hiking into the Grand Canyon is not easy, but I did it. Unpaid, I might add. I was disappointed to find out that when we were done hiking, we had to climb back out of the Grand Canyon. There was no elevator. Can you believe that? Jeannie loved it. My legs burned, I was really exhausted, but I acted like I loved it.

Upon returning to our hotel room we were surprised to see Barb and Tom sitting outside their room next door. Did they get locked out? A weary Tom explained. "We just got the baby to sleep." I remember thinking, "Is this baby ever awake?"

As I unlocked the door to our room, Barb and Tom followed us in and sat on one of the beds. Tom picked up the remote control and started flipping through the three available channels. I apologized and said I needed to take a nap before dinner. Could they possibly watch TV in their own room?

Tom and Barb seemed shocked. "We can't turn on the TV in our room!" Tom snapped. "The baby is sleeping in there! We were hoping we could hang out and watch TV in your room while the baby napped. We've been waiting for you to get back for two hours."

I was confused. Was this what parenting was about? I explained that my legs really hurt and I was really tired and I needed a nap. Tom, obviously trying to contain his anger, asked after I was done with my nap, I could kindly knock at their door so they could come into our room. Again I apologized, but I was barely able to walk. I had to lie down for an hour or so. It would be done for the rest of the evening. Barb and Tom stormed out.

"Well, that was awkward," said Jeannie. She went to take a shower and do girl stuff while I fell sound asleep with my shoes on for forty-five minutes.

Upon waking from my *nap*, I lightly knocked on their door, and we gathered to head to dinner at some government cafeteria. Barb, already in pajamas, didn't want to go. When I asked if we could bring her something, she curtly replied, "I ate my dinner already with the baby. It's fine. Just go without me. That's just the life of a mother. Can I use your bathroom to brush my teeth?" Uh, sure. I wouldn't want your raucous teethbrushing to disturb the baby.

On the walk over, I noticed Tom was being very quiet. When I asked if there was anything wrong, he stopped, looked down, and chuckled. "You won't understand till you're a parent."

"I won't understand what?"

He condescendingly explained, "You will *rue the day* you took that nap."

Rue the day? I've rued a lot of days in my life, but I've never rued about a nap. It dawned on me at that moment that the importance of the adjoining rooms was that the baby needed his *own* room and the other room was actually for the four of us. It was meant to serve as a "break room" from attending to the baby, an escape from the arduous chore of parenting. Again, I apologized but couldn't help but think if the rules had been explained at the beginning of the trip, this situation could have been avoided. It seemed to me that the logical thing would have been to outline this arrangement *before* I had screwed up the "break room" situation. An even more logical thing would have been to get *three* rooms and just admit that the baby needed his own room. I was pretty sure this would have allowed us to escape a whole lot of awkwardness, but then again, I'd never been abducted by aliens.

Tom accepted my apology, and the next day we drove back on the long desert highway.

was a relatively quiet drive except for the CD of baby music. “Ding-a-ding-dong, ding-a-ding-dong.” Suddenly out of nowhere, a huge deer ran out in front of the car. Tom swerved to avoid it, but the deer froze like, well, like a deer in the headlights. We slammed into the deer at fifty miles an hour. All of us screamed in shock. The car was totaled. The deer ran off and was injured into the desert. Aside from the deer, everyone was fine, thank God, especially the baby. He didn’t wake up from his nap. “Ding-a-ding-dong, ding-a-ding-dong.”

“Drinking the Kool-Aid”

I remember looking at people holding babies on airplanes, thinking, “Weirdo. Why would you do that to yourself?” I didn’t get it. I essentially looked at parents like they were in a cult, and, frankly, I was right. Parenting is a cult.

This goes way beyond the sleep deprivation and being poorly dressed. The following are characteristics of a cult from the American Family Foundation. I’ve provided some clarification with the [brackets].

- The group members [parents] display an excessively zealous, unquestioning commitment to an individual [their child].
- The group members [parents] are preoccupied with bringing in new members.
- The group members [parents] are preoccupied with making money.
- The leadership [child] induces guilt feelings in members [parents] in order to control them.
- Members’ [parents’] subservience to the group [children] causes them to cut ties with family and friends, and to give up personal goals and activities that were of interest before joining the group.
- Members [parents] are expected to devote inordinate amounts of time to the group [children].
- Members [parents] are encouraged or required to live [in the suburbs] and/or socialize [playdates] only with other group members [parents].

This may be hysterical or frightening to you, but it’s only half true. Yes, on the surface parents seem like brainwashed zombies, but we are not. We are not. We love parenting. We love it. You will love it too. Come join us. Join us. You must join us! Please take this pamphlet and watch this Baby Einstein video. Isn’t it great? You will grow to love it. It will give you peace. (Help me, I’m trapped.) JOIN US!

To be fair, the intangible benefits of parenting are hidden beneath this scary facade. When I didn’t have kids, I didn’t get it, and I shouldn’t have. I had never fought in the Vietnam War and had dinner in Paris on the same day. I had no context to understand the casualties or the romance a parent feels on the same day. I never knew the joy of successfully putting a two-year-old down for a nap. Well, I still don’t, but that’s beside the point. For people without kids, parenting is just weird. It can’t be articulated. You have to be in the cult to understand it. Obviously, I’m not trying to push you into anything. Make up your own mind in your own time. But the spaceship is coming on Thursday.

Family-Friendly

I am considered a clean comedian. This basically means I rarely curse and don't work blue. I never made an intentional decision to be clean; it just ended up that way. When you are discussing mini-muffins in a stand-up act, it's not really necessary to curse or bring sex into the material. Occasionally a reviewer will describe me as "family-friendly," which always makes me cringe.

As a parent, I know "family-friendly" is really just a synonym for *bad*. Family-friendly restaurants serve horrible food. Family-friendly hotels have the charm of a water park. Really, anything with the word *family* before it is bad. Have you been in a "family restroom"? They always seem like they should be connected to a gas station.

The most frightening aspect of "family-friendly" is that it means other families will be present. Other families will by definition have children, which means more screaming. Children have a tendency to behave as poorly as the most poorly behaved kid in the room. The laws of physics dictate that if there is a kid screaming and running in the hallway of a hotel, all the other children will scream and run in the hallway of the hotel.

Probably the only thing worse than the description "family-friendly" is when something is labeled "kid-friendly." Kid-friendly implies there is no consideration for what an adult might need or want. It's not just subquality. It's horrible. It may as well just be called "adult-unfriendly." Maybe the word to be cautious of is *friendly*. When you think about it, *friendly* does communicate some creepiness. It's usually preceded by the word *too*. If someone gets "too friendly," I'm usually suspicious and certainly don't want to be friends with them. Many times people will describe places as *not* being "kid-friendly." That's enough for me. Whenever I hear that a restaurant is "not kid-friendly," I always think, "That place must be awesome. Let's get a sitter."

Have Children:

THE CONDITION

Having five children has really made me appreciate the more important things in life. Particularly the sublime state of being alone. Of course, now I'm never alone. I have five kids who I love with all my heart. Even the one that gave me the title to this book.



This was written by my former son.

The phrase "I have children" is always present tense. They are always with me. Even when I am by myself, I "have children." When I travel I "have children" who I feel guilty being away from. If I'm in the bathroom enjoying some of Daddy's private time, I "have children" who will knock on the bathroom door. "Daddy, what are you doing in there?" As if I'm being rude. I "have children" like I "have male pattern baldness." It is an incurable condition, and I have it. Symptoms include constant fatigue, inability to sleep, and, of course, extreme sleep disruption.

I have become incredibly paranoid around people without kids because I "have children." I feel like it makes me an outcast to people without kids. I watch the faces of single people in their twenties after I bring up that I have children. I imagine them taking a small step backward as if to avoid contagion, with a look of "Sorry to hear that" on their face. Like I naively volunteered to contract leprosy, forever quarantining myself from the world of people having fun by having children.

Of course my fear of being rejected by friends without kids is totally unfounded. I have not become a hypochondriac about my condition, probably because of the way I viewed people with children when I was a single guy without children. I always thought if I stood too close to someone with kids, I would accidentally slip onto some conveyor belt, get delivered to the suburbs, and start going to bed at a reasonable hour.

But in actuality, my friends without kids have expressed admiration for my courage in dealing with my ailment: "You're so brave!" "Hang in there!" "You're going to get through this!" There is of course some ribbing from my single friends about my not being able to have

fun with them by hanging out in a bar all night. I often hear the “whip” sound when I excuse myself from a late-night revelry session. I’ll head home to my own late-night revelry session. I’ll still have fun and, like my friends, I’ll also wake up feeling like a truck drove over me. So I know I’m not missing anything.

Of course, it’s not the type of fun my single friends have. I wouldn’t expect them to have *that* kind of fun until they catch the bug and they too have children and discover what having fun really is. And by “having fun,” I mean “having children” to make you appreciate the sublime state of being alone. I mean, I think it’s sublime. I don’t remember. I’m not alone often enough to remember things.

The Lone Ranger

I do remember that when I was single, I was a loner by choice. I ate alone, went to movies alone, and even spent time by myself alone. The thought of a roommate to the single me was absurd. Now I have many roommates. I have an eight-year-old, a six-year-old, a three-year-old, a one-year-old, and I don't think I've even met the other one yet. Hey, there are five of them! Five kids may seem overwhelming to you, but how do you think I feel? Ten years ago I could barely get a date, and now my apartment is literally crawling with babies. It's like I left some peanut butter out overnight.

Not surprisingly, I never imagined I would get married, let alone have children. I suppose I had a romantic notion of having children someday, but, then again, I also had a romantic notion of being an astronaut, and, honestly, being an astronaut felt like a more realistic expectation. Aside from my physiology, nothing in my childhood, teenage years, or early adulthood indicated to me that I would someday have children. Obviously many, many things indicated I would likely be an astronaut. Well, okay, I drank Tang once.

I was the youngest of six kids. Yes, I came from a big family, but really nothing about being the youngest of six kids prepares you for parenthood. It only prepares you to be parented. I was never a babysitter or a camp counselor. I never had a younger cousin or even a neighbor with younger kids. The closest I ever came to a little kid was when I watched *The Cosby Show* and Raven-Symoné come to live with the Huxtables for a few seasons.

Nothing about my career choice led me to believe I would get married and have children. Being a comedian is a nomadic, nocturnal existence that goes against the basic normalcy and consistency required of being a healthy participant in society, let alone being a healthy participant in raising a child. There were times in my life when I had one thing to do all day, but I still couldn't get to it. "I gotta go to the post office, but I'd probably have to put on pants. And they're only open till five. Looks like I'm going to have to do that next week." Comedians are generally introspective outsiders who identify more with the misfit toys from *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* than any "normal" father portrayed on television.

Most stand-up comedians are well aware that they are not normal. There is nothing normal about going onstage and making strangers laugh. Try it sometime. It's really weird. We are natural contrarians. Tell a comedian to do something and they will most likely do the opposite just to see how you react. "You should play football like your brother"; "You should go into finance like your father"; "You should write an intelligent, funny, and well-crafted book like Bill Cosby."

Just when I was resigned to the reality of a future of being the proud weird uncle who lived in New York City, I met Jeannie. Jeannie was unlike any woman I had ever met or have yet to meet. She was part girl next door, part superstar, part insane-asylum inpatient. Jeannie was the oldest of nine children, and when I met her she was directing a Shakespearean play with a hip-hop score featuring about fifty inner-city kids. For *free*. He was this funny, sexy, smart woman who was passionate about her art and, for some reason, children. Working with kids inspired Jeannie's creativity, and being with her inspired me. It was an amazing relationship. Jeannie literally wanted to take care of me, and in turn I had

this crazy, almost biological desire to provide her with, well, someone to take care of.

For the first time in my life, I felt like I could spend the rest of my life with someone. Heck, I could even have a child with this person. Even if I knew nothing about kids, Jeannie could just handle everything, right? I already knew I wouldn't have to pay her. Eventually, I tricked Jeannie into marrying me. It was at that point that I discovered Jeannie is someone who gets pregnant looking at babies.

So now I am a loner with a chronic and acute case of children. I am learning to live with my condition as well as encourage others who have found themselves in a similar state. Therefore I have organized an annual Sleep-a-Thon to help raise money for research. If you would like to sponsor me, and I am sure you do, please pledge \$100 for every one hour of sleep. You will be doing a great humanitarian service, and I will be a better father because of your kindness and support. It's a win-win situation. I realize this sounds like you would just be paying me to sleep, but it's more. Together we can make the condition of having children a lot more bearable. Well, more bearable for me and my bank account. Thank you for your generosity.



Bedridden with children.

Anti-Family

I enjoy posting blurbs and observations on Twitter and Facebook about my children and parenting. Mostly I post about how ill-equipped and overwhelmed I am as a parent and how babies for some reason don't like the taste of wasabi. The blurbs are meant to be (hopefully) funny, silly, and/or insightful. Some of these observations will lean toward a dark, sarcastic take on the prison sentence that is parenthood. In a family-friendly way, of course.

Occasionally I receive comments that associate my musings with being anti-family, or somehow dissuading people from having kids. These occasional comments are so absurd they always make me laugh. I wonder if my rant on not wanting to work out is contributing to the obesity epidemic. Maybe I'm also increasing cake sales. I never knew I had so much power.

Anti-family? This could not be further from the truth. I love being a parent and enjoying finding the humor in parenting. If you complain about how you spend your Saturdays taking your kid to birthday parties, that means you are taking your kid to birthday parties. If you complain about how hard it is to get your kid to read, it means you are trying to get your kid to read. If you are complaining about your kid not helping around the house, that means you have a fat, lazy kid. You joke about it. That's how you deal. If parents don't like being a parent, they don't talk about being a parent. They are absent. And probably out having great time somewhere. I have done extensive research and, almost universally, found that the people who view my blurbs and observations as "anti-family" are dicks. Failing and laughing at your own shortcomings are the hallmarks of a sane parent.

When you are handed your screaming newborn for the first time, you are simultaneously handed a license for gallows humor. The guy who invented the phrase "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" probably had a baby. And, for a moment, probably contemplated throwing the baby out.

I Confess

I wasn't ready for the guilt of being a parent. I was raised Catholic, so guilt is a familiar friend. Guilt is as much a part of the Catholic culture as is rooting for Notre Dame. I grew up with a "God is watching you, so you better not make him mad" mentality. I felt guilty for feeling good, for feeling bad, and for feeling nothing. Attending Confession was supposed to alleviate some of the guilt, but I always ended up feeling guilty for not telling the priest everything I felt guilty about, so I stopped going to Confession. Then I felt guilty that I stopped going to Confession. That's a lot of guilt. Just when I thought that nothing could top "Catholic Guilt," I became acquainted with "Parental Guilt," which totally puts "Catholic Guilt" to shame. Sorry, Catholic Guilt. Now I feel guilty for shaming you. Well, at least now you know how I feel.

No matter how hard you try to be a good parent, you always know deep down that you could do more. I feel guilty when I travel out of town to do shows. I feel guilty when I'm out of town and I don't spend every single moment with my children. I feel guilty when I'm spending time with my children and I am not doing something constructive toward their intellectual development. I feel guilty when I feed them unhealthy food they like. I feel guilty when I feed them healthy food they don't like. I feel guilty when I drop them off at school. I feel guilty when I pick them up at school. I feel guilty mostly for writing this book instead of spending time with them. Great, now I've probably made you feel guilty for reading this book. I feel guilty about that now, too. Sorry. Probably what I feel *most* guilty about is how many times I have used the word *guilty* in this essay. Again, let me sincerely apologize. Wow, I feel so much better after this confession. You were right, Catholic Guilt. Thank you.

Happy Days Are Here Again

I've never really been considered cool. It always felt like an unattainable goal. Maybe it was my pale skin or pudgy features, but I never looked cool in a leather jacket or a pair of shorts. Even when I was wearing them at the same time. I realized long ago I was never destined to grace the cover of *Rolling Stone*.

This is not to say that cool wasn't important to me as a teenager. Growing up, "cool" felt like an assignment that I was always turning in late. I wasn't "un-cool," which in high school means "a walking target of mockery and ridicule," but that was always a looming fear. I still was allowed to hang out with some cool kids because I occasionally said something funny. I remember thinking that one of those cool kids had really "cool" parents. They weren't incredibly wealthy, but his mom and dad showed up at everything looking exceptional and stylish. They threw a Christmas party every year that all the other parents wanted to be invited to. They never seemed frazzled or appeared to get upset about anything. They always had the latest gadgets and went on amazingly stylish vacations. They dressed their kid in the hippest clothes possible. Their kid was "cool" by default, which in high school means "royalty." I remember thinking, "My parents are so un-cool. If they were cool, I too would be cool. If I'm dumb enough to have kids when I grow up I am definitely going to be a 'cool' parent."

Well, guess what? I am a parent now, and I am still not cool. I also see a lot of former cool kids trying to be cool parents, but it's not working. Why? Because parenting is not cool. You know what else isn't cool? Trying to be cool. Sorry, everyone, you're never going to be Gwyneth Stefani or David Beckham. Hell, they probably aren't even considered cool anymore. Cool is subjective. Were that kid's parents really cool? I bet he didn't think so. Actually, back then, I only remember one kid ever saying to me that his parents were "cool," but what he meant was that they smoked pot with him. Even then, I thought his parents were total degenerates.

Since becoming a dad, I have become painfully aware of the obsession with cool parenting. There are three-year-olds decked out head to toe in designer clothes. I have to assume a few of these three-year-olds didn't pick out their own outfits. Some of them might not even have credit cards. There are magazines, blogs, and websites obsessed with "cool parenting" that recommend the latest thing to feed your child, cool furniture for your child, and cool things to do with your child if you want them to be around children of other cool parents. I understand the aspiration. The fifteen-year-old me really relates. What I find odd is that the people who frequent and post comments on some of these parenting websites seem like some of the un-coolest people in the universe. I used to have a lot of faith in humanity before the advent of the website "comment" section. These brave, anonymous parents shamelessly gossip and snipe at one another, bragging about how smart and cool their kids are and mocking people who don't share their "cool" opinions. Newsflash: High school is over. You are not cool. "Cool" is a ridiculous concept.

I find it hysterical that "ironic" is currently considered "cool" when, in fact, "cool" itself is what is ironic. Even in the '70s and '80s, the television show *Happy Days* was aware of the irony of "cool." The cool character on *Happy Days* was "the Fonz," and he was ridiculous. H

office was in a men's bathroom. That's not only not cool, that's not even sanitary. Maybe our society's confusion about "cool" actually originates from *Happy Days*. Most of us watched when we were too young to understand sarcasm. We all actually thought that "the Fonz" was the coolest guy in the world because that's what the TV told us. That guy who can hit the jukebox and make it play or snap his fingers and have two chicks at his side is cool! I want to be like that guy. The guy with the greasy hair who hangs out by a urinal.

To the Fonz's credit, "cool" originated as a term meant to describe someone who ignores the conventions of the social mainstream. They just don't care what other people think and do their own thing. Now everyone is looking to blogs and media outlets to find out what is cool? If you are looking to see what everyone else is doing to try to be cool, you are probably not cool.

As if journalists know anything about being cool. In high school, if you wanted to find out what was cool, the last people you would ask would be the kids that worked on the high school newspaper: "Hey, guys, can you tell me somewhere cool to go this weekend? You know, someplace where you guys are not going to be?" I know this is true, because I worked on the school newspaper.

It is also ironic that in high school, the jocks were cool and the nerds were not cool. Now the nerds are the tastemakers. The nerds are rich and successful, and those jocks are dumb divorced guys with beer bellies. By the way, in high school, I also played football and, yes, have a beer belly. Jeannie can't divorce me. We are Catholic. Thank you, Jesus.

So parents who want to be considered cool, give it up. Even if you put your three-year-old in a fedora, we all know you are still getting barfed on and wiping noses and butts like the rest of us. No matter how cool you try to be, we all know you are spending more time in the bathroom than the Fonz. "Ayyy!"

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