

# Routes Toward Trustful Parenting in Our Time

Wellness Lifestyle – Peter Gray, Ph.D.  
Pathways #43, page 68



## Talking Points

- ❖ Peter Gray, Ph.D. points out that “A variety of social trends have conspired to reduce trustful parenting, promote directive-protective parenting, and reduce children’s freedom over the past several decades.”
- ❖ People young, old and every age in between crave freedom and suffer when it’s taken away. Do you think that the decline in children’s freedom is responsible for the dramatic increases in childhood depression and suicide? Dr. Gray thinks so.
- ❖ How can you become a more trusting parent and allow your children more freedom?
- ❖ Do you value freedom, personal responsibility, self-initiative, assertiveness, honesty, integrity and concern for the welfare of others? Think about how you can apply these to your children and your relationships with them.
- ❖ Gray says, “Trust promotes trustworthiness. Monitoring, prying and lecturing promote deceit.”
- ❖ Responsibility is learned by practicing it. In order to practice responsibility children have to learn how to make their own decisions.
- ❖ Something that really hit home for me was when Gray said, “To learn to be a trustful parent you may have to remind yourself regularly that you are not your child and your child is not you. You are simply part of the environmental substrate that your child is using to create himself or herself.” (69) When my mother and I were able to jump this hurdle growing up we were finally able to appreciate each other for who we were.
- ❖ It’s hard to, but Gray advises to “Resist urges to be in continuous contact with your child, to monitor your child’s activities and learning, or to inquire about the details of his or her day...Inquiry that infringes on privacy only invites dishonesty.” (70)
- Gray reminisces about his days when he worked at the Clinton Youth Center in New York. It was set up by the YMCA/YWCA as a free alternative for kids who couldn’t afford the “real” Y. It was a local haven for kids to go. Through working and observing the kids here for some time he

believe that “The freedom and age mixing were crucial to the success of this institution. The older kids gained a sense of responsibility through their interactions with the younger ones, and the younger ones learned many skills by watching and playing with the older ones.”

- ❖ It’s hard to find places like The Clinton Youth Center today where kids have the freedom to essentially rule themselves uninterrupted. Gray mentions finding neighborhoods that have kids of all ages playing freely outdoors, where parents and children get to know each other. Neighborhoods like these allow kids the freedom to play freely and find their own friends rather than having scheduled “play dates” and planned activities.
- ❖ How can you find a community like this? Are you a part of one already? What can you do to instill some of these ideas into your parenting?

### Resources

Full references for each article are available at <http://pathwaystofamilywellness.org/references.html>

Peter Gray, Ph.D.'s book "Free to Learn" <http://freetolearnbook.com/>