

Kids: Threat or Menace?

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But Jesus called them unto him and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not..."

- Luke 18:16.

When I entered the room to treat the next patient, I found her face-down on the adjusting table with a 100-pound Husky standing on her back. I assumed the dog belonged to her. (As humorist Dave Barry often says, "This really happened.") To entice the dog to dismount, I was considering offering him a sandwich I had in the refrigerator, but it was then that my patient somehow persuaded him to lie on the floor and play with a squeeze toy shaped like a chicken - all of which brings me to the subject of kids.

I would rather wrestle with sled dogs than treat children. Malamutes and huskies are no challenge compared to a toddler with a nonspill (Ha, ha!) cup of Hawaiian Punch. Spilled milk, cracker crumbs or leaky diapers are the price we chiropractors pay to serve the parents. Change the baby's diaper on my adjusting table? Why not? But then, do you mind if I adjust you on the floor, mom? And those are the least of the nuisances. So why would I want to encourage more kids in the office?

I like kids, okay? I have grandchildren. I'm not W.C. Fields. My wife says that this article makes me look like a curmudgeon or a child-hater. But it's just that I have very little experience adjusting small children. I'd rather work on the adults with whom I do the best job. And, in that capacity, I also must deal with the kids that my patients bring with them when they come in for treatment. Often, things go well. The children do no more than unplug my adjusting table, or pull out the facepaper 20 or 30 feet. Sometimes they even sit relatively still and play their Game Boys with the sound turned lower than an ear-shattering 120 decibels. I appreciate all of this, and actually find amusement at times with the antics of children when a parent, usually the mother, is facedown on the adjustment table.

Have you watched kids as they lie on their backs under the face piece of the adjusting table trying to see their mother's face? What's up with that? Subsequently, they seem to gravitate to her purse and dump the contents on the floor. But the really little toddlers frequently like to hold their mother's hand during her adjustment. They're frightened, and look up at me as the "destroyer," the man who pushes and stretches the "ground" of their existence. It takes a few visits before they are comfortable enough to actually get directly under my feet, while I do my best to treat their mother. Or they climb on the table while I'm working. Or they need to go to the restroom while their mom is tied down during manual lumbar traction.

When two kids accompany the mother, sometimes one is a three or four-year-old, and the other is a baby. The first time I witnessed an older child choking his or her younger sibling, I thought it might be a strong, overt act of affection - that is, until the baby began to turn blue. Sibling rivalry often becomes obvious only when mom is distracted, such as when she is also talking on her cellphone when I'm trying to adjust her. "Kids will act like ... well, just like kids!" my father would have said. But it's hard to keep them from squirting ultrasound lotion on the rug, or writing their names on

the cabinets with crayons, while I'm doing a side-posture lumbar technique (although holding a kid's head between my knees while I adjust the mother has always worked for me).

It is admirable that some among us are willing to accept the challenge of managing chiropractic care for children, especially babies. I have seen my share of children and teens after athletic injuries, with tension headaches and so forth. However, I have a difficult time measuring the success of an adjustment on an infant that is 70-percent water.

I have been in practice long enough to watch my patients' kids grow up and become my adult patients. I examined and adjusted many of them when they were quite young. But now, as they are older, I am gratified that they no longer spill Hawaiian Punch on my carpet. Now it will more than likely be a decaf mocha latte.

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