

Parenthood (7): Losing Touch

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When I was in high school, I wore orange platform shoes and “Hang-Ten” shirts and had hair that brushed my shoulders. I marveled at the Eagles’ harmonies (still do), thought John Denver was deep (shallower than a puddle), and couldn’t wait to see Elton John’s next costume and glasses (even he doesn’t go for such nonsense now). My world was so cool, so plugged in, so aware. *So who were the out-of-touch old fogies who didn’t know that Chicago was a group, not a city; that a roach was something people smoked rather than sprayed; that “groovy” had become passé long ago?*

Fast-forward twenty years: I cannot fathom how anyone can wear tent-sized jeans which only cover half their rear end, listen to Mariah Carey’s squealing or spend good money to see trash at the theater. My world has become one of work, bills, adult conversation, spiritual concerns, relaxing hobbies, etc. In my opinion, most of today’s pop culture is cheap pressboard with Formica veneer.

And herein lies the danger: My disinterest can become so great that I never enter the world of my children and see things as they do, listen to the things they listen to, think about the things which concern them. If it appears silly, shallow, crassly commercial, or immature, it’s all too easy to think, *“I don’t have time for this ...”*.

We must make time to find out the lyrics, demeanor and lifestyles of our children’s musical heroes. Not only are the lyrics appalling but their parents often *buy it for them!* Brethren, Rock-n-Roll has come a long way from the Beatles’ “I Wanna Hold Your Hand” to “Papa Don’t Preach” (Madonna) to Melissa Etheridge inviting her lesbian lover to “Come to My Window.”

It takes effort to keep up with the ever-changing scene of popular entertainment. Parents must be involved in their children’s lives, attuned to their tastes and interests. They must be sensitive enough to not make complete nerds out of their children, so out of step with their peers that they are objects of ridicule. On the other hand, parents must be courageous enough to say when necessary, “No, you’re not going to listen to that garbage in my house.” The line between interest and intrusion is not always easy to walk.

Some parents err on the other side of the equation. They try to be so hip, cool and groovy that they are an embarrassment to their children. Our job is to be informed about the popular culture that influences our children, not try to fit into it.