

Don't Teach Your Kids to Fear the World

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If you are a parent, your greatest fear in life is likely something happening to one of your kids. According to one 2018 poll from OnePoll and the Lice Clinics of America (not my usual data source, but no one else seems to measure this), parents spend an average of 37 hours a week worrying about their children; the No. 1 back-to-school concern is about their safety. And this makes sense, if you believe that safety is a foundation that has to be established before dealing with other concerns.

You can see the effects of all this worrying in modern parenting behavior. According to a 2015 report from the Pew Research Center, on average, parents [say](#) children should be at least 10 years old to play unsupervised in their own front yard, 12 years old to stay home alone for an hour, and 14 to be unsupervised at a public park. It also shows up in what parents teach their kids about the world: Writing in *The Journal of Positive Psychology* in 2021, the psychologists Jeremy D. W. Clifton and Peter Meindl [found](#) that 53 percent of respondents preferred “dangerous world” beliefs for their children.

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