

# OPINION: Am I a bad mom? You know it!

February 6, 2010 by DENISE SCHIPANI

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Did you hear the whoop of joy coming from a humble home here in South Huntington? That was me. Turns out, bad parenting is back in style.

Now, when I say "bad" parenting, I'm referring not to abuse or neglect, but to the opposite of the kind of "good parenting" that's been in vogue for the past decade or two - particularly the sort I've seen since returning to [Long Island](#) six years ago. You know the kind: the permissive, Junior-can-do-no-wrong kind. The overprotective, hovering kind. The kind that results in some kids never learning to make a sandwich, do the laundry, mow the lawn, relieve their own boredom.

"Good" parenting, as it's played out today, involves slavishly devoting yourself to every nuance of your child's life - from puzzling over the perfect preschool to driving your child around the corner to his bus stop. The idea? Your dear should never have an unsupervised or un-fretted-over moment. You're a bad parent if you buck the trend, from letting your baby cry it out, to not scheduling playdates, to not being able to shake your sillies out at Mommy & Me without rolling your eyes and wishing you were anywhere else.

Last month on [WNYC](#)-radio, [Brian Lehrer](#) conducted a series of interviews with Rufus Griscom, the founder of the parenting Web site Babble.com. In Babble's "Bad Parent" column, brave writer-parents admit such horrors as craving spouse time over kid time, or vowing to let children pay their own way through college. These days, to merely say aloud that you're not willing to sacrifice every resource, emotional or financial, to your child is bad parenting.

So I guess I'm a bad parent. I have no guilt about working. I feel no shame in enforcing an early bedtime so I can hang out with my husband or prompting my 7- and 5-year-old sons to play "Trouble" on their own because I'm in the middle of an engrossing New Yorker article.

I have refused to turn over control of my home (from the decor to the remote to the menu) to pint-size dictators, much as I love them. I embrace the power of "no," such as when every single child emerging from my sons' weekly sports-skills clinic at the [YMCA](#) whines for a little somethin'-somethin' from the vending machine, and most of them end up getting it. Mine don't, except as a very occasional treat. To be eaten after dinner.



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I don't merely find well-placed "nos" a mark of good (truly good, not trendy good) parenting; I relish doling them out. I'm not afraid of my children being temporarily uncomfortable. I'm not even afraid of hearing the occasional "you're so mean!" Why yes, son, I am. Thanks for noticing!

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