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Motherlode

Adventures in Parenting



January 14, 2011, 4:00 pm [83 Comments](#)

Raising Happy, Imperfect, Children

By [LISA BELKIN](#)

The conversation about Amy Chua's praise of what she dubs "Chinese" parenting continues.

There is a discussion going on right now over at the New York Times' [Room for Debate](#) blog, which you can find [here](#).

The Sunday Styles section will include an interview with Chua, and I will have a preview of that here on Motherlode sometime later this afternoon — so check back soon.

Until then, I am turning the floor over to Dr. Christine Carter, a sociologist at the [Greater Good Science Center](#), affiliated with the Psychology Department at the University of California at Berkeley, and the author of the book ["Raising Happiness: 10 Simple Steps for More Joyful Kids and Happier Parents."](#) She's spent years wading through scientific research about what makes children happy and successful in life — and the conclusion of nearly all the science is that forced mastery (i.e. four hours of practicing the piano a day) does not lead to either.

Carter takes issue with Chua's view that Western parents are far too permissive. To the contrary, she says, well-educated and affluent Americans are already overly focused on achievement. Advice like Chua's, she writes in a guest post today, is potentially adding fuel to this fire.

DO WE REALLY THINK THIS IS O.K.?

By Christine Carter

I am floored by the tremendous response that Amy Chua's new book, ["Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother,"](#) is receiving. It's not that I'm surprised that Chua's exposé of her own highly controversial parenting is garnering a lot of media attention, with its salacious details of a Yale law professor calling her high-performing kids "garbage." What I find downright shocking is how much credibility Chua is being given.

On this blog, for example, Lisa Belkin concludes that because "there really is no one ideal way" to parent, we parents "should feel free to choose what feels best for us." While I agree with Belkin on this point, there are some central themes Chua promotes that I find downright worrisome for the next generation.

In the last half-century, social scientists have been studying how various parenting styles affect kids. Who graduates from high school? Who suffers from depression? Who grows up to have a happy marriage? So we actually do know a lot about what makes a good parent: We have decades of scientific research that point to how we can improve the chances that we will raise happy and successful kids. Although one size does not, of course, fit all, there are broad truths when it comes to the parenting practices that are most likely to produce well-adjusted kids who thrive—socially, emotionally and academically.

Those of us who've peered closely into the research know beyond a shadow of a doubt, for example, that the children of "authoritative" parents—parents who are warm and loving, but also good at setting and enforcing limits—are better adjusted and more academically successful than those of overly permissive or superstrict parents.

So when Chua argues that "Chinese" mothers "are superior" because they demand absolute perfection—and won't refrain from berating, threatening, and even starving their kids until they're satisfied—I become very worried. My e-mail in-box has filled parents looking for an answer: should I be more demanding? Will my

children be aimless underachievers if I foster things like friendship and gratitude rather than tripling their piano practice time?

Suddenly, we “Westerners” seem like total softies, simply because we prefer to coddle rather than throttle our kids. Because, let’s be honest, we prioritize happiness over achievement.

Chua’s argument makes us start to wonder if our values are wrong. Should we start bullying our children into becoming math whizzes or a music prodigies? Do these brutal techniques actually work?

OF COURSE THEY DON’T. What Chua describes is not enlightened parenting, and there is very little to learn from it. It might take an iron will to force a kicking and screaming child to practice the piano, but all that yelling, threatening and insulting does not take much skill. We do not need to retreat back to totalitarian tactics to garner respect from our children, and certainly not to ensure their success.

The parenting methods that Chua describes go against years of scientific research into what makes kids truly happy—and successful—in life. Moreover, it rests on a faulty premise: Rather than being overly permissive, many American parents are overly focused on achievement already. Chua’s guide to raising ever-more high-achieving children could fuel this fire, and that’s scary.

Chua defines success narrowly, focusing on achievement and perfection at all costs: success is getting straight A’s and being a violin or piano prodigy. Three decades of research clearly suggests that such a narrow focus on achievement can produce wildly unhappy people. Yes, they may boast perfect report cards and stunning piano recitals. But we are a country full of high-achieving but depressed and suicidal college students, a record number of whom take prescription medication for anxiety and depression.

Chua argues that happiness comes from mastery, and that mastery is achieved through “tenacious practice, practice, practice.” She’s right here—practice does fuel success—but she’s wrong that forced mastery will lead to happiness. “Once a child starts to excel at something,” she writes, “he or she gets praise, admiration and satisfaction. This builds confidence and makes the once not-fun activity fun. This in turn makes it easier for the parent to get the child to work even more.”

Although there’s some logic to this “virtuous circle,” the druglike gratification that comes from this type of achievement is not happiness or fulfillment: Once the initial exhilaration wears off, it’s on to the next goal, in search of that elusive feeling of accomplishment. It’s success without long-term enjoyment, work without meaning.

Chua is prescribing life motivated by perfectionism—fear of failure, fear of disappointment. Not only is this a vicious form of unhappiness, but research by Carol Dweck and many others shows that kids who are not allowed to make mistakes don’t develop the resilience or grit they need later in life to overcome challenges or pick themselves up when they do fail. Perfectionists are far more likely to be depressed, anxious, and in college, they are more likely to commit suicide.

Perhaps even more disconcerting is how Chua disparages play and friendships: She takes pride in never letting her kids have play dates or sleepovers, so that they have more time for schoolwork and practicing their instruments.

If scientists have learned anything on the subject, it’s that social connections are the foundation for happiness, health and success in life. When kids build friendships through play, their social and emotional intelligence flourishes; social skills are a key predictor of success later in life. What’s more, research clearly links loneliness and isolation with chronic illness and increased mortality rates, not to mention unhappiness.

I’m not suggesting that you should fret about your children’s self-esteem, pump them full of false praise or let

them run wild. I don't do those things, and I don't advocate permissive parenting. I do advocate happiness and joy as the paths to a meaningful life.

But if that sounds fluffy to you—if you, like Chua, value your children's success over their long-term happiness—and you are inclined to practice Chua's methods for turning out an Ivy Leaguer, here is what I want you to remember: Fostering the skills that kids need for happiness is a better bet for their long-term success.

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1. 
 - Kel Hamlin
 - OK

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I think perfectionism is a fear and shamed based way of approaching life. I see children today having many problems in school, social life, and individual well-being because of the drive toward perfectionism. Here is a article on ways parents can help their children who struggle with perfectionism.

<http://kelleyward.hubpages.com/hub/5waysparentscanhelpthechildwhostruggl...>

- [Jan. 24, 2012 at 9:13 p.m.](#)
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2. 
 - Lee Mainprize
 - London

[Flag](#)

There is more than one way but there are concepts that work better for example, public praise and private reprimand works better to build self esteem. Positive reinforcement works better than negative reinforcement.

I am pretty demanding of my kids. I always ensure that I praise sincerely whilst demanding that little more effort. Its all about balance, push too hard and you'll create resentment. But without ultra demanding pushy parents would we have Tiger Woods or Roy Jones probably not!.

Lee

P.S - I created a page which helps parents get the best out of their kids in a positive way
<http://brightconfidentkids.com/>

- [July 7, 2011 at 12:30 a.m.](#)
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3.

- Lorraine Devon Wilke
- Los Angeles

[Flag](#)

Though I'm a month and then some past this article, I recently came upon it while doing some research for my own article (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lorraine-devon-wilke/parent-thy-name-is-love-d_b_823264.html). I've been dispirited by the surprising number of people who seem to support Miz Chua's methods, so I was delighted to find this wise, measured and very thoughtful take. As a parent who experienced too much of the kind of destructive parenting Chua prescribes, but went on to raise my perfectly imperfect child with an open heart and a promise to never verbally or physically resort to soul-crushing discipline, I applaud all my fellow parents who someone knew that love was more important than perfection.

- [Feb. 25, 2011 at 11:55 a.m.](#)
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4.

- Teresa S.
- Miami, FL

[Flag](#)

Educating a child is neither a science nor an art. Pestalozzi, the father of education, was unable to educate his own child. But that was a long time ago! Hundreds of years should have taught us something about parenting. This is my humble recipe: First and foremost, we need to set our own objectives. Right after,

parents need to look at their child's generation, at their talents. You teach them about success and about failure. You set reasonable limits, you give examples (and non-examples); you allow room for debate, and for respect. You re-evaluate your plan from time to time. You get to know really well who is friends with your child. You monitor the texts, the philosophies taught in school, more than the academic grades. And you ENJOY being a parent, and that happiness will be the light that will guide your children throughout their lives.

- [Jan. 25, 2011 at 11:07 a.m.](#)
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- 5.
- Rick Ackerly
 - San Francisco, CA

[Flag](#)

Thank you for separating the true predictors of success from the short-sighted ones. If we want our kids to get into a good college, we should also want them to have the wherewithall to maximize their educational opportunity when they are there, and then to continue to make something of themselves when they get out. The caricature of what might be called a "tough love" approach reminds me of what a parent once said about a teacher who was mean to her daughter: "I am all for tough love, but frankly, I don't feel the love."

- [Jan. 23, 2011 at 10:42 a.m.](#)
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- 6.
- rach r
 - ny, ny

[Flag](#)

I'd say she's raising responsible, hard-working, talented members of society. As she mentioned in her book (and I'm summarizing), some people view childhood as a training period, and not a fleeting time of play and whimsy. This is just a different philosophy that takes different methods, only time will tell if her daughters "turn out right". & who's to say what's "right"?

I'm betting they turn out amazing and don't end up needing therapy like so many people are prophesying.

- [Jan. 19, 2011 at 10:13 a.m.](#)
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- 7.
- chuck

- S C

[Flag](#)

Has Ms Chua never heard of Taoism and the balancing of Yin and Yang; and the consequences of these two getting out of balance. It seems that she wants to eradicate all traces of Yin from her children, and expect them to be healthy, burning themselves out with a fiery, Yang determination.

- [Jan. 19, 2011 at 2:48 a.m.](#)
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8.



- Christie
- Wylie TX

[Flag](#)

Thank you for a voice of REASON.... I was shocked when I read this article, which in my opinion boils down to your basic child abuse. But then, I was REALLY shocked when the book was being praised and NPR even had an interview! WOW!

And SINCE WHEN are we softies with children who play video games all day?

That isn't true around our home, and it isn't true about any of the homes we visit. I am sure you can find somebody to say, "Yep, there they are...", but that hardly constitutes a broad brushed SLAM against Americans.

We are not totalitarians in our home, yet our children greatly respect us.

Somehow we have managed to raise 4 boys, and we are in the midst of raising 3 girls. If our adult sons are any indication of how our girls will be, well, let me just say, we are HAPPY with the outcome. And we achieved it with no screaming, shaming or calling our children garbage.

China can keep their parenting methods to themselves and thank goodness they are only having one child to ruin.

- [Jan. 18, 2011 at 12:37 p.m.](#)
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9.



- Aparna
- Tokyo

[Flag](#)

Well doctor: what do u prescribe as a sure shot way to raise a happy kid??u wint say anything abt that...we know chua is wrong.

- [Jan. 18, 2011 at 2:02 a.m.](#)
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10.



- Abbi
- Israel

[Flag](#)

Veloso, your points might have some validity if Chua was lecturing to a group of parents in Bangladesh. However, she wasn't. She published an oped in WSJ- speaking directly to Americans with a plethora of choices, many of whom, despite your unwillingness to believe, raise happy, well adjusted children who thrive in the middle class and are able to make their way in the world without emotional scars and without 10 years of therapy. So whether or not her parenting choices would benefit the desperately poor is irrelevant- neither to her situation nor to her audience's.

She herself did not come from a desperately poor background and interestingly enough, neither did her husband. He managed to become quite successful without suffering the emotional abuse you and Chua seem to think is necessary in order to "get ahead".

- [Jan. 18, 2011 at 2:02 a.m.](#)
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11.



- Roger
- Seattle

[Flag](#)

I teach university courses on moral and political dimensions of schooling. I have my own opinion of Ms. Chua (I'm not fond of people who assert outrageous things and then backpedal or claim satire). But my reason for including her a bit of her stuff plus a range of the responses from NYT and other sources lies elsewhere. Look at the range of opinions, the misunderstandings, the non sequiturs, the miscitations of "research." In calling attention to all this, I will want to remind my students of just how difficult it is to talk about schooling, achievement, child rearing, behavior, the good regime, and the good life. We simply cannot find common grounds for talk.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 12:33 p.m.](#)
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12.



- veloso
- here

[Flag](#)

I would have expected no less from the readers of this blog.

However unhappy the children of Chua-style parenting are, the fact is that they have options. They can go somewhere else, do something else, buy 10 years of therapy, whatever. They have the education, social status, career that will allow them, once the work past their issues, to go off and get fulfilled.

For the other people in unfulfilling jobs, bad situations, and are trapped in places with no future, no money, and no time, what can you say, that they at least feel good about themselves? That they're happy that Chua is getting pummeled? She's the one working at Yale with two overachieving kids...and you aren't.

In the US you don't have to make those sorts of decisions, for the most part; you don't need to be good at anything in particular to have a decent life. In other parts of the world the distance between being poor and a decent life is very, very far, and if I lived there I'd definitely do exactly as Chua did. It's better to get the kids out of extreme poverty, because that's a better future for them. My satisfaction would be seeing them not have to choose between eating and clothes for their job.

The fact is, parents really can make these kinds of decisions about their children if they want to. Success doesn't always mean being the nicest, happiest, well-adjusted, poorest person on the block. Some people actually want their kids to achieve, be successful, rich, because life at that level really is better. If you don't, I'd suggest staying out of the way and minding your own business. There are millions of people around the world trying to grab for the big brass ring, and they really couldn't care less about your (or your kids') self-esteem.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:41 a.m.](#)
- Recommended1
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13.

- Tallafarro1
- Europe

Flag

Chua may be repeating the abusive upbringing she had, based on the Aian fear of failure and need to win. Unfortunately, more children die from parental abuse than from all childhood diseases put together. Parents are only older "children" themselves, and themselves the victims of their own parents', grandparents' and ancestors' mistakes all the way back to Methusale,h and too many, sad to say, without even realizing it, take revenge on their own offspring for parental abuses they themselves suffered as children. It may not be consciously done, but it IS done. I realized this while I was still a child through observing the adult tactics of my little friends' parents when their children dared to have an opposing opinion. It was water clear to me that parental life frustrations and/or preference for one child over another often fueled parental punishment. It's human and universal.

No one becomes an all-wise parent upon pregnancy. Parenthood is a daily, on- going experiment and according to the emotional health of the parent, an ongoing learning experience that must be tempered with love and humor. Unfortunately, in this world of more than 2 billion people, most of whose 3rd world populations live in poverty, starvation and war, and the first world, that lives in fear of war, job loss and

home loss, bad parental examples, abusive marriages, you name it...it's hard indeed, to be the calm, reasoned, loving person all children should be entitled to have. I wish all parents good sense, a good sense of humor and good luck.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:26 a.m.](#)
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14.

- Banty
- Upstate New York
- Verified

[Flag](#)

Actually, we're *lucky* if they hide in their room with a guitar. It's more often, interactive video games where they have a chance to excel *somewhere*.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:25 a.m.](#)
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15.

- M
- San Jose, CA

[Flag](#)

Way to go responders #5 and #7 I totally agree with you!!!

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16.

- Banty
- Upstate New York
- Verified

[Flag](#)

There are a fair number of "Tiger Mothers" in our school district, and one of the side effects on the families that don't take their tact, is that the activities that our children *do* love and *do* practice at and strive to master, have as a top cohort a few to whom that activity is the singular center of their lives. Which make as a price to the rest of our kids, second tier accomplishment or a completely unbalanced

childhood.

Now I'm sure there is the other side, that accomplishment should be rewarded, and gargantuan effort should be rewarded, and in a certain sense I have to agree. But this isn't the extent of competition that I recall as a kid - the air has gotten sucked out of the room, the achievements of most children are crowded out, as every venue of endeavor turns into an Olympic Event. No wonder a lot of our kids just want to do something like buy a guitar and hide in their bedrooms to play it. I can't blame them.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:24 a.m.](#)
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17.

- Molly Casey
- San Francisco Bay Area

[Flag](#)

(Also posted on WSJ)

I think it is sad that this very lively, albeit heated discussion is dominated by pitting one ethnic parenting style against another. As an American with grown children and originally from Taiwan, I thought Chua's essay was obnoxious but it wasn't until I read the other follow-up essays that I realized why I reacted as such. By making the claim that Chinese parenting style is superior, Chua knew that responses will be fast and furious. And it worked! According to Amazon, her book is now #6.

After reading all those follow-up essays and countless number of comments on both WSJ and NYTimes, parenting methods seem to have taken a backseat to ethnic differences or am I wrong? Am I truly that naïve to believe that no ethnic group has the "superior" parenting method? As a young mother during the 60s', I relied on Doctor Spock to help me from how to heat a bottle to disciplining. Of course, my wise and loving parents' parenting style was the biggest influence. Isn't that how most of us learn parenting skills? We read books, take or reject advices from parents, relatives, and friends, and then follow our own gut feeling of how to be a parent. Where does ethnicity come in?

What we have lost sight of in the fury over Chua's claim that "Chinese" way is superior is the incredible blessing we, including Chua, (she must like it otherwise she'd live somewhere else) the good fortune to live in America. As a melting pot of many ethnicities, we have the opportunity to learn from each other. We can decide what works for us and our children. After all we all have different priorities, thus different responses to the same idea. Wouldn't it be more productive to share our experiences of raising children so that our children can adopt what they consider to be gems and discard what they think otherwise? After all, they are raising our future leaders. I guess this idea won't sell papers or books.

Having said all this, I guess Chua is smart enough to know what she needs to write to sell her book. WSJ knows how to sensationalize it to sell its newspaper. And we all, including myself got sucked into hours of venting. As I turn 63 this month, maybe I am becoming one of those folks who reminisce the earlier years of being so much easier and pleasant. I had one book, Doctor Spock, to help me. My daughters, both wonderful mothers have a gazillion books for references. I had it easier but did it make me a better parent? I don't think so. I honestly don't know. However, I do know that I don't someone like Chua to tell me that her parenting skills were superior to mine because she is Chinese.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:23 a.m.](#)

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18.

- Ann Engelland, MD
- New York

[Flag](#)

Thank you Dr Carter for these comments that bring some humanity and reason to this discussion. As a pediatrician and mother, I have found the recent work of Dr Kenneth Ginsburg (Building Resilience, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics) to be helpful in understanding how to raise children who will be competent, caring, and coping young adults and grown-ups. His seven C's: competence, confidence, character, connection, contribution, coping and control can guide us to tailor our discipline, teaching, and style with the "authoritative" style that we know works best.

www.AnnEngellandMD.com

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:20 a.m.](#)
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19.

- UNYC
- nyc

[Flag](#)

Chua seems to have serious insecurities. She's not any different than the Toddlers and tiaras moms who make their little girls play dress up and dance and strut around. Those moms are lacking in some way, and want to live vicariously through their children. That's why they force them to get spray tans, wear adult clothes, get eyebrow waxes, all so someone will come up to THEM, the moms, and say "my, what a perfectly beautiful little girl you have. Aren't you just so proud?"

Ms. Chua, meet Pageant Mom.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:16 a.m.](#)
- Recommended4
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20.

- Jackie
- Tempe

[Flag](#)

To comment on a post from Ratna:

"Ms.Carter says, "But we are a country full of high-achieving but depressed and suicidal college students, a record number of whom take prescription medication for anxiety and depression." Ms Chua and others like her would say, "No, the US is a country of depressed and suicidal college students **PRECISELY** because their parents have not harangued them and guilt-ed them and tongue-lashed them enough" !!

Clinical depression and other mental illnesses are biological in nature. We are only now beginning to understand the mechanisms involved. If people take medication to allow them to function in society, it is no different from the person who takes medication for high blood pressure, statins, insulin, etc.

The rates of mental illness seem to be similar across different countries, societies, etc. The differences are in how such conditions are named, quantified, and treated. In China, I believe such people are locked up so as not to bring "shame" on their families. In Germany, the children that would be diagnosed with bipolar disorder here are considered to have ADHD.

No amount of "good" parenting will prevent mental illness. No amount of browbeating or abuse will get anyone with mental illness to "snap out of it."

In this week of all weeks, let's have compassion for the mentally ill and those who love them.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 10:14 a.m.](#)
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21.

- beentoChina
- Winston-Salem NC

[Flag](#)

I am white, with a Hong Kong born wife, lived in Chinatown in NYC and in China for many years. It has been my experience that most Chinese parents are stricter with their children than Westerners and there are some real advantages to that as in general our American culture is too permissive. However those Chinese mothers who are pushing their children to be perfect in every way (and there are plenty of them) are really doing it for their own gratification and not for their children at all. Most of these children have the social skills that are very limited and are only learn them when they get away from home if they learn them at all. I will never forget a conversation with two adult Chinese American Wall Street folks who were complaining to me that despite their Wharton MBAs were never invited to the parties of their coworkers because they were "prejudiced" against them. They were not invited because they were not interesting socially skilled people who would make a party more interesting. Prejudice had nothing to do with it. The real foundation that makes children successful in life are spiritual and moral skills that allow them to cope with adversity and events that are beyond their control. Hard work and persistence are only two of many. Kindness, generosity, fair play, honesty, moderation in ones desires, putting the group's best interests ahead of ones own, all of these are in short enough supply in the general society we live in. Encouraging these in a child are as important as anything else, actually more so.

- [Jan. 17, 2011 at 12:39 a.m.](#)

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22.

- Lisa Raffoul
- Tecumseh, ON

[Flag](#)

I couldn't agree more! Great perspective by Dr. Carter! I am a parent coach and from what I have learned through my own life and through any reading or research is that successful children are the ones who have been loved and nurtured so that they have self confidence and self esteem.

Success can be defined in many ways. I coach parents that have children who have a disability and I know that success can be defined in many ways. For my son Eric, who had multiple disabilities, success meant going to an inclusive community school, traveling with his family and learning to hold a spoon....at the age of 12. He was successful because we valued who he was and provided support to him so that he could have a meaningful life.

I wonder what Ms. Chua would have done if she was faced with a child who couldn't achieve perfection in the typical sense. It's a scary thought.

- [Jan. 16, 2011 at 10:11 p.m.](#)
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23.

- FreeURMind
- Maryland

[Flag](#)

Here's an interesting take on our (worldwide) system of educating our children...

<http://www.ted.com...>

- [Jan. 16, 2011 at 10:10 p.m.](#)
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24.

- ShannonWagstaff
- Hong Kong

[Flag](#)

As a former professional musician, as a teacher, and as the parent of a special needs child, I find Ms.

Chua's approach to musical 'excellence' little short of laughable. Her drive for perfection negates the broad range of human experience. To use one example: the English cellist Jacqueline du Pre was one of the most famous, popular cellists of her day and has continued to be recognised as a master since her untimely death in 1987. If you listen to many of her recordings, you hear that her performances were often not flawless, not perfect - but they sing in our hearts because of the musicianship which sings through every line. The same can be said for Glenn Gould, Maria Callas and a myriad of other top performers.

The approach that Ms. Chua takes to her children's practice is superficial. As Dr. Carter rightly points out, once the thrill of the initial achievement is worn off, a concern would be that the child will not then be able to take full and real enjoyment and learning from the music they have created. The syncopation may be wonderful, but will the music sing to the child's soul? Or will she simply remember the agony that she went through to get it 'right'?

What would Ms. Chua say to Chinese mothers with special needs children - the children who will never be (for one reason or another) the 'best' or top of their class? Should Chinese mothers of these children take her approach? Or will they realise that every piece of research on how SEN children learn best, shows that similar approaches work wonders with neurotypical children? Qualities such as patience (as opposed to anger), caring (as opposed to domineering) and the ability to listen (as opposed to direct) work wonders for children of all cultures. Ms. Chua's approach shows no understanding of the reactions of the brain to stress or anger. Her anecdote of her child's piano practice being a success negates the many other techniques that could have been used to achieve the same result - without having to resort to the cruelty that she describes (telling a child they can't go to the bathroom - really?)

I find Ms. Chua's whole premise based on her categorisation of her ethnicity rather than her life - although she does make a nod to this, she does not recognise that ethnic experience is not homogenous - try living in China for a while, Ms. Chua - most of the Chinese mothers I know would respect your determination, but not your methods: they would acknowledge your rhetoric but understand that the reality of the approach would run a very real risk of children whose minds and nerves are overloaded by the time they graduate high school.

I teach high-achieving children who are under enormous pressure to succeed academically, socially, and in a range of extra-curricular activities. I am lucky to know (as Ms. Chua perhaps does not) that there is more than one way to cook a goose - that there is more than one way to breed success. I certainly know that my special needs son will never be the best, but he will certainly lead a loved, guided, and yes - successful life, without anger, and without abuse. He will possibly even learn a skill that Ms. Chua's approach seems to lack - like compassion.

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I'm concerned that the way the WSJ portrayed Chua was distorted to begin with, and that now even the readers of the article are misquoting it. Chua, for example, never called her kids garbage; she was citing something that happened to her, which does NOT mean she insists that calling her children that moniker is a good idea. Please read the articles carefully and also get past bombastic journalism, both Dr. Carter and the author.

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Raising healthy, happy, well-adjusted kids isn't easy. At Motherlode, we cover it all — homework, sex, child care, eating habits, sports, technology, the work-family balance and much more. [KJ Dell'Antonia](#), the lead blogger for Motherlode, has been writing about the personal, cultural and political aspects of family life for a decade now. She is also a former corporate lawyer and prosecutor and a New York City exile, who is now raising four kids, two dogs and a cat in rural New Hampshire. Come join her in a conversation about the parents we are and the parents we want to be.

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