

A VERY BRIEF SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL TRENDS AFFECTING FAMILIES

What happened to create the situation we have now in which there is so much separation and misunderstanding between generations of parents and children?

There are several significant trends that have affected families in the 20th and now 21st century.

One is the increase of worry and anxiety in parents over the safety and well-being of their children which, coupled with parents' loss of influence over their children, creates helplessness.

Another is the change in the power dynamics of the family so that children now hold more power in a family than they ever have before.

Related is the shift in what influences children. Historically parents were the greatest influence on children but now peers and agencies external to the family like social media, television, schools and so on have greater impact on children. Schools, churches, television and the commercial marketplace have fostered separate worlds of childhood and youth in which certain cultural references and experiences are shared by peer groups and from which parents and even older siblings are excluded.

Since the 1920's, there has been a radical change in the boundaries between parents and children as family models have shifted from authoritarian to democratic.

While this created new opportunities for intimacy and friendship between parent and child, it also left everyone confused about what constitutes proper use of authority and boundaries between parent and child.

The popularization of parenting advice from the new field of psychiatry and social agencies created self-doubt and insecurity in

parents. There was a significant shift toward blaming parents for the problems of the child creating a psychological burden for parents.

The cultural view of children as fragile and highly precious in a dangerous world increased parental guilt and worry.

The advent of the widespread use of drugs has also affected families.

For many families, divorce has created conflict and distance between parents and their children.

This material has been compiled by Selene Aitken from these books:

- *When Parents Hurt* by Joshua Coleman Ph.D.
- *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* by Steven Mintz
- *Anxious Parents, A History of Modern Childrearing in America* by Peter N. Stearns