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## Raising Kids in the Twenty-First Century - What Did I Do Wrong?

By [Joe Herzanek](#)

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Addicts and alcoholics often zero in on Mom or Dad as the scapegoat--whether it's a teenager or an adult that has the problem. Rarely does a day go by that I don't get a call from a desperate parent (usually a mom), and find that the child has shifted some or all of their problems onto the parent. The insinuation from the addict to the parent is, "your parenting skills are the problem." After a while, the parent may start to feel guilty and believe they are at least partly to blame.

Ultimately the addict/alcoholic has found one more excuse to continue using--*it's my parent's fault*. The parent starts to think about what they could have done differently, and guilt builds. Often parents don't seek the help and support they need because of the shame they take upon themselves for not preventing this. So my advice is this: Don't start playing the could've, would've, and should've game. It can go on forever.

### **Taking the blame for another person's poor decisions solves nothing.**

Parenting skills are important, and raising children is a big responsibility. Just the same, our kids make choices. Some of their choices are good, and some not so good. Taking the blame for another person's poor decisions solves nothing. In fact *when parents do this, they rob their child of the valuable lessons the consequences are meant to bring*.

Mary, a friend of our family, has a son who, when he was seventeen, left home a few days before Christmas. The son had been abusing drugs and alcohol and when given the choice of living at home or using drugs, he chose to leave. Mary was doing her best to hold herself and the rest of her family together during the holidays. While attending a Christmas party, she confided in her neighbor, and the neighbor quickly remarked, "That kind of thing would never happen to us; we have much higher standards!"

A remark like this, which attempts to place the blame on the parents, can be incredibly damaging not only to the parents but to the child as well, shifting the blame in the wrong direction.

We should love our children, empathize with them, never give up hope, and do whatever we can to help them see the light. In spite of our best efforts, raising children in the twenty-first century in some ways can be like a roll of the dice. We've all seen cases where kids who came from horrible and abusive backgrounds have gone on to succeed in life. Unfortunately,

the opposite also happens. There are no guarantees in child-rearing. Most of us do the best we can with information we have. Hindsight is 20/20, and often we learn as we go. If we, as parents, could go back in time and do some things differently, would we? Sure. *Would that have eliminated all the problems our teens are having now?* We'll never know, but I doubt it.

This article is excerpted from the book "Why Don't They Just Quit?"

Joe Herzanek, a man who battled his own demons of addiction over twenty-five years ago, says, "I know people can change. If I can do it, anyone can!"

A recovering person himself, Joe is the president and founder of Changing Lives Foundation and author of the new book "Why Don't They Just Quit?" As an addiction counselor in Colorado he has spent thirteen years working in the criminal justice system.

His passion for helping men and women struggling with addiction, as well as their family members and friends, inspire him to offer hope and solutions.

Joe offers words of encouragement: "Addiction is not a hopeless situation," he writes. "Addicts and alcoholics aren't crazy, and they can quit."

Joe and his wife Judy have three children, Jami, Jake, and Jessica, and enjoy the beautiful Colorado outdoors with their two Cairn Terriers, Lewis and Clark.



<http://www.whydonttheyjustquit.com>

<http://www.changinglivesfoundation.org>

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