

NEWSLETTER

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SCIENCE OR OPINION?

What seems like zillions of experts offer parenting advice through many SOURCES: books, magazines, newspapers, TV, the Internet, lectures, workshops, parenting agencies, parenting classes...a long list.

PEOPLE giving parenting advice include pediatricians, child psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, teachers, behaviorists, social workers...another long list.

There can be a vast difference between "advice from experts" and "expert advice."

And there can be a big difference between an expert who is credentialed and a self-styled expert.

What's a parent to do? How do you sort out conflicting advice?

Can science help? Yes and no. Science can be very precise. If strep is cultured from your child's throat science has shown that the timely use of an appropriate antibiotic lessens symptoms quickly and prevents complications.

But is there a science of parenting? Can we scientifically measure parenting effects? Not really. We can't do controlled experiments comparing children parented on way to children being parented another way. There are too many variables. Every child and every family is different. And there is always the danger of confusing correlation with causation.

Thus most of the time people who give parenting advice are giving their OPINION. Which means you should know something about this person.

The advice I give is the product of my credentials, years of experience both at work as a pediatrician and at home as a mother, my extensive and continued reading, my empathy for and knowledge of what parents need, and my strong commitment that parenting advice should DO NO HARM. The feedback I get from my readers and parents attending my lectures is very positive. The rare negative feedback sends me scurrying to find a better answer or a better way to express myself. I am always learning.

Bottom line advice: Know the background of your parenting expert. TRUST the person giving parenting advice. However CHALLENGE this person if the advice does not seem to make sense.

PS Happy Valentine's Day! Cards and candy are perishable and not as important as the love you have in your heart and demonstrate every day.

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For parenting information, a free monthly newsletter, a personal answer to your parenting questions, or to order my parenting book, "ParentTips" visit my website, <http://www.ParentKidsRight.com>.

You can find Dr. Heins on Twitter where she will post website updates: <http://twitter.com/drheins> and on her parenting blog at Dr Heins' Post: <http://www.drheins.blogspot.com/>