

Bold Book Notes – Achtung Baby by Sara Zaske

America has created a culture of CONTROL...

We take control of kids' freedoms to...

- Move
- Be alone
- Take risks
- Play
- Think for themselves

This is CULTURE-WIDE

- Homes
- Schools
- Sports
- Media

We need to get back to VALUES of...

- Personal responsibility
- Self-reliance
- Individual freedom

We are free to raise kids how we see fit... but we don't consider KIDS' freedoms

BABY STAGES – start self-reliance training

- Ease up on the attachment parenting focus
- Set loving boundaries as they age
- Say no and comfort after (not during) the fit ... when they are calm
- Create sleep routine – put them down when they are still awake – self soothe training is the beginning of self-reliance training
- Don't interrupt a playing baby – give time to explore (safely) on their own
- More independence from you – it's a good thing! Not a cold, callus thing.

TODDLER TIME

- Embrace mornings out / early preschool / short spurts of day care – even if you are not a “working outside of the home” Mom.
- Change your thinking to... “It's good for my toddler to have independent time/time away from me / time with other influences (other kids, other caring adults, etc.)
- Be comfortable NOT being at EVERY waking moment of your toddler's life.
 - It's healthy for THEM to have their own experiences without constant parent supervision

PRESCHOOL – KINDERGARTEN

- Place more importance on social / emotional development NOT ACADEMICS
- Play based learning helps learn...
 - How to communicate
 - To understand their strengths / weaknesses
 - How to get help
 - Problem / conflict solving skills

Academics come later once these foundational skills are established FIRST.

Aim to teach / support...

- Being curious
 - Through student-led learning/ projects
 - The power to accept mistakes
 - Give the message that mistakes help lead to another idea
 - Their “inner drive”
 - Where kids want to find out things for themselves (can’t do this with worksheets!)

IT’S ALL ABOUT GIVING THEM MORE RESPONSIBILITY OVER THEIR OWN LEARNING/DEVELOPMENT

U.S. STYLE

- We are all about FASTER learning, not necessarily BETTER learning
- Development happens... “The grass doesn’t grow faster if you pull it.”
- Why does the US think faster is BETTER??
 - Even if kids have the ability, are they ready and willing without heavy handed teacher intervention without sacrificing something else? (like inner drive? Curiosity? Self-motivation? Independent thinking?)

DISCIPLINE

- Let students / children be a part of class rules / home rules (Once old enough)
- **THOUGHT! Kids THEMSELVES are best ones to enforce their own rules and solve their own conflicts**
 - (yes, it can feel like “Lord of the Flies” but what long-term benefits are there in doing it this way?
 - Empowerment
 - Feeling capable and not a victim
 - Responsibility
 - Use mirroring questions such as... “How do you think the other kid feels?”

Take aways to use HERE (in the U.S.)

- Kids can choose to drive their own projects
 - Kids...
 - Pick their own topic
 - Decide ways to get information
 - Go to the library
 - Conduct interviews
 - Plan a field trip
- Involve kids in house rules
- Wait before intervening in sibling fights
 - If you can't wait, ask questions to help them see how the other feels (don't just react, yell and separate kids)
- Encourage overnight adventures EARLY – toddler age!
 - Family member or close family friends... gives kid an early taste to have their own experiences without you
- Give more responsibilities
 - Chores
 - Food prep
 - Expectations to help their younger siblings or kids in their neighborhood

OUTSIDE TIME

“There is no bad weather just unsuitable clothing”

- Get outside every day for some period – 1 hour is best...
- In the US, kids are having LESS time outside and experiencing MORE....
 - Anxiety
 - Helplessness
 - Depression
 - Narcissism
- We used to outside all day in summer and for a good chunk of time after school... what gives?
 - Hyper emphasis on academics
 - Prioritization of organized sports over free play
 - More time with on demand media
 - Exaggerated fears of child abduction (your kid is more likely to be hit by lightning)
- ***BTW... Germany hasn't succumbed to pressures and fears like we have... even though they feel the fears and have similar concerns. The difference???***
 - **THEY FEEL THE BENEFITS OF OUTSIDE AND INDEPENDENT TIME OUTWEIGH THE RISKS...**
 - And this is supported culture-wide
 - Giving kids freedom is difficult but necessary

FREEDOM TRAINING

- Walk/bike to school ON THEIR OWN
 - Germans have a “traffic school” unit at school in the 1st grade where they learn the rules of the road, do walking tours of surrounding neighborhoods near the school, get a lay of the land and practice safety.
 - Parents are part of this practice and the culture supports/expects this
- Here in the US, the dramatic drop in kids’ freedom to move / be independent outside is NOT a fact of modern life... it’s a fact of modern CULTURE (which can be changed!)
- **“How can a child learn self-reliance if at every moment he is under control and his parents always make decisions for him?”**
 - Controlled children become controlled adults
- Teach AWARENESS not FEAR
 - If you want kids to be able to say NO to an adult who is invading their space/making them uncomfortable, etc.... (which is usually someone they know, NOT a stranger) we want to encourage them to say NO to adults...even to us (their parents).
 - Change your thought that kids being able to say NO to us (respectfully) is NOT always a sign of defiance... it can be training/supporting them to learn to stand up for themselves (which is a skill you’ll want them to develop for the real world)
 - Respect your kids when they don’t want to give hugs / kisses (even to you.) This helps them feel they oversee their bodies... again – something we WANT them to feel – EMPOWERMENT not VICTIM!

SAFETY TRAINING FROM GERMANY...

- Re: strangers... have them practice shouting NO! I DON’T WANT TO! If anyone tries to touch them or grab them.
 - Parents and kids have a secret password... and in the event of an emergency and someone else (parent approved) has to get the child, the parent can give the trusted adult the agreed upon password to tell the child – letting the child know that it’s ok, in this instance, to go with this trusted adult...
 - Give kids the advice if you feel you are being followed, kids are trained to go to a busy, public place (restaurant/store) and ask for help
- Allow Kids to do more and more on their own.
 - Get over your fears, moms... Remember, the benefits far outweigh the risks (and we are safer than we are lead to believe)
 - Use tech – Gizmo watch (ability for kids to have 6 different contacts and also allows parents to track where their kid is.) If using this type of gadget helps you get over your fear and give your kid more independence – it is WORTH IT!
 - At playgrounds – give kids some space with guidance to ask a mom for help if they need it. (perhaps take a walk out of the area of the playground)
 - Think the rational thought that if they do get hurt, someone will help (just as you would for another child)

FIRE, KNIVES AND ALL THINGS DANGEROUS

- German kids are taught to safely use a knife in preschool (butter knives at first)
- There are no kids safety scissors – taught to use regular scissors
- Taught a fire unit in 1st grade
 - How matches work (they strike hundreds of them in an hour – by the end – the fascination is gone...)
 - Light candles
 - Discuss dangers and how to use it safely
- German thinking... If you didn't approach these "taboo" topics/dangers head on, they'll do it in secret and could get hurt due to their ignorance – again – SELF-REGULATION PRACTICE!
- German culture favors adventure parks – parks with what we in the States would consider risky equipment with low safety standards... and their culture doesn't award damages to the families of kids that get hurt at these parks – again SELF-REGULATION is HONORED and PARAMOUNT!
 - The goal of these parks is to create risk, so kids can start to manage it for themselves.
- Encourage REAL ADVENTURES no need for an adventure park. You just need...
 - Independent initiative
 - Personal responsibility
 - Potential for failure
 - Willingness to accept possible consequences
- ***If you as mom are having a tough time letting go... think this thought...***
 - **"It's dangerous when kids are protected from risk taking. This is the only way you learn how to trust yourself"**
 - BTW... Anxiety and victimized feelings come when you CAN'T trust yourself and DON'T have confidence in your ability to handle challenges/risks/etc.
- OVERPROTECTION = INCREASED ANXIETY
 - "My parents didn't worry about me, so I didn't worry about me." – Elizabeth Gilbert

SEX EDUCATION – taught EARLY!

- 1st/2nd grade – discuss basic biology, body differences, sex abuse prevention strategies
 - Being open and upfront/honest at an early age helps lower feelings of body shaming
- Pre-teens/teens in Germany learn more than just STD's and Conception...
 - Body image
 - Pregnancy prevention
 - Masturbation
 - Orgasms
 - Homosexuality
 - Emotional connectedness
- Tip for us here in the US... Cover this stuff with your kid... do it yourself!
 - Get your kids guides/books/resources etc. if they don't want to talk with you - as long as they get the accurate information (Meg Meeker has a video you can download to inform kids – one of many resources!)

DEATH

- Don't discourage talking about it if kids come to you with questions/concerns.
- Ask "What do you think about it?"
- Can also discuss some religious beliefs of afterlife/ mythology / etc.

Bring on tough subjects early and often gives intellectual freedom to your kids. Trust their ability to handle it.

The default strategy with any tough subject your kids comes to you with... "What do you think?"

If we want our kids to be independent, we should encourage their development of freedom of THOUGHT

- Come to terms... THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS GOING TO THINK OR BELIEVE WHAT YOU DO.
 - Do you think and believe in the same way as your parents?
- A parent forbidding children doing certain things will most likely be ignored and the worse case, kids will do it for spite.
- With more independence and self-regulation, there is a higher involvement as a community member / citizen.
- Higher independence/self-regulation at younger age = higher feeling of capable and empowered feelings.
 - These feelings help inform how German teens feel about themselves and their future.
 - They experience lower rates of depression and anxiety than their US counterparts. Just sayin'....
- College kids in the US have increasing demand for mental health help and higher rates of depression and anxiety...
 - possibly due to a lack of resilience and feelings of helplessness being a victim and not an empowered person...
 - this may be due to the fact that here in the US the prevailing trend is that teens do not and have not had as much responsibilities/freedoms/independence and self-regulation practice up to this point in their lives.

We want our kids to have the skills to craft their OWN lives.

The goal isn't for us to push them (academically/resume-building/organized sports prowess/etc.) to construct the life WE think they should have.

RECIPE FOR A SELF RELIANT AND RESPONSIBLE ADULT...

- Start YOUNG
 - Let them self-soothe to sleep
 - Don't interrupt a happy baby/a toddler happily playing on their own
 - Set up overnights and other experience your baby/toddler can have WITHOUT YOU
- Focus on PLAY BASED LEARNING at toddler/preschool age in a mixed-age program if available
- Practice walking/biking to school with them so they can do it ON THEIR OWN
- Protect time in your day for kids to PLAY FREELY (without direct adult supervision)

- Get outside for an hour a day – no matter the weather
- Discuss/practice with risky/dangerous things and topics so kids can practice (and it not be so forbidden/enticing)
- Let kids take a crack at managing their own relationships
- Let kids pursue their own ideas, interests, career goals – start this practice with kids leading their own learning/projects while young
- Encourage them to test out their independence and freedom all along the way
- Let them do as much on their own as possible... since BIRTH
- Recognize that your fears as mom are the only thing in your way from giving these opportunities to your kids.
 - And the good news??? you can address your fears and conquer them! Remember, your kid is more likely to be struck by lightning than getting abducted – let's put some of these fears in their place, ok?

OTHER GERMAN LESSONS

- All that's required from us parents:
 - Love
 - Food
 - Shelter
 - General guidance
- They will do the rest of the growing up THEMSELVES.

“My children are not really mine... they belong first and foremost to themselves.”

- DO NOT or STOP looking at your children as beings that need to be CONTROLLED
- **As Moms... shift your view of your role...**
 - **FROM: AUTHORITY (where you are the enforcer of all rules and the teacher of all things)...**
 - **TO: GUIDE/HELPER (and make space for others to guide and help... build that village!)**

PUSH FOR CHANGE:

- Universal preschool
- Subsidized childcare
- School policies allowing for more play in school
 - Put homework in its place
- We need more time to be FAMILIES
 - Paid parental leave
 - Lower work hours or not have work creep into evenings and weekends
 - Guaranteed sick and vacation days
- Place something other than a job at the center of our assessment of what makes a good life. (minimalism!)

Change your thought to:

“My child is an individual (not an extension of me) and he has individual rights.”

- Right to independent time
- Right to connect with friends without a parent hovering
- Right to move around their community

We cannot raise free and responsible children by trying to restrict what they think and believe and punishing them for misbehavior...

We raise free and responsible children by giving them freedom and responsibility.