



Parenting: Who Is Raising Who?

by Joe Gandolfo

We brought our first son, Cole, home on Monday, Labor Day 1996. Labor Day! No pun intended. Exhausted, we pulled into our driveway about the time the sun was setting. I parked the car and helped Tonya into the house. She sat on the couch in our living room.

I hurriedly went back to the car to get Cole. He was strapped into one of those car seats, sleeping, and my first challenge with a new born occurred. I could not get the baby basket to release from its base. Tugging, pulling and flabbergasted – I was finally able to get the baby basket to release. *“Is this a sign of things to come?”* I wondered.

Cole was still asleep in the basket. I brought him into the house and set the basket on the floor in front of Tonya and sat on the couch along side her. We both looked at each other and smiled. In a non-scripted unison we turned to look at Cole to see his eyes wide open looking back at us. In the instant my eyes met with the eyes of this little human being, my excitement and exhaustion quickly turned to a contained panic. *“What do you do now Dad?”* I thought.

During the first 6 months Cole taught us how to parent him – him letting us know what he needed. He would let us know through his laughs, tears, cries, hollers, coos, awakenings at night, his smiles – we learned to respond. **By being attentive**, Tonya and I learned how to take care of him. He taught us what he needed and we were learning to *be parents*. But just when we thought we had the parenting thing down, the little guy started to crawl and crawl all over he did. It all changed.

Where is that darn parenting manual? When we had our second son, Duncan, in January 2001 their still was no parenting manual given out. For sure parents should receive a manual once having a second child. Come on, help a parent out! *“There is no parenting manual that comes with kids”*, I have heard many times or is there a manual after all? I believe there is a manual and that manual is our

Our children grow and change almost daily, and just when we think we have the parenting thing down – hopefully, we realize we do not. I am convinced that we parents must be open to our children growing and changing, that we must adapt to this change if we are going to be effective parents. If we can open up our hearts and minds, they have as much value, if not more, to share with us as we do with them.

My boys have reminded me that change is constant. They have revealed to me my fears and have unknowingly encouraged me to face and embrace my fears. They have taught me about love, playfulness, trust and forgiveness. They have revealed to me a deeper understanding about hope, inspiration and perseverance. The thought I had the night we brought Cole home, “*What do you do now Dad?*” I continue to have today – eleven years and counting.

Who Is Raising Who? There is a manual after all. Check it out!

Listen to Joe’s free daily podcast – ***Teen Success Radio*** – available on iTunes.
His new book ***The Greatest Teenage Myth in the World*** is now available @
www.JosephGandolfo.com or www.TheGreatestTeenageMythInTheWorld.com

Joe Gandolfo is on a mission to ***champion the greatest commodity in today’s world – our youth, teenagers, young adults and college students***, and to rally, strengthen and energize the adults – parents, educators, mental health professionals and organizations - who work with and care about our greatest commodity in the world.

Joe works as a ***professional speaker, success coach, seminar leader motivational counselor and author***. He brings 20 years experience working with youth, teen-agers, student-athletes, professional athletes, adults, parents, educators, public and private schools, organizations and associations.

His clients have included: *Georgia Tech Athletic Association, Rockdale County Schools, Cobb County Schools, Cobb Teen Leadership, YMCA, Childcare Resource Network, University of Clemson, University of West Georgia, PGA of America, Milwaukee Brewers, Coca-Cola, SouthCoast Hospitals, Owens-Corning and MPI Georgia Chapter.*

He has been an adjunct professor at Georgia Tech (1996-2000) and Georgia State (2005-06). He was on staff at the Homer Rice Center for Sports Performance (2000-07). He has had a private consulting practice since 1991.

To inquire: 678-640-0000, joe@JosephGandolfo.com, www.JosephGandolfo.com