

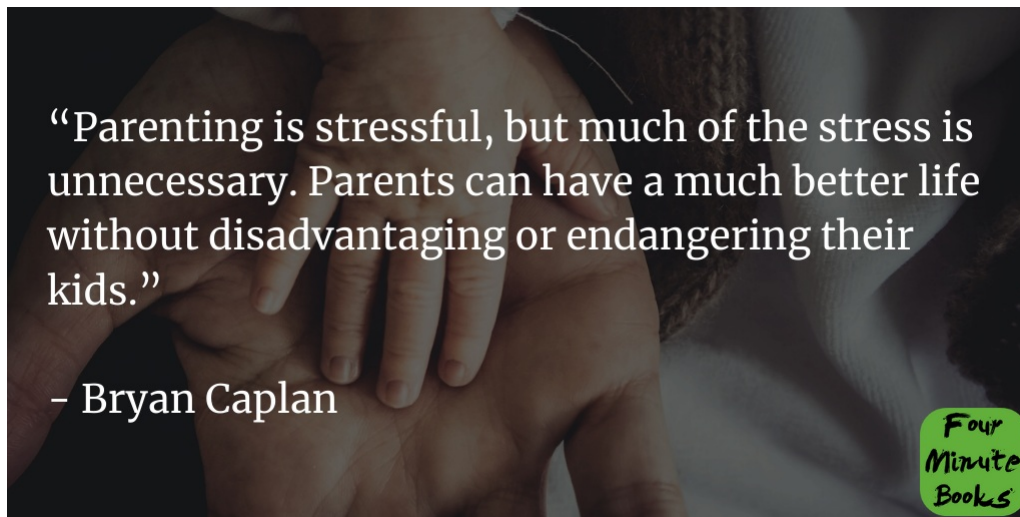
Selfish Reasons To Have More Kids Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Selfish Reasons to Have More Kids* explains how parents accidentally allowed modernity to suck all the pleasure out of family life, and why they should feel no guilt over choosing a low-stress way of parenting instead.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Selfish Reasons to Have More Kids: Why Being a Great Parent is Less Work and More Fun Than You Think tackles some of the big mysteries of modern life: if parenting is anywhere near as stressful as everyone says, why do so many people keep doing it? And if parenting is so wonderful, then why are fewer people becoming parents and having fewer kids?

Economist Bryan Caplan argues that, when it comes to happiness in family choices, too many parents are shooting themselves in the foot. They choose to have too few children. Usually for bad reasons like the short-term unpleasantness of infants and toddlers. Or because they worry that the world is dangerous and the future is bleak.

But if you like children at all, you shouldn't let overblown, short-term concerns outweigh the huge pleasure you could get from enjoying your family later in life.

Here are 3 lessons I've learned:

1. Most of your parenting choices don't matter very much, so there's no point in stressing over them.
2. Children's health, safety, and overall quality of life have actually never been better.

3. If parenting really can be easier and much more fun than you think, perhaps you should have another kid or two!

Lesson 1: Parenting choices don't have a huge impact on kids, but that's actually good news.

Parents largely assume that their day to day choices add up to create a huge, long-term impact on their children. This invites parents to do things like worry about all of these choices, read a ton of parenting advice, consult parenting experts, and more.

However, many reliable “twin studies” put these myths to rest. When researchers study twins who have been raised separately, they find that the twins come to resemble their genetic parents much more closely than the adoptive parents who raised them.

Not just “resemble” as in appearance—children turn out much like their genetic parents, despite adoptive upbringing, in terms of educational outcomes, political beliefs, health risks, and more.

What's the significance of these twin findings? Basically, once you've conceived your children, you've already cast the genetic dice. If those kids turn out like you, it's probably more due to their genetic similarity than due to what you said or did as a parent.

There's some wiggle room for impacting children's values and behaviors through parenting, but probably mostly in the short term. In the long run, they're likely to revert to their genetic baseline. So you should choose a genetic co-parent whose qualities you like, and then try not to sweat the small stuff.

Lesson 2: Don't listen to scary headlines—most children today have great lives.

If you've fallen into the trap of watching or reading too much conventional news, you've probably developed the belief that modern life is dangerous for kids. They seem to face all sorts of health hazards, like from toxic plastics and processed food. Plus it seems like dangerous strangers lurk everywhere, from public playgrounds to right inside your home via the computers and smartphones even young children use.

Happily, this overall picture of safety doom and gloom just isn't accurate.

Although there's always room for improvement, children have never had it better in the history of humankind. **Vaccinations have virtually eradicated many of the infectious diseases of childhood, and diseases like childhood cancers have become more and more treatable.**

Last but not least, “stranger danger” was always overblown—kidnappings and murders get lots of attention because they’re rare, not because they’re common. In short, if you have a child today, he or she is very likely to go on to lead a good life, especially in a developed country.

Lesson 3: You might want to have more kids than you’d originally planned since good parenting is not as hard as you thought.

Social scientists have had a hard time figuring out whether children make parents happier or less happy with their lives. The data isn’t really clear, and there are also lots of confounding variables. **Over 90% of parents report *not* regretting their choice to have kids, though, which is pretty good evidence that parental “buyer’s remorse” is low.**

Plus, different kinds of parenting are more and less pleasant for the parents. Even if parents are a bit less happy than non-parents, that could simply be due to the steep demands of modern parenting: intensive parental involvement in school, many extracurricular activities, lots of stress about the future for parents and children alike.

If Caplan is correct that these stressful parenting choices don’t matter much and aren’t really worth it, then parents should stop choosing them and stressing themselves out needlessly! A lighter parenting touch means parenting each child costs much less in time and money than if you were doing very intensive parenting.

Middle-class people commonly assume that they can only afford 1 or 2 children. They think too much of the costs of high-quality housing, education, activities, and more. But many people could afford extra children if they didn’t worry so much about buying things that don’t matter.

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Selfish Reasons To Have More Kids Review

As Caplan admits, if you just don't want or like kids at all, he's not going to convince you of anything in *Selfish Reasons to Have More Kids*. After all, it's the "selfish" case! But if you already like kids and are just a little *too* worried about taking care of them, this book could set you straight and literally change the course that your family life takes.

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Who would I recommend the Selfish Reasons To Have More Kids summary to?

The 35-year old who's trying to decide whether she is done having kids, the 22-year old who's planning how to balance the demands of career and family, and anyone who wants to push back against the insane demands of modern parenting in favor of a saner path.