

Overview: Youth suicide rates are climbing, antidepressant prescriptions for children are common, and a staggering number of kids are lonely, lost, sad, and fearful of growing up. What's gone wrong with America's youth? Abigail Shrier, bestselling author and investigative journalist, in her recently released book, *"Bad Therapy - Why the Kids Aren't Growing Up,"* argues that the problem isn't always the kids - it's often the mental health experts (and some parents). In his newly released book, *"The War on Children,"* John MacArthur echoes similar concerns. He writes, *"The war on children is raging in education, entertainment, psychology, politics, and practically every other earthly realm where parents or children can be influenced."* The war for the hearts and minds of our children is on, and MacArthur explains where the strategic battles are being fought and how to engage biblically. This class will focus on both the problems and the Biblical solutions for protecting children and helping them grow to maturity.

Session One: "What's the Problem?"

A. Secular Perspective (*Bad Therapy* by Abigail Shrier) (Introduction and Chapter 1)

1. Quote: *"We parents have become so frantic, hyper vigilant, and borderline obsessive about our kids' mental health that we routinely allow all manner of mental health expert to evict us from the room. ('We will let you know.')* *We've been relying on them for decades to tell us how to raise well-adjusted kids. Maybe we were overcompensating for the fact that our own parents had assumed the opposite: that psychologists were the last people you should consult on how to raise normal kids...We explored our childhoods and learned to see our parents as emotionally stunted. Emotionally stunted parents expected too much, listened too little, and failed to discover their kids' hidden pain. Emotionally stunted parents inflicted emotional injury."* (pp. xiv and xv)

2. Quote: *"Guided by these experts, we adopted a therapeutic approach to parenting. We learned to offer our kids the reasons behind every rule and request. We never, ever spanked. We perfected the 'time-out' and provided thorough explanation for any punishment (which we then rebranded as a 'consequence' to remove any associated shame and make us feel less authoritarian)...We needed our kids and everyone around them to know: our kids weren't shy, they had 'social anxiety disorder' or 'social phobia.' They weren't poorly behaved, they had 'oppositional defiant disorder.' They weren't disruptive students, they had 'ADHD.' It wasn't our fault, and it wasn't theirs. We would attack and finally eliminate the stigma surrounding these diagnoses. Rates at which our children received them soared."* (p. xvi)

3. Quote: *"Schools, especially, jumped at the opportunity to adopt a therapeutic approach to education and announced themselves our 'partners' in childrearing. School mental health staffs expanded: more psychologists, more counselors, more social workers. The new regime would diagnose and accommodate, not punish or reward. It directed kids in routinized habits of monitoring and sharing their bad feelings. It trained teachers to understand 'trauma' as the root of student misbehavior and academic underperformance. By feeding normal kids with normal problems into an unending pipeline, the mental health industry is minting patients faster than it can cure them...The experts operate from the assumption that everyone requires therapy and everyone is at least a little 'broken.' They conscripted teachers into a therapeutic order of education, which meant treating every child as emotionally damaged...Maybe it's time we offered a little resistance."* (pp. xvii and xviii)

4. Quote from the author's own personal experience as an adult (and adverse effects to children and adolescents): (pp. 4 and 5)

5. Definition of psychotherapy from American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: *"A form of psychiatric treatment that involves therapeutic conversations and interactions between a therapist and a child or family."* The American Psychological Assoc. defines it: *"Any psychological service provided by a trained professional."* As the author goes on, *"...therapy is conversations about feelings and personal problems styled as medicine. Parents often assume that therapy with a well-meaning professional can only help a child or adolescent's emotional development. Big mistake. Like any intervention with the potential to help, therapy can harm."* (p. 6)

6. Iatrogenesis (When the healer makes things worse): *"From the Greek, iatrogenesis literally means 'originating with the healer' and refers to the phenomenon of a healer harming a patient in the course of treatment...Much of iatrogenesis occurs not because a doctor is malicious or incompetent but because treatment exposes patient to exogenous [factors or agents introduced or produced outside the organism or system] risks. Iatrogenesis is everywhere - because all interventions carry risk...And here, what I'm calling an 'intervention' is any sort of advice or corrective you would typically give only to someone with a deficiency or incapacity...With interventions a good rule of thumb is: Don't go in for an X-ray if you don't need one. Don't expose yourself to the germs of an ER just to say hello to your doctor friend. And - just maybe - don't send your kid off to therapy unless she absolutely requires it."* (p. 7)

7. Psychotherapy Needs a Warning Label (examples): *"Well-meaning therapists often act as though talking through your problems with a professional is good for everyone. That isn't so...Any intervention potent enough to cure is also powerful enough to hurt. Therapy is no benign folk remedy...it can provide relief. It can also deliver unintended harm. Therapy can lead a client to understand herself as sick and rearrange her self-understanding around a diagnosis."* (pp. 7-10)

1. **Quote:** *"Most adults can remember the halcyon [happy, blissful, peaceful] days when society sought to protect children from harm. Not anymore. Popular culture has turned on the young with an unimaginable barrage of destructive assaults. It is an aggressive campaign being executed with unconscionable malice. The primary goal is to brainwash children through the spread of lies shamelessly intended to obliterate biblical spirituality and morality - and thereby systematically dismantle the foundations of society... Assaults against children are coming from all directions. Propaganda is embedded in children's entertainment, in advertising that targets young people, in the music they listen to, and in their school curriculum. Media produced for children today is practically all infused with ideas that are purposely designed to undermine the biblical values that helped shape Western culture for their ancestors. The idea is to indoctrinate future generations with a belief system where good and evil are fundamentally inverted, where gender is not binary but rather a sliding scale with infinite possibilities, where sexual perversions are celebrated, and where God is banished from public discourse."* (pp. ix and x)

2. **Quote:** *"In her 1996 book 'It Takes a Village,' Hillary Clinton famously challenged the God-given parental role. She drew her book's title from an oft quoted African proverb, 'It take a village to raise a child.' There is of course a germ of truth in the proverb: Kids cannot be properly raised in total isolation, and what they are exposed to in their environment will influence the development of their character. Parents need to make sure they are surrounded with good influences...But Mrs. Clinton's critics and supporters alike understood that her objective in writing the book was to make a not-so-subtle argument against parental rights. She believes the secular state knows better than parents what is in the best interests of today's children. She is therefore convinced that child rearing should be a collectivist enterprise with the government ultimately in charge."* (p. xi)

3. **Quote:** *"That notion has become standard policy in public schools, local libraries, the entertainment industry, government agencies, and many large corporations. That's the reason society is now inundated with a flood of people and programs aggressively seeking to indoctrinate young children with values that reflect a radical, secular, and sexually deviant worldview. It explains the push for bizarre new activities targeting children, like graphically explicit sex education for preschoolers, 'Drag Queen Story Time,' and ubiquitous efforts to involve children in 'Gay Pride' celebrations. This is why even the Walt Disney Company has made a concerted effort to insert LGBTQ+ characters into all their children's programming."*(p. xii)

4. **Quote:** *"Christian parents face an especially hard, uphill battle to raise their children 'in the discipline and instruction of the Lord' (Eph. 6:4). Practically every bureaucrat who works in a government agency or public school system is convinced the government knows better than parents how children should be raised and what they should be taught. Furthermore, public schools nowadays are overwhelmingly (and often militantly) anti-Christian...These trends are not likely to be reversed in the near future. Governments do not easily relinquish control once they have seized it. Public schools and government interference in the parenting process will get worse, not better...If you are a parent, you need to recognize that (no matter who you are) your children are not exempt from the ongoing efforts to commandeer their worldview and alienate them from biblical principles...Above all, realize that this is war...It is a dangerous ideological conflict with eternity at stake. The enemy's aim is to capture your children's hearts and put them in permanent bondage by enslaving them to a sinfully corrupt worldview - a godless, amoral belief system. Your responsibility as parents is to keep them free from that bondage. You must do that by taking control of what they are taught. teach them God's Word; train them in righteousness; model righteousness for them; participate in every aspect of their lives; give them wise, biblically based guidance; and above all, give them your extravagant love."*(pp. x-xiii)

5. **Quote:** *"You cannot isolate your children enough to make sure they are untouched by the world's assaults, but you can shield them from many of the worst influences...It is after all, your duty as a parent to give their lives direction. Train them in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6), and train them well - especially in matters pertaining to their spiritual growth. It is to that end that I have written this book. I hope it is a help and encouragement to you as a parent or grandparent seeking to come to your precious children's defense in this brutal war."* (pp. xiii and xiv)

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain what Abigail Shrier means by a therapeutic approach to parenting and the dangers of this philosophy.
2. Why is iatrogenesis especially pertinent when related to the fields of psychology and psychiatry?
3. Give examples of how psychological labels may hinder the process of assisting children and adults in their growth.
4. What are the greatest dangers you have observed in which this culture wages war on our children?
5. Do you agree or disagree with John MacArthur when he writes, *"Don't leave your children in a public school if they are being bombarded daily with immoral godless propaganda. Don't enroll them in a private school that is not truly and thoroughly biblical. (A school that is 'Christian' in name only may actually be worse than any other option.) Take the lead in teaching your children regardless of what school choice you might make."*
6. If your children are already "raised" what (by God's grace) did you do well and what would you do differently?
7. Explain the importance of the three-fold balance in raising children: Telling, Teaching, and Training. (II Tim. 3:10-17)