

Keen to be mean

• Carlsbad woman writes a rule book for good parenting

RUTH MARVIN WEBSTER STAFF WRITER

Good parenting is not a popularity contest; or at least most experts agree - it shouldn't be. What's more important is insuring your children's safety at every stage of their development, said Carlsbad resident Maureen LoBue. She has written a new book on parenting called, "Mean Mom's Club: The Mom's Rule Book" (\$15 paperback from Amazon.com) that she says she hopes will give other moms the strength to be mean too.

"If you consider a mom's role is to insure safety," LoBue said, "then it becomes dear that your job does indeed include being a mean mom: setting clear boundaries and saying no when the boundaries are being tested, each and every time without fail."

LoBue, who has a master's degree in education and childhood development, said the title of the book came from the days when she was raising her two children and they would question her reason for saying no, and, instead of simply saying "Because I said so," she would say, "It's in the Mean Mom's Rule Book."

And when her sons would complain that she was a mean mom, LoBue said, she would tell them she was SO mean she was president of the mean moms club.

Now that her sons are grown and moved away from home, she said, she wanted to write the rules down for them in a book. She has dedicated her book to them: Andy, 27, who graduated from San Diego State University with an engineering degree, and Ben, 21, who is currently finishing up his undergraduate, degree at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo.

The Mean Mom's Rule Book consists of seven simple rules that, LoBue said, can be applied to a variety of situations.

One such rule states: "I brought you into the world, and I can take you out.", By this, she said, she means that it is a mom's job to be in charge and teach her child right from wrong, which includes reasonable punishment.

At different stages in a child's development, safety issues change and so do the techniques to rein in misbehavior, she said. For infants, safety is being warm, comfortable and well-fed. But for toddlers, physical protection becomes most important as they go out and explore the world on their own. For preschoolers, safety means learning social boundaries, and for teens, it means safety from experiences that they think they are ready for and are not.

Looking at safety concerns this way, said LoBue, just makes sense, common sense.

This lets you decide for yourself," she said. "I wanted the book to be a quick reference, and the rules cover a whole range of things that you can use with your own parenting styles because there are a lot of different families out there."

LoBue said that all parents have personal goals for their children, and though they can differ from family to family, it is important to have rules and stick to them.

"When I was a family advocate, we would set up structured, programs for the families. And with some sense of stability, the children always did better," she said.

Whatever house rules your family chooses, it is important to be consistent because testing boundaries is every child's way of checking to see if the safety net is still in place, said LoBue.

"When you look at that new beautiful baby, you need to have a plan," said LoBue. "You need to sit down with your husband and have a foundation to come back to. And then you have to make sure you follow that plan."

MEAN MOM'S QUIZ (CONTINUED)

.2. Your 15-year-old son comes into the room sporting spiked hair in a rainbow of colors. You are going to a family event. What do you say?

- A. "Love your shirt. Let's go."
- B. "No son of mine is going to a family event like that."
- C. "wash your hair so you don't embarrass yourself."

3. Your 40-year-old wants to go with big brother. Big brother offers to let him ride on the front of the bike so he won't cry. What do you do?

- A. Let him go because you know your older child will be careful
- B. Agree with the plan so you can get a break.
- C. Refuse to let him ride on the bike.

MEAN MOM'S QUIZ

Do you have what it takes to be a take-charge mom who bases her decisions on common sense and a foundation of seven rules?

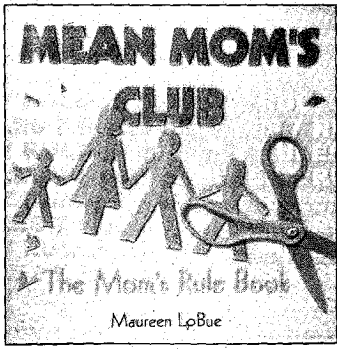
1. The baby is fussing, dinner is still in the freezer, your son needs to be picked up in 20 minutes, and your head is pounding. What do you do?

- A. Put the frozen meat against your head and pick up your son.
- B. Put the baby in the crib, have a short cry, and pick up your son.
- C. Take some aspirin, order pizza, and call a friend to pick up your son.

➤ QUIZ, G-4

4. While shopping, your 10-year-old finds a pair of too-expensive pants. She starts to cry. What do you do?

- A. Give her the money just this once because you see how important it is to her.
- B. Suggest she earn the extra money by organizing the closets at home,
- C. Refuse to buy the pants under any circumstances to show her who is in charge.



Cover of "Mean Mom's Club" by Maureen LoBue, M.Ed..

A self-described "mean mom" and proud of it, LoBue said the message of her book has already resonated with other moms. She recently filmed an interview on a television talk show in Seattle, and local parenting groups have expressed interest in having her talk with them. To contact LoBue, e-mail her at meanmom@meanmomsclub.com.

** Find the answers to the quiz at www.meanmomsclub.com.

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