

# Introduction

*“If we don’t shape our kids, they will be shaped by outside forces that don’t care what shape our kids are in.”*

- DR. LOUISE HART.

When kids are good and well-behaved, it can be nice. Things are generally quiet, and it’s almost like you’re only vaguely aware that there are little people living in the house, and you occasionally set out food and snacks for them. Kind of like having gnomes who come out at night and tidy up and cobble shoes for you.

But when they’re not well behaving. You might as well have an infestation of hobgoblins who make messes, break things, and demand tribute in the form of snacks, food, vastly overpriced shoes, trinkets, or whatever happens to be trending on their friends Tik Tok that week. And if you give them what they want, they only occasionally shut up until another Tik Tok comes on 'and they generate more demands.

Gnomes, kids, hobgoblins. It’s kind of the same but different.

So you’re stuck with them. And you do your best to raise them right, fashion them into socially acceptable human beings. Which is tough enough, a job all its own. But even that’s not enough because you have to guard against influences. There’s some stuff out there that can fill their heads with all sorts of nonsense. And at first, it can even seem benign or, at best, harmless.

Oh, my child has taken an interest in modern political figures of 20th-century India.

Weird but ok. They'll be cultured and knowledgeable of history. Great.

And then suddenly, they're wandering around in bed sheets and announcing their intention to go on hunger strikes to protest western imperialist expansion.

And then you have to turn to your spouse and go, "Honey, can we still get a trade-in on Gandhi here? And maybe just get the gnomes and hobgoblins? Maybe a dog for them to play with too or something?"

It can be rough and more than a little daunting.

And very tiresome. Because it's bad enough when they're full of curiosity and constantly asking questions and stuffing toys up their nose. But it gets worse when they stop asking questions because they know everything. And disdainfully dismiss anything that doesn't conform with their current worldview fascination.

And every time we turn on the television, there are horror stories of kids running off and joining cults and stuff. You've gotta really watch those influences because no matter how hard you try, you can't keep them clear of them. Those outside influences, good or bad, will find a way to your kids' eyes and ears. And despite their utter certainty of their enlightenment, they're susceptible. Very much so. And that's very scary for us.

The best we can do is try and teach them to guard themselves and instill within them wisdom through examples. Like taking half of their Halloween candy and explaining to them that they've just discovered taxes. And then they complain that you stole it, it's extortion, and then you give them a hug and share a warm moment because they just discovered government and civics also!