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MY TURN

■ **Wayne Chan**



Bike locks and Beatles music make for good parenting lessons

There's no two ways about it — being a parent is a humbling experience.

Generally, I think I know what I'm doing. Be fair, but be consistent. Give your kids a helping hand, but don't do everything for them. Love them unconditionally.

For the most part, that covers about 80 percent of anything I ever face. Unfortunately, that leaves about 20 percent of the time when I can make a complete idiot of myself.

A perfect example — the case of the unlocked bicycle.

Earlier this spring, I was in charge of delivering snacks and drinks to my son Tyler's junior varsity tennis team. Tyler also had a doctor's appointment right after the match, so I knew timing that day would be pretty tight.

Being the smart, logistical dad that I am, I decided on my way to the tennis match that I should pick up the bike Tyler rides to school every day so we could make it on time to the doctor's appointment.

Way to think ahead, dad! I should have been a professional chess player.

As I pulled up to the bike area, I saw Tyler's bike parked in the bike rack, but also noticed it was not locked up.

You might be wondering, "Well, why doesn't he have a lock?" It's a logical question. But my answer would be that the bike *did* have a lock — it was just wrapped around the frame of the bike instead of actually being locked to the bike rack.

Tyler apparently decided he would forego the whole pesky bike-locking process in favor of a more laissez-faire, who-would-ever-think-of-stealing-my-expensive-unlocked-bike-sitting-alone-in-the-bike-rack philosophy.

I have a theory about teenagers.

The theory is that all teenagers in their developmental years have skulls so thick that it crowds out 99 percent of any brain matter that would normally be there. I call this developmental stage "Boneheadia Screwupity."

As I made my way to the tennis courts (feeling it was my fiduciary responsibility to bring up the unlocked bike situation), I approached Tyler.

Wayne: Ty — How can you not lock up your bike, especially when you have a perfectly good bike lock right on the bike?

Tyler: I dunno.

Wayne: I mean, you have this expensive bike — how can you be so careless not to lock it up!?

Tyler: I've left it unlocked all year long and no one's ever taken it. How can you be so sure someone will take it?

Wayne: Because I did the same thing in high school and somebody swiped my bike!!!

As I said earlier, being a parent is a humbling experience. But let me end this column on a different note.

This next story is kind of a big deal for me. First, besides Tyler, my wife Maya and I are also the parents of Ethan and Savannah. The three of them are triplets and they are now 16 years old. Beyond that, Ethan and Savannah are autistic. They don't speak much, but they are terrific kids.

Second, I love the Beatles.

Not long ago, I took all three of the kids to a Beatles tribute show. I knew Tyler would love it, but to be honest, I only brought Ethan and Savannah because the tickets were inexpensive and I did not have anyone who could watch them at home. They'd never expressed any interest in the Beatles that I could ever tell, but I thought it would be a nice night out with the kids while Maya was away on business.

When the show started, Savannah started bobbing her head, then she stood up and started dancing and singing. She knew the words to "Hey Jude," "Can't Buy Me Love," "Get Back," and many others. All this was coming from my daughter who normally doesn't say more than a word or two at a time.

Of course, I play the Beatles in the car a lot when I'm driving them around, but I really had no idea she had picked up on the lyrics. She sang along to many of the songs with a big smile on her face. Tyler and I were on each side of her and we were simply amazed.

I can't tell you how blown away I was to see her like this. I will never underestimate her again.

At one point, she sang the words to "Blackbird":

*Blackbird singing
 in the dead of night.
 Take these broken wings
 and learn to fly.*

Those 15 words mean so much more to me now. It truly was a humbling experience.

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