

From The World Is Flat by Thomas L. Friedman

Parenting (excerpts from page 303)

No discussion of compassionate flatism would be complete without also discussing the need for improved parenting. Helping individuals adapt to a flat world is not only the job of governments and companies. It is also the job of parents. They too need to know in what world their kids are growing up and what it will take for them to thrive. Put simply, we need a new generation of parents ready to administer tough love: There comes a time when you've got to put away the Game Boys, turn off the television set, put away the iPod, and get your kids down to work.

The sense of entitlement, the sense that because we once dominated global commerce and geopolitics – and Olympic basketball – we always will, the sense that our kids have to be swaddled in cotton wool so that nothing bad or disappointing or stressful ever happens to them at school is, quite simply, a growing cancer on American society. And if we don't start to reverse it, our kids are going to be in for a huge and socially disruptive shock from the flat world.

David Baltimore, the Nobel Prize – winning president of Caltech, knows what it takes to get your child ready to compete against the cream of the global crop. He told me that he is struck by the fact that almost all the students who make it to Caltech, one of the best scientific universities in the world, come from public schools, not from private schools that sometimes nurture a sense that just because you are there, you are special and entitled.

"I look at the kids who come to Caltech, and they grew up in families that encouraged them to work hard and to put off a little bit of gratification for the future and to understand that they need to hone their skills to play an important role in the world," Baltimore said. "I give parents enormous credit for this, because these kids are all coming from public schools that people are calling failures. Public education is producing these remarkable students – so it CAN be done. Their parents have nurtured them to make sure that they realize their potential. I think we need a revolution in this country when it comes to parenting around education."

Friedman later goes on to say: "I am suggesting that we do more to push our young people to go beyond their comfort zones, to do things right, and to be ready to suffer some short-run pain for longer gain."