

NEWS



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Baby not on board

By Joe McAllister , CORRESPONDENT

Springfield author Joe Sindoni spells out, from A to Z, the things to consider before starting a family in "50 Reasons Not to Have Kids."

Joe Sindoni wants to qualify himself: he loves his kids. They're grown and doing fine.

After raising his two sons from "colic to college" by himself, this original Mr. Mom answers the question, "Would you do it all over again?" with an emphatic "No!"

The 50-year-old Springfield resident's advice, insights and observations on child rearing are all in his newly released book "50 Reasons Not to Have Kids." It's a dose of honesty and reality on raising children in an increasingly complicated society.

"Parenting the way our parents did isn't working very well," he says. "Today a family plan is just as important as a business plan."

Sindoni offers no restraint of tongue or pen.

"There is certainly a lot of good and a lot of responsibility in raising children but the trials and tribulations outweigh the good," says Sindoni. "It's so much more challenging than running a small business. I'm much more sympathetic to women who stay home to raise children."

The self-taught family guy found himself divorced in 1982 when his wife was diagnosed with serious mental disorders. An anomaly over 20 years ago, Sindoni was awarded full custody of two toddler boys.

From the terrible twos to the troublesome teen years, Sindoni single-handedly raised his two sons Joseph, now 26 and Justin, 27. He cut back on hours running his own business and took a financial hit along with an emotional one.

He discovered that raising children was as John Lennon said, "A responsibility which most of us, including me, avoid most of the time because it's too hard."

Sindoni was there for PTA meetings, karate classes, and Little League and school trips. In some ways, he's still old school in his approach to child rearing.

"My kids were the first day care generation," Sindoni says. "Today, parents are throwing their kids in day care en masse, as young as six months old. It's not a good thing."

In his book, Sindoni answers such parenting questions as: Can having a baby save your marriage? Who is easier to raise: boys or girls? Can you afford to have children? Does day care do more harm or good to your child?

With typical brutal honesty, Sindoni questions some parents' ability to have and raise children at all. "Some people aren't qualified to have a pet, no less children," he says. "Family planning is more than just planning the number of children. It's planning whether to have children at all."

Sindoni credits his parental skills to on-the-job training, parenting classes and therapy sessions. He even turned to "stand-up comedy over Prozac" to keep his sanity. He's performed in Delaware County clubs, with his whole act centered around the yin and yang of family life.

His summers are spent at Wildwood Crest where he works as a lifeguard. The stay-at-home experience awakened another muse in Sindoni, the parent. He became Joe Sindoni, the writer.

"I collected my thoughts, ideas and experiences by writing them down," Sindoni says. "Being a single dad, I had a lot to write about."

Sindoni's essays on parenting have been published in the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Baltimore Sun.

In his book, Sindoni advises parents and parents-to-be how to avoid what he calls "parental bear traps." His controversial statements are sure to raise eyebrows and voices - just what Sindoni wants.

"Making a baby is not a sacred event, raising a child is," he says. "Today we're too busy with our own lives to raise our own children."

Sindoni challenges the system, both educational and social. On prescribing drugs for kids: "Some kids just don't learn well in classrooms," he says.

"To me, ADD means Alert, Determined and Decisive kids. The first drug most kids are introduced to is Ritalin."

Sindoni isn't anti-family. He's more pro-parent choice.

"I see my friends live life child-free. They're economically better off and their lives are much more stress-free. I'm just offering people a dose of honesty."