

## Swede and O.D.D

Recently I was engaged in a pleasant conversation with my favorite School Marm. She is intelligent, highly degreed and is employed in one of Minnesota's larger school districts. Her educational specialty is working with educationally challenged and "special-needs" students.

I was interested in hearing about her work and latest challenges. She told me about one of her typical challenges in working with these "special needs" students. An 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy had been sent to her as a result of his disruptive behavior in a classroom. Upon coming into her room and being told to take a seat at one of the tables, he responded with some advice to her that is unprintable here, as this is a family-oriented newspaper.

Suffice it to say that had I said something of that sort to one of my teachers when I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I doubt I would have lived to make it home to face the second dose of justly deserved wrath that would have awaited me.

"What did you do to him?" I inquired.

"Well, I did about all I could do, which was send him to the principal's office, and then get control of my classroom again' she replied.

"What did the Principal do to him?" I wondered.

"He called his mother and sent him home for the day. But, later in the day, the mother called and demanded a conference with the principal, the school counselor and me. So, we had one at the end of the day. The mom showed up and was livid" she said.

"Little wonder about that, I'd have been more than a little livid too".

"Oh, no, not for that reason, the mother was livid at us as teachers, and demanded that her son be placed in a special classroom due to his condition".

"What condition?" I inquired.

Well, Mom claimed her boy couldn't help acting like that because he has ODD – Oppositional Defiance Disorder. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, but typically by belligerent and defiant behavior towards authority figures, such as teachers.

Wise and world traveled man that I am, I knew The Marm was pulling my leg on this one.

Okay, I'm not so wise. She advised me to go Google on ODD and see what I found. So, I did exactly that, and learned more about this insidious and frightful emotional condition that plagues so many teens and preteens. Turns out it's a recognized emotional/psychological condition, and has an entire treatment program including group

therapy, behavioral modification programs, and a full cornucopia of pharmaceuticals to treat it.

After reading and thinking about it, I concluded that ODD must have genetic roots, and is inherited. This conclusion came to me after giving some thought to my own family history and background. It became evident that my family has suffered from ODD for several generations now.

It begins with my own father, aka The Swede. He was raised in a single-parent family during the Depression, he and his mother having been abandoned by his father. With his mother working long and hard hours, Swede found much time and opportunity to follow the designs and intents of his own heart, most of which were not good. In due course, he found himself interacting with a judicial magistrate acting in his official capacity. Knowing, as most folks did, that WWII was raging, the Judge gave Swede a choice between becoming acquainted with either a military recruiter, or the warden at a state facility near Redwing.

In a decision that was to be life changing and far reaching, Swede decided on the recruiter, and made the acquaintance of a Sergeant in the USMC whose job it was to find sufficient quantities of young men to serve as cannon fodder during our nation's time of need. Somehow in the recruiting process, Swede was able to hide or disguise his ODD, or the Sergeant was careless in his duties and failed to make the proper inquiries and examinations. Eventually Swede found himself at Paris Island, under the tutelage of a Drill Instructor, far less benevolent and compassionate than the Recruiter. This DI did come diagnose Swede's rather severe case of ODD and began steps to treat it. These steps included some long days of physical activities, group therapy in having the entire platoon participate in behavioral modification techniques, and the occasional and judiciously placed boot-in-the-ass.

The entire program worked wonderfully, curing Swede of the nearly all of his ODD tendencies in eight short weeks. Swede went on to serve his country in 3 theaters of operation, receive medals and commendations, and eventually return home to make use of the GI bill to go to college, begin a career, and then get married and raise a family.

It was when this last item came to fruition that ODD once again reared its ugly head. Swede and the Mrs. were to bear and raise 5 offspring, all of which suffered from ODD. Every one of them. Although all 5 offspring were to manifest this defiance in their own unique ways, all 5 of them had it. And, although each obtained only one-half of their genetic material from Swede, the Mrs. was certain that the ODD came from his side of the family, and not hers. Or so she told us.

Swede, himself now an expert in identifying and treating this condition, modified slightly the methods and techniques learned from the Paris Island DI, and was able to cure all 5 of his offspring of this condition. Fairly early in their lives too. The efficacy of his treatment methods were manifested in part by the fact that all became acquainted with college recruiters, and not a single one with a jail warden.

Then came the next generation, which included my own lovely offspring,

I was utterly amazed from the delivery room on, how these precious bundles of joy demanded to be recognized as the center of the universe. They simply believed that the world should exist for them, and that everything they wanted should be given to them upon demand. They were each incensed when they were not given such deference. Not only that, but they would defy, at times with militant belligerence, any directive I gave them.

I knew then what one of my tasks as a father would entail: curing them of their ODD. Like my father before me, I used some of the more effective techniques that had cured me of this insidious condition, with some modifications and adjustment for a new generation. The long and short of it is that all 3 of my sons, while born with ODD, have been successfully cured of it.

All without medication, or the intervention of school counselors, or the local constabulary.

Benjamin Franklin rightly noted that education can not take place without discipline. Discipline seems to be the one thing, more than any other, lacking in our educational system. Which may explain in part why our educational system continues to fail, despite the ever increasing demands by administrators for more money. When we make discipline into abuse, and confuse the innate curvature of the soul with a psychological disorder, when we make people victims of genetics and poor opportunity or newly invented “diseases” instead of holding them responsible for the consequences of their actions, we destroy the very foundation of the building we are trying to erect.

It's too bad, of course, that The Swede can't go visit the School Marm's classroom, and give her some advice and assistance in curing her students of ODD. Truth of the matter is, however, if he did, he would be the one standing before the Magistrate.

He's far too old to go back to Paris Island.

*Greg Hull is a sawyer and philosopher-at-large who is anticipating the eventual birth of his own grandchildren to discover if ODD continues for another generation. He suspects it will*