

Toxic Parents

I'm contacted on a regular basis in the media for commentary about the family and it's rare for me to decline. This week I did. The journalist was writing something about "Toxic Mothers-in-Law" and wanted my advice and opinions about it.

I told her that I think the convention of referring to family members as toxic is doing enormous harm to our society. It's a view of people as willfully destructive and mean, and does nothing to contribute to a view of family members as deserving of compassion, forgiveness, and understanding.

It also does little to promote the idea that parents do the best that they can given their own stressors, income, who they're married to, the culture that exists when they're raising their children, their own childhoods how much support they have, and who their child is.

Calling parents toxic does nothing to encourage reconciliation or a deeper understanding of human nature and its inevitable frailties.