



By **Cam Marston**

The Snack Manifesto

If your clients are taking too much care of their children, you may have to give them the bad/good news



Clients may be tempted to help their children too much, preventing them from growing on their own.

My wife and I have children that are 13, 11 and twin 9-year-olds. I'm writing this sitting in the stands at my 11-year-old son's football game, watching his team go through warmups for their first game of the season. My oldest daughter is playing volleyball elsewhere and my twins have guitar lessons someplace else. My wife, a high school volleyball coach, has a match with her team at a fourth location – not sure where. My phone is buzzing with check-ins to make sure everyone is where he or she is supposed to be.

A parent of one of my son's teammates steps up to the stands and asks the gathered parents, "Who was bringing

the boys snacks tonight? They're wondering because they haven't gotten them yet." Snacks. That word said the right way will make parents share looks that are a mixture of disgust and amazement.

When did snacks become a fixed part of all children's activities? When did children expect snacks to be a part of everything they do? When did we begin believing that children, in order to survive, must have snacks at all organized functions?

My four kids, all in different locations doing different things, will share one thing – some parent has gone to great lengths to make sure they'll get snacks.

Somehow the settlers of this great nation gathered their belongings and started walking west from one side of this continent to the other. They experienced hunger, heat, floods, mountain ranges, angry and unwelcoming Indians, and goodness knows what else. No one met them along the way with snacks. I don't remember Neil Armstrong saying that he couldn't leave the LEM and stand on the moon until he had his snack. No one ran onto the beaches of Iwo Jima to provide snacks for the troops who were fighting inch-by-inch to claim the island. But organize a child's activity today and snacks must be included; you, the parent, are expected to sign up.

Two weeks ago, it was my family's turn to bring snacks. I planned to make a statement and bring a few apples and some plastic knives so the kids could cut the apples and share. Or enough celery for every kid to have a stalk. I'd make my

snacks healthy and not bring bags of Doritos and Gatorade – the go-to snacks for busy parents since all can be bought in bulk quantities roughly the size of a child's event (smart of them).

My goal was to meet my snack-bringing obligation but make sure I'm never asked to bring snacks again. The kids would revolt to see an apple and I could claim I'm only looking out for their own best interests. A bag of MSG-coated fried corn chips and a plastic bottle of neon-colored, sugary electrolytes versus celery? I'm the good parent. I'm the one truly concerned about our children. How dare you tell me I no longer need to bring snacks. But if that's what you want

So what's all this got to do with you?

Parents care for their kids. They always have and they always will. But with each succeeding generation the amount of care, attention, protection, support and "enhancement" of the child's well-being extends a little bit further from what may be good for them. Is it reasonable to believe that the expectations we set in our children will still be with them as adults? Certainly. Why wouldn't they be?

It seems to me that if we give our kids snacks all the time to accompany nearly everything they do then at some point these kids will become adults and expect accommodations appropriate to their adult age. Why not? Heck, it's happening now all around you if you know what to look for.

It's hard to look your clients in the eye and tell them that all these wonderful things they're doing for their children are actually bad for them. That the child's Roth IRA has too much money in it and that the kid needs to struggle in some way to appreciate whatever they're given.

Or when your client complains that they can't put any more money into their retirement account because their adult child is getting their third graduate degree and they are paying for it so their child won't have any student debt.

Your clients better be certain that their child has plans to care for them when they get older because they're not taking care of themselves.

We shouldn't make life hard for our kids. Life is hard enough. At the same time, though, we shouldn't be protecting them from, well, life.