



DEAR DR HARTMAN

Toddler Torture

Hello patients,

This is a difficult time of the year for those of you who have been silly enough to obey your biological clock and produce offspring. The Christmas holidays are approaching and soon you'll have to spend prolonged periods of unbroken time in close company with the bearers of your genetic material.

At least for parents, there is some intellectual and emotional satisfaction in observing the antics of little people who have an uncanny resemblance to themselves. But let's spare a thought for that group of women in the community who spend large portions of their lives in the company of other people's children.

I'm referring to that band of masochistic mothers who work for Family Day Care. These workers are paid three peanuts and four buttons an hour to care for other people's children, and they are silly enough to agree to do this in their own homes.

I recently attended a dinner to mark the tenth anniversary of Family Day Care in Newcastle, NSW. There I learnt that even though this year's Newcastle earthquake was terrible, it pales

into insignificance when compared to the daily damage that a group of toddlers can do to an average suburban home.

Actually, a scientific experiment was carried out in Britain this year which has implications for the mental health of Family Day Care workers. In this experiment, top commandos from the crack SAS security forces were locked up in small suburban homes. They were left there, utterly alone, with five toddlers. They were armed only with six bananas, two bottles of raspberry cordial, and a pile of paddle pop sticks.

These commandos were then told that they had to survive without adult company for at least ten hours. It proved to be the ultimate test of physical and mental endurance for a group of men who were considered invincible. The results were monitored via a closed circuit television camera. I don't have to tell any parents of toddlers reading this what happened, because you can probably guess. It was like Armageddon. There were toys, food scraps and dirty nappies all over the walls.

Men who'd survived the Falklands War were reduced to screaming meemees in a very short period of time. 92% of the men were dragged from the houses dribbling and mumbling incoherently within six hours. Only 8% survived the full ten hour period, and 3% of these men have been unable to communicate with another adult person since.

This Toddler Torture Containment Program has evidently been used in recent months to break suspected IRA agents in Ireland. The suspect is simply locked up with toddlers in a specially designed model of an ordinary suburban home. The suspects invariably collapse and confess in a very short time. In fact the British have found they'll confess to anything at all, even if they haven't

done it, just to get out of those houses and back into adult company.

The Family Day Care worker is all too familiar with the pressures experienced by these Toddler Torture victims. In fact the rate of psycho-sexual collapse among these carers is so high that I have been forced to develop special programs at my clinics tailored to their special needs. If you are a parent faced with the school holiday horrors, you may be interested as well.

At my clinics we can teach you how to keep large numbers of little kiddies quiet in one spot all afternoon. We'll teach you things you'll never hear about at Parents' Effectiveness Training. Things like how to build giant spiders' webs out of thick rope.

You cover the rope in industrial glue, dress up the kiddies as flies, and then just let them buzz into that dirty great web. They won't make another move all day! It's so simple, it's frightening.

My highly trained staff can also teach you how to build tiny sensory deprivation units out of egg cartons. Yes, you can have a Katingal and a Jika Jika in your own back yard! These tiny human zoos are so absolutely soundproof, you'll never hear the kiddies crying out for help, no matter how loudly they scream.

In fact, the NSW prisons minister, Michael Yabsley, learnt everything he knows about running jails at one of my special Family Day Care Workshops on Discipline Techniques for the Under Fours.

Happy holiday daycare, and I look forward to seeing you at one of my clinics.

*Send your problems to Dr
Hartman's secretary, Julie
McCrossin, care of ALR.*