



# THE STAND

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## *Forever. Amen.*

RANDY ALCORN REFLECTS ON  
THE ULTIMATE CONSOLATION.

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# THE SOLUTION STANDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

## OUR KIDS' MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

By Jill Garner, guest writer

For 2024, The K-12 School Shooting Database ([k12ssdb.org](http://k12ssdb.org)) reports 323 school shootings in America, a bleak reminder of the troubling mental health issues among our children and youth. Consider these facts:

<h3>ONE</h3> <p>At least one in five youths, ages 9 to 17, has a diagnosable mental health disorder causing some degree of impairment; 1 in 10 has significant impairment.</p>	<h3>TWO</h3> <p>The most common mental illnesses in adolescents are anxiety, mood, attention, and behavior disorders.</p>	<h3>THREE</h3> <p>Suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years. Suicide deaths among this age group increased by 62% from 2007 to 2021.</p>	<h3>FOUR</h3> <p>In 2022, over 77% of college students reported experiencing moderate to serious psychological distress.</p>	<h3>FIVE</h3> <p>Between 1999 and 2019, antidepressant use increased by 64%.</p>
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Whether reviewing clinical research, doing a Google search, or talking to neighbors, it is evident that there is a host of causes for these grim statistics. Among the culprits blamed are social media, breakdown of the family, jam-packed schedules, 24/7 news, lack of positive role models, isolation, depression, anxiety, and over-prescribed medications.

Statistically and anecdotally, it's clear that families face an unprecedented challenge today in raising children to become young adults who find their place and purpose in this chaotic world. What remains *unclear* is how to overcome this challenge.

Manners of the Heart, based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, believes that the solution to the mental health issues among today's children is obvious. Raising a generation of *StrongHearts* – morally courageous young people who are grounded in truth and fortified with self-respect – begins with understanding the root of the problem.

### Cause and effect

It's hard to fault an 8-year-old for exhibiting 2-year-old temper tantrums. It's hard to fault a 13-year-old who believes the only way to alleviate his pain is by ending his life. It's hard to fault a young adult for dropping out of life when he has been given everything the world has to offer and is still unsatisfied.

Manners of the Heart suggests that it's not the fault of Alphas, Gen Zers, or Millennials; rather, if one particular demographic group is more responsible than the others, the ministry believes it is the Baby Boomers.

Baby Boomers have been obsessed with *prosperity* at the neglect of *posterity*. In many cases, the quest for "more" has damaged subsequent generations. Digging beneath the surface reveals hearts desperately seeking self-glorification, self-importance, and self-promotion ... better known as *self-esteem*.

It all began in the garden of Eden. When Satan tempted

Eve to defy God's command, it was as if he held a mirror before her face, tempting her to become her own god. And so she did. In glorifying herself and disobeying God's command, she changed the course of human history.

In every age, that same sin of pride is on full display, always opposing God's Word, which says: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

Fast-forward through the centuries to the 1960s when psychologist Carl Rogers proclaimed, "Love yourself, love yourself, love yourself."

Even in this mantra, Christians failed to recognize the red flag of humanism, which stood in direct opposition to God's glory. Rather than rejecting self-glorification, it is embraced.

Today's culture is obsessed with the cultivation of self-esteem as an essential component of mental health. Leading experts in the field of psychology believe that high self-esteem in young people leads to lower rates of drug abuse, higher academic scores, and less delinquency.

However, the truth is that self-esteem was – and continues to be – Satan's ploy. Worshipping self and calling it good has caused each generation to stop worshipping God and respecting His Word.

### The root, the fruit

Today, many parents – whether consciously or not – raise their children with the underlying goal of developing their self-esteem. It is no wonder these children crumble under pressure ... that they're always seeking happiness while never experiencing joy ... that many are empty and hopeless ... that they're self-centered rather than others-centered. It is no wonder they can't find God's purpose for their lives.

God did not create people to reflect their own sinful, self-ish nature but to reflect Jesus' image to the world. Jesus says in Matthew 10:39, "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."

Children don't need self-esteem; they need self-respect, which comes from esteeming God and esteeming others. In

a powerful contrast to the wisdom of the world, Galatians 5:22-26 states, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now, those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another."

What does this look like in children's lives? Consider this comparison:

### Self-esteem


Fleeting happiness  
Greediness  
Arrogance  
Insecurity  
Approval-seeking  
Unsatisfied  
Self-serving  
Gives up  
Fearful  
Self-exalting  
Artificial  
Self-centered

### Self-respect

Lasting joy  
Gratefulness  
Humility  
Confidence  
Assured  
Content  
Self-giving  
Persists  
Brave  
Selfless  
Authentic  
Others-centered

Self-respect enables children to stand against temptations and embrace the good, the right, and the holy things of God. Self-respect empowers children to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; it cultivates in them a desire to fulfill God's purposes.

When children are raised with self-respect, they see beyond themselves and seek after God's purpose for their lives. They reflect Jesus' image to the world, seeking to serve rather than to be served.

Fortified with self-respect, children can become *StrongHearts*, being grounded in the truth and morally courageous. 



Jill Garner is the founder/chief visionary officer of Manners of the Heart, a nonprofit ministry that seeks to reawaken respect in our society for the sake of the next generation. Garner is the architect of HeartEd, a teaching philosophy that unlocks the heart to open the mind. She is also the author of the award-winning book, *Raising Respectful Children in a Disrespectful World*. Her latest book, *StrongHeart: Cultivating Humility, Respect, and Resiliency in Your Child*, helps readers cultivate self-respect in the hearts of their children.

For more resources, visit [mannersoftheheart.org](http://mannersoftheheart.org). To book Garner as a speaker for an upcoming event, visit [jillgarnercontent.org](http://jillgarnercontent.org).