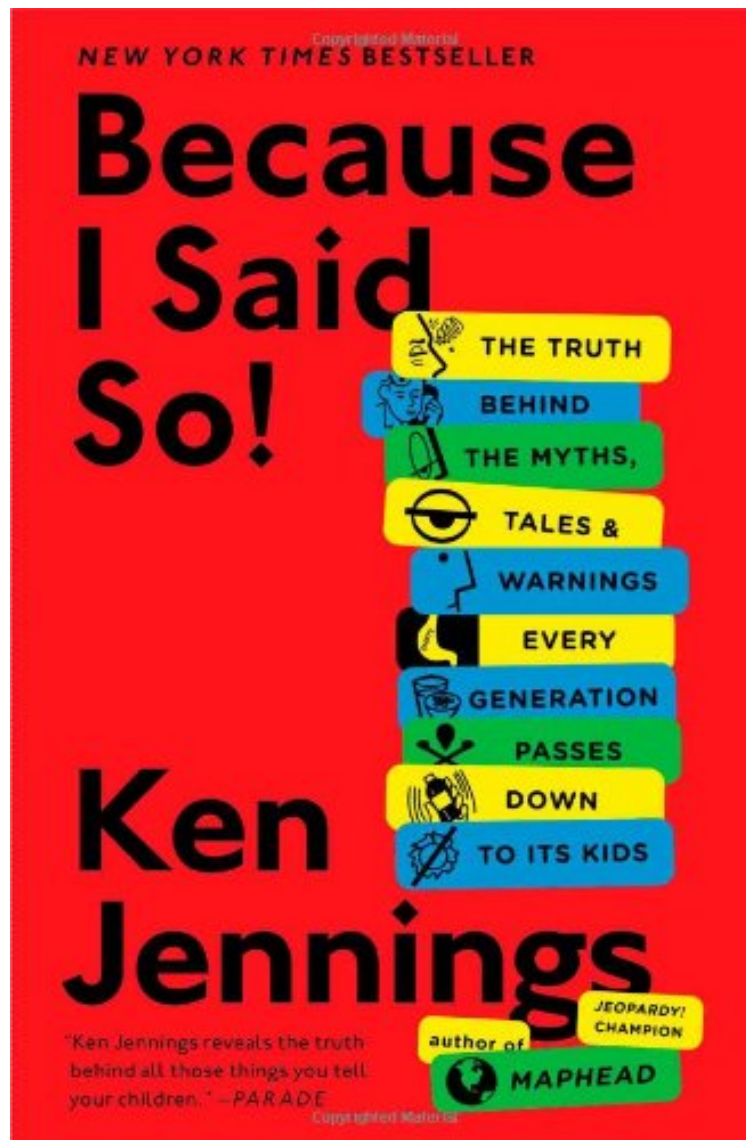


(Read free) Because I Said So!: The Truth Behind the Myths, Tales, and Warnings Every Generation Passes Down to Its Kids

# Because I Said So!: The Truth Behind the Myths, Tales, and Warnings Every Generation Passes Down to Its Kids

Ken Jennings

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**Ken Jennings : Because I Said So!: The Truth Behind the Myths, Tales, and Warnings Every Generation Passes Down to Its Kids** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Because I Said So!: The Truth Behind the Myths, Tales, and Warnings Every Generation Passes Down to Its Kids:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great info. By Suzanne L McDougall My husband is enjoying bursting peoples bubbles with the truth versus myth info in this book. Add that it's by Ken Jennings and that makes it a winner. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. who said so By Melody Ayers I have not finished this book, I got bored. Not as interesting as I thought. will finish sooner or later 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good book for kindle.... By pinknbooks... but I was surprised at the poor quality of the printed pages. I would have expected a bit of color in the "mostly true" / "mostly false" graphs at the end of each entry. Also, the pages felt a bit recycled (not that I'm against recycling). I use this as a coffee table book, so I was hoping for something a bit more substantial. I gave it three stars because I enjoyed the content.

"Ken Jennings reveals the truth behind all those things you tell your children" (Parade) in this entertaining and useful New York Times bestseller "armed with case histories, scientific finds, and experiments on himself and his own children" (Los Angeles Times). Is any of it true? If so, how true? Ken Jennings wants to find out if parents always know best. Yes, all those years you were told not to sit too close to the television or swallow your gum or crack your knuckles are called into question by our country's leading trivia guru. Jennings separates myth from fact to debunk a wide variety of parental edicts: no swimming after meals, sit up straight, don't talk to strangers, and so on. Armed with medical case histories, scientific findings, and even the occasional experiment on himself (or his kids), Jennings exposes countless examples of parental wisdom run amok. Whether you're a parent plagued by needless concern or a kid (of any age) looking to say, "I told you so," this is the anti-helicopter parenting book you've been waiting for.

"Because I Said So! is the MythBusters of old wives' tales. But beware: it could be a dangerous book if it falls into the wrong hands; namely your kids'. All of us can look back on the cautionary admonitions our parents and grandparents used to shout at us when we were in the middle of fun, and now our suspicions that they were hokum are verified! But we have to keep this to ourselves. If our kids get a hold of this book, we'll have nothing left to kill their joy with. So buy this book, read it, and then hide it away!" (Ken Denmead, New York Times bestselling author of Geek Dad) "A fun, lighthearted compendium of conventional wisdom, mostly parental, which debunks plenty of old wives' tales and urban myths while offering a few surprising truths.... 'Occasionally Mom knew what she was talking about,' as this clever book confirms, but often she did not." (Kirkus s) "With his trademark wit and genius. . . . Jennings imparts wisdom and good sense in this highly entertaining and oddly educational book." (Publishers Weekly) "Sets aside esoterica in favor of the received wisdom of American parenting. . . . Jennings maintains his humor and warmth, keeping everything on the level of friendly, well-researched advice from the dad down the street who, by the by, would totally own your ass on trivia night at the neighborhood pub. Because I Said So! is breezy and illuminating, a mix that would be more volatile in less capable hands." (The A.V. Club) "Armed with case histories, scientific finds and experiments on himself and his own children, Jennings let us in on what we really need to worry about ... and whether parents can now say 'I told you so!'" (Los Angeles Times) "Jennings examines dozens of parental warnings, scoring their veracity against the most up-to-date scientific knowledge he can find. The result is highly engaging, occasionally surprising, and even somewhat useful. . . . If this book keeps one kid from having to wait an hour between eating and swimming, it will have done its job." (Boston Globe) "Ken Jennings reveals the truth behind all those things you tell your children." (Parade) About the Author Ken Jennings grew up in Seoul, South Korea, where he became a daily devotee of the quiz show Jeopardy! In 2004, he successfully auditioned for a spot on the show and went on an unprecedented seventy-four game victory streak worth \$2.52 million. Jennings's book Brainiac, about his Jeopardy! adventures, was a critically acclaimed New York Times bestseller, as were his follow-up books Maphead and Because I Said So! He is also the author of Planet Funny. Jennings lives outside Seattle with his wife, Mindy, his children, and a small, excitable dog named Chance. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Preface I was sitting in my parents' kitchen not long ago when my young son, Dylan, came whipping around the corner with a grape Tootsie Pop firmly clamped in his teeth. "Whoa, slow down!" I said. "What if you tripped and fell on your face? The lollipop stick would get jammed right through the roof of your mouth!" Dylan's eyes got wide. "Could that really happen?" I had to admit, I had no idea. This was something my mother had told me repeatedly while I was growing up, but it's not like I'd ever dug into the relevant medical literature or consulted with surgeons. What do you do when a nine-year-old calls your bluff? "Of course it's true!" I told him. "Go sit down at the table until you're done with your lollipop." Just like with terrorists and bears! You can't show any doubt or weakness! I found my mom and asked her to back me up: it's true about lollipop sticks and horrific puncture wounds, right? She had no idea. "That's what Grandma used to tell us," she said. "I think it also happens in a Chaim Potok novel. The Chosen, maybe?" I was horrified. A fact I'd confidently passed along to my trusting children turned out to be thirdhand rumor confirmed only by a novelist? (A novelist-slash-rabbi, but still. And it turns out the lollipop injury isn't in The Chosen, anyway. It's from In the Beginning.) What else had I been inadvertently misleading them about? Washing behind their ears? Chewing with their mouths closed? Was our whole life together a huge lie? That's the dirty secret of parenting: it's a big game of Telephone stretching back through the centuries and delivering garbled, well-intended medieval bromides to the present. Possible misinformation like the lollipop thing never gets corrected; it just goes into hibernation for a

few decades and then jumps out to snare a new generation, like a seventeen-year cicada. Parents find themselves in these factual blind alleys because they have no other resource than the dimly remembered thirty-year-old lectures of their own childhoods. Until now! In this book, I've compiled 125 of the nagging Mom- and Dad-isms that we all grew up with, and then I've meticulously researched the scientific evidence behind them. On some, I'm happy to deliver a clear-cut verdict one way or another: either confirming them as "True" or debunking them as "False." More often, though, the truth falls somewhere in between: true with an "if," false with a "but." Some of these parental clichés turn out to be accidentally right for the wrong reason (see "Eat your crusts, that's where the vitamins are!" on page 90 or "Never wake a sleepwalker!" on page 165). Others are time-tested and unimpeachably sensible . . . but still don't always hold up well in real life (see "Don't talk to strangers!" on page 57). So there are plenty of "Mostly False" and "Possibly True" verdicts in here as well. Much of the gray area is a matter of risk assessment. Human beings, as a rule, are terrible students of probability. As a result, we develop paranoid, nightmare-inducing phobias about the unlikeliest things (plane crashes, strangers kidnapping our kids) while ignoring far more pressing risks (heart disease, car accidents). I've used the best statistics available to try to help you gauge the relative risks of different childhood activities, whether that's going outside barefoot or swallowing gum or running with scissors, but the final decision is always going to be a judgment call—like so many other elements of parenting, an art and not a science. Take my mom's lollipop fear, for example. There is a fair bit of medical research on "pediatric oropharyngeal trauma," which is what doctors call it when kids bash up their mouths on some foreign object. A 2006 study out of Edmonton estimated that fully 1 percent of childhood injuries are oropharyngeal traumas, and another study from Pittsburgh's Children's Hospital found that puncture wounds were indeed common outcomes. Twenty-nine percent of the injuries were serious: a large laceration, or a fistula (eww) or mucosal flap (don't know what that is, but double eww). Brain damage and death are extremely rare complications, but both have happened. So clearly I was justified in telling my son to sit down while finishing his lollipop, right? Well, maybe and maybe not. The Pittsburgh study also notes that most cases are minor and heal with no medical intervention at all, and then runs down the items that are most likely to cause this kind of trauma. Lollipops were one of the rarest culprits, causing less than 3 percent of the injuries studied and vastly outnumbered by pencils, musical instruments, toys, sticks, and so on. The hospital treated just one lollipop case every two years, on average. Meanwhile, the Tootsie Pop company alone makes twenty million lollipops per day. I guarantee that lots of those lollipops get eaten by kids on the go—and yet injuries are rare. So the numbers suggest that, compared to lots of other common day-to-day activities, eating-a-lollipop-not-sitting-down isn't terribly reckless. There's a fine line between making kids cautious about dangerous horseplay and just making them panicky about totally normal stuff, like moving around with a pencil or harmonica or something in their mouths. Parents love their kids, of course, and would like to keep them safe from everything. But even if that were an achievable goal—and it's not—it might not be great in the long run for the poor kids involved. A 2009 Time magazine cover package on "helicopter parents" followed the first wave of hypercushioned, overparented American children into adulthood, and the results were depressing: mommy webcams in college dorms, employers like Ernst Young preparing "parent packets" for the pushy parents of new twentysomething hires. By trying to protect our kids from every little thing, we may have created a generation of kids and young adults who don't feel confident about anything. So the risks need to be measured against the rewards. What if there's a 0.95 percent chance that a kid who bikes to school will get in a wreck, but a 95 percent chance that a kid who's not allowed to bike to school will grow up more tentative, complacent, lazy, and/or unhappy, because riding your bike to school is awesome? I feel like those percentages might not be that far off. So I hope this book serves as a reality check for potentially jittery parents. But even if you don't have kids right now, you presumably were (or even are) one yourself. In that case, I hope this book helps inoculate you against the crazy things parents somehow still believe—and when you take away the authoritative intonation, lots of parental wisdom is pretty nuts. Put butter on a burn? Wear a hat if your feet are cold? Drink eight glasses of water a day? Is that even possible? If you really want to know how silly much of our parental nagging sounds, ask someone from a different culture what parents harp on there. My Korean friends weren't allowed to sleep with an electric fan in their rooms, because a fan, they were told, would somehow asphyxiate them while they slept. In Russia, kids are warned not to sit on cold surfaces, or they'll freeze their gonads and wind up sterile. Germans and Czechs hear from a young age that they should never drink water after eating fruit, or they'll get a bellyache. Filipino children don't get to wear red when it's stormy, because red clothing attracts lightning. A friend's Iranian mother used to warn her against ever inhaling a cat hair. If you get one caught in your throat, she said, you'll just keep vomiting repeatedly until you die. I'm not poking fun at these superstitions—I just want you to realize how ridiculous our own old wives' tales would sound to someone who's never heard them before. Wait an hour after eating to swim? If you cross your eyes, they might stay that way? How, an outsider might wonder, does anyone actually believe this stuff? And yet there are times when the oddest and the oldest bits of parental folklore turn out to be true. There are now studies showing that cold, wet feet might indeed help cause a cold and that chicken soup can fight one. Double-dipping potato chips does spread germs. Breakfast really is the most important meal of the day. Occasionally, Mom knew what she was talking about. I've intentionally limited this book to propositions that can easily be tested scientifically, by doctors and statisticians and so forth. I've tried to back away slowly from vaguer points of parental philosophy: minefields like homeschooling,

circumcision, co-sleeping, TV banning. Anything your weird sister-in-law is always talking about on Facebook is out, basically. Sadly, I also had to avoid areas where the science is still hotly debated and inconclusive, which meant leaving out a lot of very modern parental worries: video games and social media and whatnot. In twenty years, maybe I can write a sequel in which we finally find out what was up with phthalates in plastic toys, predators on the Internet, and cell phones causing cancer. But I'm not sure how long that will take—TV is over sixty years old and experts still disagree on how that affects kids. So don't hold your breath. (Holding your breath for too long is bad for you, according to a broad scientific consensus.) I know there's no way one book can stamp out all the lies parents tell their kids. You're still going to have safety lies ("The car won't run unless your seat belts are on!") and cheapskate lies ("Honey, when the ice cream man is playing music, it means his truck is all out of ice cream") and sympathy lies ("We sent your hamster to live on a farm") and keep-your-kids-out-of-therapy lies ("We love you both exactly the same!"). But the accidental lies should be easier to tackle. It's time to shine the cold, hard light of truth onto controversial behaviors like sitting too close to the TV, eating toothpaste, and sneezing with your eyes open. It's not too late! Future generations will thank us.