

The destruction of trust

written by Sandy | January 24, 2023



By Sandy . . . “I love this song. ([Nice to Be with You](#), a 1972 song by the band Gallery) I was 13 years old when it came out and in love with this 25-year-old girl that lived up the street. I was just a kid to her, but she was always so nice to me. We would go for ice cream. I can still see her walking down the street. She always wore go-go- boots and miniskirts and those halter tops that tie in the front. The next year I started high school and she moved away. I ran into her years and years later. I was in my twenties and she would have been into her thirties by then. We went for lunch, and I told her that I had the biggest crush on her when I was a kid, and she said, ‘Yeah, I knew you did.’ ”

This is a comment, written some years ago, on a YouTube recording of the song. I had searched for the song to listen to it, a brief trip down memory lane. I never look at comments on You-Tube videos, but something drew my eyes down. My only thought as I read it was, “How sweet,” and then I saw the response that someone had put to the comment.

“It’s awesome that you were able to have a relationship as a

kid with an adult that was truly just friendship from the adult. Nowadays the adult would be accused of grooming and would be deemed a sexual predator.”

That brought me up short. Two thoughts were in conflict in my mind: how cynical and how true, and then they melded; it is cynical, and it is absolutely true.

I thought of past conversations I have had with male teachers in which they expressed concern about ever being alone in the classroom with a student, male or female, for an after-school tutoring session or after-school detention. As a somewhat older female teacher, I had not experienced that concern, but for them it was very real. “One accusation,” I remember one of them saying, “and life as I know it would be over.”

One accusation, true or not, would immediately have labeled him a “child molester,” and his life would indeed have been drastically changed, his profession denied him, and his relationships affected, even destroyed. He might well have faced criminal charges and expensive legal fees.

So is the reality of today’s world in which any interest whatsoever on the part of an adult toward a teenager or a child is seen in the worst possible light and then acted on as though that interpretation was the only conceivable one. An adult could not take a young teenager for ice cream, a teacher would not have a student alone in a classroom, unless that adult, that teacher, had a sexual motivation.

How much has been lost by this new, cynical view, formed and nourished by headlines screaming about “grooming,” “predators,” and “the sex offender registry,” and also by new sexual offense laws proposed every legislative session in virtually every state? How many children and teens could have benefitted from establishing relationships with caring adults, adults who would have been mentors, adults who would have enriched their lives, adults whose only motivation was

altruism and concern and decency, adults who perhaps remembered their own childhoods and their lack of positive role models and wanted nothing more than to provide that to members of the next generation?

Also lost is trust. Children were taught to trust adults, to turn to them for help when needed. Now they are taught to mistrust and avoid them. They are taught "stranger-danger." They are taught fear.

Attitudes and laws that genuinely protect children from harm are needed, are good.

Attitudes and laws that cripple normal, human, inter-generational relationships are destructive and evil.

The next time you read an article about a teenage boy or young man going on a shooting spree, killing and injuring others and quite possibly himself, ask yourself: Would this have happened if some adult had reached out to this boy, offering friendship and mentorship and helping him see a better version of himself than the one he would ultimately choose?