

# Essay on parenthood: movie analysis

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



- How do Nathan and Frank (with Larry) deprive their children of autonomy in opposite ways? Be sure to explain what autonomy is. You must connect the parent's behavior with the child's lack of autonomy.

When we hear of the word “autonomy” we immediately think that it has something to do with freedom, and it does. Autonomy is kind of a state in which a person is free but also take note that it also means that the person or entity is able to stand on its own two feet or is independent. In the movie “Parenthood” the audience is presented a variety of circumstances where a child can be deprived of their autonomy at a young age, in this case, Nathan and Frank and how they deal with their children Patty and Larry, respectively.

Nathan can be perceived as a man who values knowledge and education highly. And he certainly wants to instill these values of his onto his young daughter (who I think is in first grade, or something) as we are introduced to his family where he is lecturing Patty on educational excellence. Sure, education is very important to everyone but it should be done in time. In this situation, Nathan deprives autonomy from his daughter, Patty, because as a child, she should be enjoying the company of friends and exploring the wonders of the imagination, but she isn't. Nathan, who was probably thinking of just the best for his daughter, unintentionally made her incapable of relating to kids her age and distorted the meaning of “fun” for her. This, I guess, is a representation of the deprivation of autonomy in terms of freedom because as a child, Patty should be mingling with other children her age, not textbooks.

On the other hand, we have Frank (Nathan's father) and his relation to his

son Larry. Larry, being the youngest of Frank's children, probably is the favorite. And as opposed to Nathan who practically prevents Patty from experiencing anything fun, Frank sort of tolerates Larry with whatever he does (even though he is a failure in the eyes of his siblings). But because Frank tolerates Larry so much, this becomes kind of a dysfunctional relationship in such a way that Larry becomes extremely dependent on his father even as a grown man. This prevents autonomy in such a way that Larry has grown to be unable to stand on his own two feet, because he knows that if he messes up, his father will be there to save him. Later on in the movie, I think Frank realizes that he was the one to cause such behavior and just accepts Larry for how he is.

B. How does Helen do better with regard to her children's autonomy?

Analyze how Helen's behavior has a positive impact on her children.

Helen presents a sort of balance between being a tolerant and responsible parent which was probably brought about by the fact that she is a single mom. Like any other parent, she faced many challenges especially dealing with two teenage children. But what I found interesting about her was that she faced everything with an optimism that would put anyone else's to shame. When she accidentally picked up the pictures of her daughter doing obscene things with her boyfriend, she didn't try to corner her daughter and let her anger get the best of her. She did do the right thing which was to reprimand her daughter, but she did it with so much care and understanding. It's because she knows that people make mistakes, and it wouldn't be right to sever ties with her daughter just because of one mistake. She held back her anger and showed her understanding side because she wants to make it

known that her daughter Julie can come back to her if she'll have any problems. In Garry's case she also exhibited the same things by showing her worry about her son (by checking his room and seeing if he did drugs) and upon finding his stash of porn videos, immediately found relief and even offered to help him get over whatever phase he was going through (which again shows her amazing way of pulling back anger and have the understanding mom resurface in a flash).

I think she has such a positive effect on her children mainly because of her optimism and trust on her children. She also does not try and deprive them of their autonomy whilst not forgetting her responsibilities as their sole parent. She lets them make their own mistakes and learn from them. She simply guides them (and not forces them) to do what she thinks is right.

C. Why and how is Gil's youngest child (Justin) developing into a happier, more autonomous person than his oldest child, Kevin? Be sure to connect the particular child's happiness and autonomy with the way Gil treats him and provide illuminating examples.

Gil and Karen (his wife) mentioned sometime in the movie that since Kevin was their first born, they were so protective over him and sort of panicked over the simple things that go wrong. And I think that's what led to Kevin's unstable behavior. Because he thinks that he shouldn't make any mistakes, but he keeps on making them, which keeps all his emotions on the surface. And again when we say autonomy, it means that a person is in a state of freedom. And Kevin isn't. Because he's pressured by this standard that he needs to perform well or else he'll disappoint his father. And when people live with a thought like that subconsciously, it sort of limits everything about

them. Like for example, during the Little League match, we are shown Gil's daydream of his son graduating as valedictorian. But then, Kevin fails to catch the ball that would cost them the game. And by failing to do so, Kevin knows that he disappointed his father as well as his team and again falls into depression.

As for Justin, he was probably the kid who seemed to be the one with more freedom out of all of Gil's children because he wasn't put on such restrictions as that of Kevin. Probably because by then, their parents already know what can possibly harm a child and therefore let down the overly protective guard they had over Kevin. He is a free spirit who will make mistakes and learn from them (not sulk over them) and I think that's what makes a person well-rounded in the future. A person like Justin who is fearless and have fallen down and gotten back up millions of times can probably survive the real world much better than a person who stays down.