



With best wishes,  
Jacqueline Kennedy







(FW1) FORT WORTH, Tex., Nov. 22--PRESIDENT GREETED--President John F. Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy are greeted by well-wishers on their arrival at their Fort Worth hotel last night. In center background is Texas Gov. John Connally. (AP Wirephoto (fk60500stf-fk) 1963













  
**FAMILY NEWS FROM DR. JAMES DOBSON**

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Dear Friends,

Almost exactly 25 years ago, I began writing the pages of a new book intended to help mothers, fathers and teachers instill and preserve a sense of self-worth and confidence in children. The first chapter began with the following description of a little boy whose name would someday become familiar to us all:

He began his life with all the classic handicaps and disadvantages. His mother was a powerfully built, dominating woman who found it difficult to love anyone. She had been married three times, and her second husband divorced her because she beat him up regularly. The father of the child I'm describing was her third husband; he died of a heart attack a few months before the child's birth. As a consequence, the mother had to work long hours from his earliest childhood.

She gave him no affection, no love, no discipline, and no training during those early years. She even forbade him to call her at work. Other children had little to do with him, so he was alone most of the time. He was absolutely rejected from his earliest childhood. He was ugly and poor and untrained and unlovable. When he was thirteen years old, a school psychologist commented that he probably didn't even know the meaning of the word love. During adolescence, the girls would have nothing to do with him, and he fought with the boys.

Despite a high IQ, he failed academically and finally dropped out during his third year of high school. He thought he might find acceptance in the Marine Corps; they reportedly built men, and he wanted to be one. But his problems went with him. The other marines laughed at him and ridiculed him. He fought back, resisted authority, and was court-martialed and thrown out of the Corps with a dishonorable discharge. So there he was—a young man in his early twenties—absolutely friendless and shipwrecked. He was scrawny and small in stature. He had an adolescent squeak in his voice. He was balding. He had no talent, no skill, no sense of worthiness. He didn't even have a driver's license.

Once again he thought he could run from his problems, so he went to live in a foreign country. But he was rejected there too. Nothing had changed. While there, he married a girl who herself had been an illegitimate child and brought her back to America with him. Soon, she began to develop the same contempt for him that everyone else displayed. She bore him two children, but he never enjoyed the status and respect that a father should have. His marriage continued to crumble. His wife demanded more and more things that he could not provide. Instead of being his ally against the bitter world, as he had hoped, she became his most vicious opponent. She could outfight him, and she learned to bully him. On one occasion, she locked him in the bathroom as punishment. Finally, she forced him to leave.

He tried to make it on his own, but he was terribly lonely. After days of solitude, he went home and literally begged her to take him back. He surrendered all pride. He crawled. He accepted humiliation. He came on her terms. Despite his meager salary, he brought her seventy-eight dollars as a gift, asking her to take it and spend it any way she wished. But she laughed at him. She belittled his feeble attempts to supply the family's needs. She ridiculed his failure. She made fun of his sexual impotence in front of a

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friend. At one point, he fell on his knees and wept bitterly, as the greater darkness of his private nightmare enveloped him.

Finally, in silence, he pleaded no more. No one wanted him. No one had ever wanted him. He was a most rejected man. His ego lay shattered in dust!

The next day he was a strangely different man. He arose, went to the garage, and took down a rifle he had hidden there. He carried it with him to his newly acquired job at a book-storage building. And from a window on the sixth floor of that building, shortly after noon, November 22, 1963, he sent two shells crashing into the head of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Lee Harvey Oswald, the rejected, unlovable failure, killed the man who, more than any other, embodied all the success, beauty, wealth, and family affection he himself lacked. In firing that rifle, he utilized the one skill he had learned in his entire, miserable lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

Oswald's personal problems do not excuse his violent behavior, and certainly, I would not seek to absolve *him* for his murderous act. Yet an understanding of his inner torment and confusion helps us see him, not only as a vicious assassin, but also as the pitiful, broken man he became. Every day of his life, from the lonely days of childhood to the televised moment of his spectacular death, Oswald experienced the crushing awareness of his own inferiority. Finally, as it often does, his agitation and frustration turned to anger.

The greater tragedy is that Lee Harvey Oswald's plight is not unusual today. While others may respond less aggressively, this same consuming awareness of inadequacy can be seen in every avenue of life—in every neighborhood, in every church, and on the campuses of our schools. It is particularly relevant to adolescents. I have observed that the vast majority of those between twelve and twenty years of age are disappointed with who they are and how they look. In a world that worships superstars, they consult the mirror for signs of greatness and see only acne and misaligned teeth. Most of them will not admit how they feel because of embarrassment and disgust.

Likewise, Oswald never published his early self-doubt—nor would we have paid much attention if he had. But in retrospect, there is little doubt that the rejection of his early childhood led to deep discontent as a teenager, to his twisted adult life, and to his dark destiny. Not everyone who suffers through a bad childhood becomes an assassin, of course, but it is sobering to consider those who do. Gary Gilmore,<sup>2</sup> Charles Manson,<sup>3</sup> Richard Speck,<sup>4</sup> James Earl Ray,<sup>5</sup> Wayne Williams,<sup>6</sup> and David Berkowitz ("Son of Sam")<sup>7</sup> and other notorious killers had troubled youths. Yet the consequences of low self-esteem can be painful even for the less violent. That is why we need to start early to prepare our children for the pressures and insults they will face.

From a broader perspective, every stage of life poses its own unique threats to self-worth. Many adults continue to deal with memories of painful childhood and adolescent experiences. Women are especially susceptible to them. I am also convinced that the symptoms of senility among the elderly are exacerbated by a growing awareness that they live in the exclusive world of the young—where wrinkles, backaches, and dentures are scorned and their ideas are out-of-date. Many of them know they are a burden to their families. This feeling of uselessness is the special reward reserved for life's survivors, and it should not be surprising that our older citizens often "disconnect" from the world, emotionally and intellectually.













