



DEXTER'S Do-It-Yourself DISASTER

A Draw-it-Yourself
Short Story

Proverbial Kids[©]

Wisdom for Young Families

By Karen Anderson Holcomb

Dexter's Do-It-Yourself Disaster

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Draw-it-Yourself:
Dexter D. Turner
Jumping off The School Bus

The moment Dexter D. Turner's toe touched the ground, he felt a wave of excitement. His bright yellow school bus pulled away from the sidewalk, and with it, all the worries of Third Grade. Today was the day he and his father would be leaving for their Spring fishing trip on the coast!

Dexter's legs were in gear.

The sun warmed his face as he raced to the front porch of his house and flung open the screened door. *Ker thump!* He dropped his backpack on the floor and hustled past his mom in the kitchen.

"How was school today, D.D.?" His mom asked.

"Okay!" Dexter knew his mother would like a longer answer, but he was in a hurry.

He slipped out the back door, skipped the steps, then stomped through the backyard to survey last night's *big problem*. Past the shed where his dad's old blue truck was parked and packed for the trip, was a walnut tree. And tangled in a limb half-way up the tree was Dexter's fishing line.

His new rod and reel lay at the foot of the tree.

"D.D., I told you not to cast that reel," his father had scolded. "Now it's too dark to untangle it."

"I'm sorry, Dad," Dexter had apologized.

Backyard Tree and Dexter's fishing pole with the line stuck in the tree; blue truck packed for the trip

“Sorry is not enough, son,” Mr. Turner said, “Some things you need to be *taught*. You can’t just *think* you know how to do something.”

Mr. Turner and Dexter

Dexter had hung his head.

“We’ll get it down tomorrow,” his father had looked straight into Dexter’s eyes and said,

“When I get home.”

This was not the first time Dexter had ignored his father’s instructions. Just Monday, he had struck a match in the bathroom, setting off the smoke alarm. (He got a spanking for that.) Tuesday he had poured pickle juice into the fish bowl.

A lit match, some dead fish, an empty pickle jar, Mrs. Turner’s cell phone alarm, and a red wagon whose handle is turned downward.

And Wednesday he had deleted some apps on his mother’s cell phone and changed her alarm setting to 3 a.m.. She was NOT happy.

His parents had instructed him about those things, but ignoring instruction had become a habit for Dexter. And because he assumed he knew everything already, Dexter never read printed instructions either. That’s why the handle of his little red wagon was upside-down, among other things.

Toys which require instructions

Now, the sun shone brightly. It would be at least an hour before his father was off work, and Dexter was anxious to pack his fishing rod. *Exactly how tangled was the line anyway?* His father had said they would take care of it when he got home from work. But Dexter was impatient. He was also smart, strong, and available. *Why wait for his father?*

“Dexter!” Mrs. Turner called, “Come help me pack the cooler!”

Pack the cooler? Dexter felt he had a more important job to do.

Dexter's mom, packing the cooler for their trip to the coast.

"In a minute, Mom," he called, jogging to the tree.

He picked up his new rod and began to pull. Last night, the red-and-white bobber, weights, and hook had spun over the limb multiple times. If he could just pull it hard enough, it might come loose. He pulled it left. He pulled it right. He even walked to the far side of the tree, past a few other branches, and pulled. But it seemed like things became tighter instead of looser!

Suddenly, a branch lifted Dexter's pole out of his hand completely. The shiny new rod and reel sprang above the boy's head. There was only one thing he could do! Dexter ran to his dad's truck, lowered the tailgate, and pulled the tackle box to its edge.

Dexter opening Mr. Turner's tackle box, some of the supplies inside it.

"Son," he remembered his father saying yesterday. "If you need anything from this box, ask first. Let me get it for you."

But he was probably talking about the little drawers on the front of the box, Dexter reasoned, not the top-level shelf where the tools were.

Dexter shrugged, then lifted out the cutters, opening and closing them a few times. They felt good in his hand. He saw his dad's fishing hat near the box and put it on. Then Dexter noticed a few other interesting things in the

tackle box: lures, floats, weights, fishing line. *Fishing line!* He needed that. Especially since he was going to cut his rod out of the tree.

He grabbed it.

A child's fishing pole and an adult-sized rod & reel

Dexter ran to the walnut tree, jumped up, and grabbed his rod. He loved the spongy gray handle. It was much nicer than the kiddy pole he had used last year. He was bigger and older now, and he had his own grown-up rod and reel this year. If he could just—

Snap! Swoosh! When Dexter cut the line, the tree branch sprung past his head, scratching his face and taking his father's hat with it.

Uh-oh.

Mr. Turner's favorite hat in the tree, Dexter's guilty face

A sense of dread flashed through the young boy. His father loved that hat. He would be pretty upset if it were lost. *But it was not lost,* Dexter reasoned. *It was only up in the tree. Besides, his father was tall. He could easily reach it.* Yes, Mr. Turner was a man. He was man-sized and strong, and he was very smart. Dexter wanted to be just like his father when he grew up.

Meanwhile, Dexter needed to crack open the reel to make sure it had enough line for the weekend. At first glance, he could not see how to open the cover of the reel. There were no arrows or buttons or words—only a seam where the top and bottom met. Dexter wedged the cutter blade into the seam and twisted the handle to pry it open. *Crack!* *Oh, no,* Dexter thought. *Something broke.*

A cracked fishing reel

“Dexter Dewayne Turner, what are you doing with those cutters, young man?” Mrs. Turner’s voice burst through Dexter’s concentration.

“You scared me, Mom!”

“What is this, D.D.? Did you cut that pole out of that tree without your daddy’s permission? Did he not tell you that he would take care of that when he got home?”

“Yes, but,” Dexter swallowed hard. He wanted to inspect the broken reel, but he kept his eyes on hers. “I’ll put them back right now,” he said.

After all, he would not need them again.

“See that you do. I packed the cooler without you. I hope you like pimento cheese,” she said and returned to the house.

Dexter began to sweat. He disliked pimento cheese, but it was the least of his problems. He peered up at his father’s hat in the tree, then down at the reel in his hands. The plastic was cracked in one little spot, but he thought he could tape it.

Before returning the cutters to the upper tray, Dexter flipped open the tiny drawers on the front of the tackle box. *Bingo!* He spotted a tube of permanent glue. He grabbed it and set it on the tailgate with the fishing line and his rod and reel.

Very little line remained inside the reel, so Dexter took the end of the line and tied it to

A pimento cheese sandwich; Mrs. Turner packing the cooler

the free end of the new spool. He cranked his reel 58 times. The spool flipped up on its end and rolled off the tailgate into the dirt, but Dexter kept reeling. He whistled as he worked, just like his dad.

Suddenly, the line grew taut.

Before Dexter knew what was happening, the rod jerked in his hands.

Dexter fell onto his side and was dragged off the tailgate onto the ground! His knee bumped the tackle box, and it crashed upside down on the ground. If he had not known better, Dexter would have thought a 30-lb King Mackerel had jerked his line. Instead, it was the neighbor's dog, Meatloaf.

"Meatloaf!" Dexter exclaimed, rising to his knees.

The furry dog dropped the spool of fishing line from his mouth and began licking Dexter's face.

Meatloaf in action

"Stop! Stop!" Dexter hollered. He had work to do!

The boy stood up, cut the line, and threaded it through the top of the reel cover, this time without whistling. Holding the top and bottom together with his knees, Dexter uncapped the permanent glue and dripped a line of glue along the crack. A few drops fell inside the reel, and a large drop fell on his finger.

Rats! Dexter muttered under his breath, setting down the tube.

Things never go right for me, he grumbled.

Then, without thinking, Dexter knelt to pick up a handful of tackle which had spilled from his father's

box. It took less than two seconds for a large hook and a feathered lure to stick to his index finger.

Dexter's finger, glue, hook & lure

Dexter was horrified! He pulled on the hook, but it would not come loose. Instead, the point pierced his skin near his knuckle. He hollered and began to cry.

The sound of Mr. Turner's car engine flooded Dexter with relief. His father would be able to loosen the hook and remove the feather. He could get the hat out of the tree. He could do all those things, because he was a man. And Dexter loved him.

"Dad!" he wailed.

Mr. Turner rounded the corner of the house.

Mr. Turner Coming home

"Dexter!" He exclaimed. "What are you crying about, son?" It took only a few glances for Mr. Turner to see Dexter's do-it-yourself disaster. He stepped back and gestured to the yard. "What is going on here, son?"

"I tried to do it myself, Dad."

Mr. Turner carefully removed the hook and lure, then looked into his son's eyes. "You cut your rod out of the tree without me, didn't you, D.D.?"

"Yes, sir," he was ashamed to say.

"You opened the tackle box when I told you not to?"

Dexter gulped. "Yes."

Mr. Turner then saw his son's cracked reel, the dried

Dexter's kiddy pole

glue crusting on the seam, and a wad of knotted fishing line nearby. "Take this to the shed and bring back your kiddy pole, Dexter."

"Okay, Dad." Dexter said, his heart sinking. Because of his disobedience, he would have to use his half-sized kiddy pole on the coast.

"I love you, son, but your disobedience has consequences," his father said.

"I understand." Dexter felt about an inch tall, but he had to confess. "Dad? Your hat is in the tree."

"Why am I not surprised?" Mr. Turner retrieved his hat. "We are leaving in an hour, son."

"I'm sorry, Dad."

The blue truck driving out of the city; boiled peanuts, palm trees, and the Atlantic Ocean

"We'll talk about this later," his dad replied. "Go give your mom a goodbye hug."

Dexter and his father always enjoyed the drive out of the city, through farmland and into the sandy coastal plains. They would stop for boiled peanuts at their favorite produce stand.

They cheered to see the first palmetto bushes and palm trees, and especially their first glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean.

Mr. Turner also enjoyed talking with Dexter about God's truths on these trips. Today, he shared his favorite verse from the book of Proverbs.

“The Bible tells us in Proverbs 1:8 ‘Listen, my son, to your father’s instructions and do not reject your mother’s teaching. They will be a garland of grace on your head and a gold chain around your neck,’” Mr. Turner said, “Kids who accept instruction become champions, son.”

“Yes, sir. I understand,” Dexter recalled his disaster.

“You must obey me. I want you to do things for yourself, but you must first be taught.”

“Yes, sir.”

“That’s all I’m saying. Got it?” Mr. Turner glanced at Dexter with wide eyes, a grin growing on the edge of his lips.

Then he flipped on the radio and sang out in a funny voice, “Let’s go to the beach!”

Mr. Turner and Dexter driving down the road, laughing, and listening to

Dexter laughed and shouted, “Woo hoo!”

He would have a good time this weekend, even if he did have to use a kiddy pole when fishing.

He would tolerate it.

Pimento cheese sandwiches, however...

If only he had obeyed his mom, he would be eating peanut butter and jelly!

The End.

Proverbs for Parenting

(A: Accept Instruction)

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and don't reject your mother's teaching, for they will be a garland of grace on your head and a gold chain around your neck. **1:8 (CSB)**

My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,
because the LORD disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in. **3:11-12**

For this command is a lamp, this teaching is a light,
and correction and instruction are the way to life. **6:23**

Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life,
but whoever ignores correction leads others astray. **10:17**

A wise son heeds his father's instruction,
but a mocker does not respond to rebukes. **13:1**

Whoever scorns instruction will pay for it,
but whoever respects a command is rewarded. **13:13**

Listen to advice and accept discipline,
and at the end you will be counted among the wise. **19:20**

Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it. **22:6**

A servant pampered from youth
will turn out to be insolent. **29:21**