

TIPS FOR CONSCIOUS PARENTING

By Anne Felt, M.S.

What is the meaning of life for today's family? Do we merely exist together for a period of time? Or are we drawn together for a higher purpose? Is it inevitable to raise our children the way we were raised? Or can we learn to do things differently to create better results?

Parenting is a lifelong commitment. I have found in my 28 years of parenting that the way I interact with my children continues to shape our relationships even after they are raised. The parent-child relationship is the most crucial bond known to man. What are you doing to form and shape this bond on a conscious level in your family? It is important for parents to wake up and to decide consciously what they want to create in their families. Children learn what they are taught. It goes something like this: When I am spanked or hit, I learn to hit back. That is called violence and abuse. When I am yelled at and told I am "bad", I believe I am bad so I have nothing to lose. I learn to defend myself for being "bad". Being bad gets me a lot of attention and then I have power. When I am forced to comply I learn that being strong means being forceful. I learn aggression and to force others to follow my will.

What do I want to teach my children? If I want to teach respect, caring, cooperation, compassion and responsibility, I must model those same behaviors in my own life. If I demonstrate these positive attitudes and behaviors, my children learn from my example. From infancy through adulthood, children observe their parents. Studies show that 93% of all communication is nonverbal; that means my actions carry more meaning than my words. Only 7% of communication results from what I say. Parental actions speak louder than parental words. It is time for parents to examine what they are really communicating to their families.

Here are 10 tips for creating effective relationships with your children.

1. Be in control of your own attitudes and behavior. Be aware of your own emotions. Communication from a place of control and calmness is most effective.
2. Look at your child when you speak. Approach the child calmly and kindly. Practice this on easy issues so that you can remain calm in a crisis.
3. Learn to listen to the child's nonverbal communication as well as his verbal communication. What emotions do you see there? Be aware of his feelings and act accordingly.
4. Respect your child's feelings as well as your own. Allow the child to express difficult feelings. Teach him to express himself safely as you also do the same.

5. Speak directly to the child using a kind, loving tone of voice when you ask questions and provide correction. Take time to listen and to take turns in the conversation.
6. Love the child even when you disapprove of his behaviors. Do not condemn or shame the child.
7. Set firm limits without being harsh. Allow for questions and concerns to be addressed rather than to immediately punish him.
8. Remember that children do not need to suffer in order to learn. Harsh disciplinary tactics breed anger, resentment and even revenge.
9. Spend quality time with your child. You can give 5 to 10 minutes of true attention at least once a day and get results. True attention includes eye contact, being in close proximity, enjoyment of a mutual activity, sharing of thoughts and feelings, and a sense of connectedness. This time feels good for both parent and child.
10. Remember that your child is a blessing. What we treasure and nurture as a blessing flourishes. Spend time and effort nourishing your spiritual bond with your child. He was sent from God as a gift to be enjoyed. Be thankful and appreciate this gift in the present moment. Blessings grow when appreciated.

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