

## Conscious Parenting 101

In this age of media, materialism and militarism, kids are bombarded by messages that are beyond the control of most parents. Children are exposed at increasingly young ages to conflicting images of what is important. In my work as a pediatric Speech Pathologist and as a Family Life Coach I see increasing challenges facing families. I recently read that the incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorder is now estimated at 1 in 166 children. Wow! That is a bit staggering. Oh sure, the diagnostic tools are more refined nowadays. And certainly there is a lot more information available to parents. But still my reaction is Wow! How scary...kids today are different.

Doesn't it seem that today's children seem to be street smart beyond their years? It seems like they arrive here on planet earth with an uncanny ability to manipulate their parents!!! Just watch 2 year olds. They will show you how to get exactly what you want. All you have to do is resist what the adults tell you to do, throw a tantrum or 2, and the adults are eating out of your hands...it's child's play really!

Do you ever have the feeling that your kids are calling an unreasonable amount of the shots in your family? Do you feel that you have already used all of your strategies and tools, and it is only 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning? Hey, I can relate...I raised 3 children...it is a lot of work in every sense: physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. That is why it is time for parents and other concerned adults to unite! This is a "call to arms" for parents to get some effective parenting tools and to begin to use them consistently!

Do you remember how you felt when your parents punished you as a child? I personally resolved to do things differently than my parents. I decided not to yell, shame, blame, judge or otherwise browbeat my children into submission. I wanted my children to be my friends, and to like me. I soon found out that permissiveness really does not work well either. Then I alternated between being the authoritarian parent and the rag doll parent. FINALLY I learned some effective strategies that included positive methods as well as attention to my children's emotions. This approach provides a solid foundation to teach our kids how to be responsible, caring, loving, compassionate and empowered. These traits are also known as character – that gray area that our schools, churches, park districts and families are struggling to teach today's children.

The process of developing character is really about raising emotionally intelligent kids – and the fact that emotionally intelligent parents are better equipped for this task. It is all about becoming conscious of our role as models for children...aka being a "role model". That is the way kids truly learn what it takes to be a person of character. I remember the practice sentence in my 8<sup>th</sup> grade "Introduction To Typing" class (now known as Keyboarding): "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country." I would apply this thought to parenting as follows: "Now is the time for all capable parents to develop new tools to aid their children in growing up healthy and strong." In other words, making an investment in parenting tools and know-how is the way you will gain or regain control in your family without sacrificing your relationship with your children. Our goal as parents is to create win-win scenarios in our homes. That is emotional intelligence at work!