Parents Set Example For Relationships

by Lodi Fuller

When a newborn is brought home, cradled in loving arms, do the happy parents give thought to the ongoing relationship with their child? Before them spreads an unquestionable path of experience; a path with many turns, but never ending during their lifetime.

Such a blessing, to be the selected guides for this tiny, dimpled infant. Parents lead and steer for however long it takes until their offspring become independent of their wisdom; every family member learns day by day how to interpret the dance of love.

Our hearts tell us that the bonding relationship between parent and child is by far the most important, the most rewarding. The love the parents hold for each other is of their choosing and would hopefully be deep and lasting. The child born of their intimacy has no choice and is the immediate responsibility of those givers of life. An undeniable connection is made—a beginning relationship that babies trust and test, always assuming they will be protected and understood.

Relationships are nurtured in the classroom and on the playground. Teachers necessarily instill an atmosphere of acceptance and caring. Most children find a very close association with this person who endeavors to guide them through the labors of learning. Some teacher-student relationships are remembered an entire lifetime and can be as rewarding and inspiring as a family kinship.

Watching students play is a delightful and enlightening experience. Their personalities become apparent when sharing is required or competition is part of the play. Learning sportsmanship and fair play are valuable assets to their adolescence and adulthood. Adjusting to those lessons is much easier when children already possess self-esteem and feel secure within themselves. Those traits must be instilled very early by parents who lay the groundwork with love and discipline—the two most vital tools for building character.

How parents interact with people every day sets a pattern for the children who mirror their elders' behaviors. What a shock it is to hear our little ones repeat some unkind remark or scoffing we have blurted out without thinking.

Mom and Dad are undeniably responsible for youngsters' attitudes toward religion, politics and the less fortunate. How we approach someone who is disabled or uses a wheelchair really portrays how far we have come in learning acceptance, not just tolerance, of those situations. Our relationships with those who are different can be some of the most rewarding relationships for an entire family.

We are in relationships we seldom give thought to—with our neighbors, grocery clerks, gasoline attendants, bank clerks, employers and employees. The list goes on. With just a friendly hello, there is a bonding of sorts; eye-to-eye contact and a smile offer a comfortable moment of trust. Fleeting relationships, perhaps, but valuable additions to a day's experiences.

Our children will mirror our daily contacts with people. If we are congenial, our youngsters are congenial. If we are sullen, they are sullen. They sense sincerity and are uncanny in detecting less-than-genuine attitudes. As parents, we may not always feel cheerful, but we can always be cordial and polite, setting that example for those who emulate our behavior.

The hope would be that all relationships are comfortable and balanced. Even when that is not the case, each interaction with others lends itself to our character. Children can soon learn interactive skills when we encourage them to listen and watch, to pay attention to the world around them.

From grandparent to schoolmate, something valuable will be gained from each bonding experience and healthy growth will be nurtured.

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