

Passing Your Values on to Your Children

Rona Renner, RN

As you enjoy the holiday season, it's important to ask yourself if you're teaching your children the values that you think are important to live a responsible and meaningful life.

We live in a fast paced world with many demands. Children are bombarded with media messages that are often opposite of what we value. They are encouraged to want more, eat more, be sexy, and talk back to parents, and they spend hours on the telephone and on the computer.

It's a challenge to teach children that they can't always have what they want, or what their friends have. Encouraging them to enjoy what they have, to explore nature, and to save up for something special takes time, attention, and patience.

It's the job of parents, relatives and teachers to spend time with children and not use money or gifts as substitutes for attention. The gift of time is the greatest gift you can give children.

Adults communicate values by their actions, words, and expectations. Children watch what you do, and if they see you being generous with others, they will learn to be generous. If they see that you are grateful for the little things in life, they won't become greedy. If you expect them to be polite, they will learn to say "please" and "thank you."

Guidelines:

1. Teach by example, be respectful, and point out the good in people. When watching a movie talk about the values of the characters.
2. Have dinner together as much as possible, and talk about community and cultural events.
3. Thank your children for helping out with the dishes, or visiting grandma. Don't just praise good performance on grades or sports.
4. Don't expect your children to be perfect. Say you're sorry when you make mistakes. .
5. State your opinions, but respect differences. Learn about cultures and religions different from yours.
6. If possible, take your children to work with you.
7. Resolve conflicts without being hurtful. When you're angry, cool off before you discipline your children.
8. Write down the goals you have as a family, and discuss how you can accomplish them. Perhaps during the holiday season you'll serve food at a homeless shelter, or bake cookies for a lonely neighbor.
9. Kiss your children good night. Remind them what an important part of your life they are.
10. Listen with your ears, your eyes, and your heart. Slow down and appreciate your family!
11. Spend some time thinking about what's most important to you, and decide what you're going to do in the coming year to add more meaning to your family life, according to your values.

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