

GROWING UP: CHANGING PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

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CHILDREN TEND TO GROW QUICKLY FROM THEIR CUTE TODDLER STAGE INTO YOUNG CHILDREN, TEENS AND BEYOND. AS THEY DEVELOP, OUR WAY OF BEING WITH THEM REQUIRES CONSTANT EVALUATING AND MODIFYING AS WE ADAPT TO THEIR ALTERING REQUIREMENTS.

First and foremost, it is important from the earliest days to set a foundation in the relationship between parent and child that is based on love, truth and connecting to the whole person while meeting everyone as an absolute equal human being at all times. This foundation is paramount as it allows your child to develop a way of being with you that is not just based on rules, guidelines, expectations and 'talkings to'. These rules are certainly needed but will constitute an unstable foundation when the other essential components as mentioned above are absent.

Treating all family members as equals includes providing the same opportunity for all family members to openly discuss their own pictures and expectations about how they foresee future situations. It is important that we as parents learn to adapt to our children's developing pictures while remembering our role is not to control them by dictating what they can and cannot do – rather, to support them to develop a level of responsibility and discernment that allows them to know that they are responsible for all their own choices and all their own outcomes.

But why? Why can't parents keep controlling their kids so their children remain the picture the parents would like them to be forever? The fact is, our children were never ours to control – no matter how short or tall they may be!

Simply put, our role as parents is to support our short people to become the most independent, responsible, connected tall people that they are capable of becoming. This means supporting our children to become teenagers and adults who feel equipped to respond to all parts of life as it is presented to them.

In claiming this role, the real title of parents could be 'life teacher'. As a life teacher a parent would constantly be offering their child the next lesson in life that will support them to develop their next step of independence when they choose to.

Parenting Tips:

- The skill of discernment is VERY important. Teaching a child, teenager and adult to discern what and who feels harmless vs. harming; safe vs. unsafe; supportive vs. unsupportive etcetera for their future is one of the most beneficial skills you can teach any person. This discernment need not be based on fear, rather teaching each person to trust their own feeling and themselves all the time.

WHAT TYPE OF PARENT COULD WE CHOOSE TO BE:

OPTION 1 – A LIFE TEACHER <i>One who supports our children to self-master life as it is presented to them</i>	OPTION 2 – SMOTHERING PARENT <i>One who supports our children to become dependent, reliant and needy on others</i>
<p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent teaches child to participate in and eventually dress self independently 2. Parent supports child to learn how to complete the hard questions in homework 3. Parent teaches the safety guidelines around social media when legally allowed to set up social media account (e.g. 13 years for Facebook) 4. Parent teaches all life skills as required 5. Parent talks about natural outcomes as a result of choices and allows child to contribute to their own decision making 	<p>Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Parent continues dressing child when child could otherwise start doing for themselves 7. Parent answers homework for child 8. Parent bans a child from using social media and thus they never develop the discernment & responsibility to use social media wisely 9. Parent does for child what they could otherwise do for self 10. Parent dictates what the child can and cannot do without bringing lessons of responsibility

- When we parent through teaching natural consequences for our own choices then people will develop the skills of responsibility. When we parent based on 'because I said so' there will be minimal respect or self-responsibility learnt.
- Parents' expectations and boundaries are best not to be based on age, gender or previous experience of another ... rather, based on what will support this individual to meet their potential?

This evaluation will support independence and responsibility when based on:

1. What does my child need to learn next to increase their level of responsibility and independence?
2. What skill will support my child to self-master another aspect of their current and future life?

Above all, have fun and ensure parenting is filled with fun and playfulness no matter what age your child is - young, teenager or adult!

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