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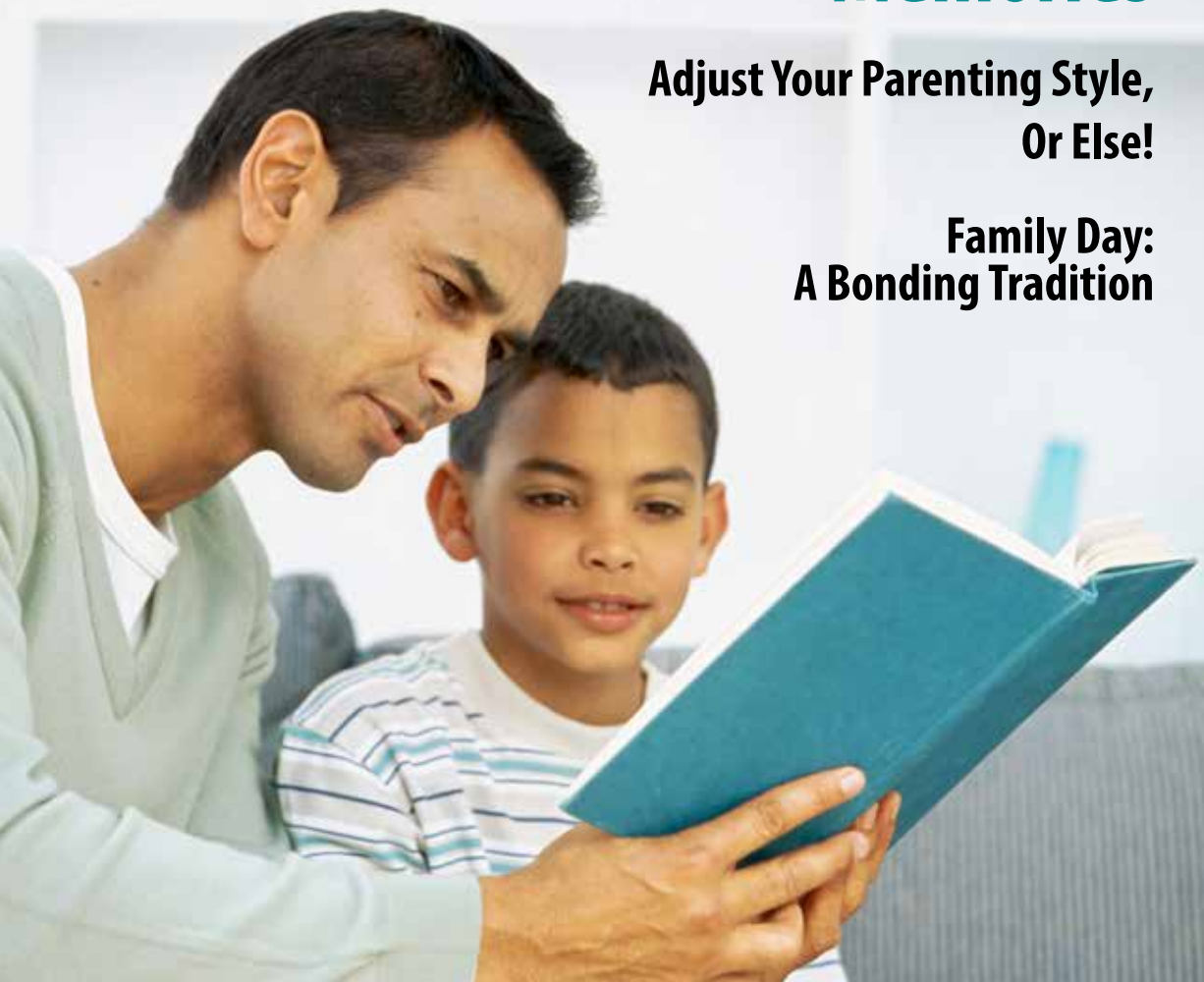
MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

Fireworks and Memories

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Or Else!**

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Parenting! It's such a vast subject that innumerable books and articles have been written about it, covering every possible angle and method. One thing most current writings agree on is that parenting children in today's world is not what it used to be. Things have changed so much and so fast in the past 25 years, that children today would hardly relate if they were able to travel back in time.

The availability of technology is the biggest change for children—even for the youngest among them. Some of the toys and gadgets now on the market were unimaginable even a few decades ago.

Yet, love and understanding are still keys to successful parenting, as are communication and spending time with kids. No tablet, video game, or cell phone can replace those vital ingredients to raising well-adjusted and happy youngsters.

This issue of *Motivated* includes some great articles on how to individually and personally communicate, connect, and interact with children and teenagers in a world filled with technological wonders that vie for their attention.

After reading through this issue, I think you will agree that after all is said and done, nothing will ever replace the magic of the personal touch!

Happy Parenting!

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Fireworks and Memories

By Jeff, Web Reprint

She is sitting on my lap as we gaze into the night sky. This may be the last year she will be willing to do that. She's growing up so fast, and pretty soon snuggling with Daddy will be embarrassing rather than comforting. She lays her head against my chest and I smile. Above us, cascading explosions of light and color brighten the darkness. I glance down at her wonder filled face. She doesn't notice me looking at her so I take a moment to drink in her innocent beauty. She is my little girl, my grown up baby. With every flash in the sky, pictures fill my mind of different times when I have looked at this precious face...

Flash... I see her for the first time. So impossibly tiny and fragile; still enveloped in the brightness of the place she just left...

Flash... Shiny, dark eyes stare up at me in the soft glow of a night light as I cradle her in my arms...

Flash... "Smile," I say. So she opens her mouth as wide as possible... she is still learning what that word means...

Flash... She staggers across the floor trying to make it from the couch to my waiting arms. Her hands are raised high in the air, her eyes open wide with excitement...

Flash... I am dropping her off at pre-school. She turns to me as I start

to get out of the car to walk her in and says, "It's okay Daddy, I can walk in by myself." I get a little teary-eyed as I realize, with pride in my heart, that she is growing in confidence...

Flash... On her face is a mischievous smile as she asks me if she can tell me a secret. I acquiesce and she proceeds to burp in my ear...

Flash... I see her face in a thousand splendid moments. They rush by as if I am fast-forwarding her life until all at once it stops. And here she is, sitting in my lap, enjoying the colorful wonders of fire exploding in the sky.

I realize in this moment just how fast these precious years with my daughter are going by. My time with her is like a fireworks display; beautiful, colorful, vibrant, emotional, breathtaking... and over way too fast!

I recommit myself to being the daddy she needs me to be. I declare to myself and God that when she is grown up and on her own, I will not look back with regrets that I didn't pay attention more, love more, listen more, share more... but instead I will be able to close my eyes and see the beautiful flashes of memories that we made together!

I am a father... and there is nothing more important in this life that I must succeed at than this! ■

Adjust Your Parenting Style, Or Else!



By Mark Gregston

Most of us tend to parent the same way we were parented. Even those of us who vowed, “I’ll never do that to my kids,” often fall back to imitating what we saw from our parents. The problem is that the world has changed. Our parents would have been horrified by what our kids casually experience and discuss amongst themselves today. Things are different, and your kids are changing every day as well. Are you keeping up?

Parents need to adjust. To adjust from controlling to coaching your growing kids doesn’t mean you are surrendering your core values or throwing up your hands in futility and giving up; it means you are meeting them at their level and respecting their individuality.

Parents who are unwilling to adjust, tend to push away their children or cause them to rebel. I’m not saying that your child should be allowed to walk all over you; rules and boundaries must be set and maintained. But adjusting can help your kids think you’re keeping up with their age and are in touch with their world—so they’ll be more likely to lean on you when they need help or to discuss the issues in their life.

Back in the Dark Ages when I grew

up, information turned over every eleven years. Today, it happens every nine months. The pace of change has quickened, and if we are inflexible and refuse to acknowledge those changes, our kids see us as “dinosaurs,” out of touch with their world. It’s more vital than ever that we stay engaged with our kids. That means we need to know what’s going on in their lives and in their culture (which probably means we’re going to have to learn a new language or two), and to fit in with the way they relate to others in their world.

A New Way to Talk

The commanding communication style used when your kids were younger won’t work well when they are adolescents. So stop lecturing; start discussing. Stop talking; start listening. Please understand that I’m not saying the old way is wrong. It’s fine and it is needed for the care and nurturing of younger kids. But the changes in the thinking process of your teen will require a new way to talk to them if you want to really get through to them. Modifying the presentation doesn’t change the content of the message or the values of the messenger. It just makes

it easier for you to get through to your teenager.

Many well-meaning parents think they can protect their kids by sheltering them. They spend very little time preparing them for the real world because they aren't in danger at the moment. But they can only keep their kids isolated for so long. At some point they're going out into that world—to a job, to college, to marriage—and it is vital that they be prepared for that day.

When you taught your kids to swim, you probably didn't pick them up and throw them in the deep end of the pool. You started them out splashing around in the shallow water, and gradually increased their exposure until they were ready and able to swim on their own.

Here's a practical application of this principle: most parents wait too long to give their teens privileges and responsibilities. Typically they drag their feet for about six months past the point where they should have. I tell parents, "If you're thinking about letting your teen do something, you probably should already have done it." If they have to fight for their independence, they are actually in self-preservation mode; they innately know they need to test out freedom to adjust to the world in which they will have to survive.

Having said that, I remain absolutely committed to protecting kids from danger. Give your kids freedoms, but as we say in the horse world, "let out the reins" slowly. Don't do it in areas that will threaten their safety and their future, especially at the very impressionable "tween" age, between 10 and 12 years old.

Breaking the Mold

One way to adjust your style is that instead of just telling your teenagers what to do (the way most of us were raised), have discussions with them; spend time working out the practical applications of the truths you have taught them. Rather than lecturing, ask questions. When you start asking questions, you convey a powerful positive message to them that they need to begin thinking on their own. Asking questions makes them feel valued.

The answers you get to your questions will help you identify areas in which you may need to adjust or strengthen your teaching. Do not be judgmental or reactionary. If they are a teenager, you have already taught them all you're going to teach them about your values; now affirm and guide them toward what is right.

Adjusting to your teen's age and maturity is like hitting a moving target. It's not something you can do just once. As they grow and mature and face new challenges, you need to keep changing right along with them. Don't wait until your teen spins out of control to make the needed changes.

Many kids feel like their parents don't understand their world and don't speak their language—and they're right. Someone who goes to work in a foreign country takes time to learn the language and customs in order to be effective.

Are you willing to put that kind of effort into helping your teen survive the trip to adulthood? ■

Your Best Investment: Time

By Derek and Michelle Brookes, *Keys to Kids*



Your children will never forget the special times they spend with you. Aren't those some of the memories you treasure most from your childhood—when your parents invested their love in the form of personal time and attention with you?

Children thrive on love, attention, concern, and consideration, and if they don't have it—or if they think they don't—then just like the rest of us, they feel unimportant, and eventually rejected.

You don't always have to spend a great deal of time with children to make them know you love and appreciate them, but you do have to spend some time. And the quality of the time you spend with them is just as important as the quantity.

Someone once wisely said, "Your children need your presence more than your presents." Play with your children, read with

them, hold them, hug them, encourage them, enjoy them. Go for walks, or just sit around together, and talk. Ask questions and listen to their answers—really listen.

If you're like most parents, you have more demands on your time than you can possibly meet, and time with your children gets crowded out when emergencies come up. You rationalize that there's always tomorrow for that. But your children need you today.

Determine how much time you need to spend with each of your children each week, and schedule it. Consider it a top priority, an appointment that must be kept. If a genuine emergency comes up, you may need to reschedule your time with your children, but don't cancel out completely. If you find that you frequently have to postpone your time with your children,

rethink your priorities and plan, and come up with one that will work.

When older children are having problems, they need even more of your time, and you need to be even more attentive to listen. Don't be too quick to offer solutions or advice, and try not to sermonize. Hear them out completely before you say anything, and help them reach their own right conclusions, if possible.

Many parents of grown children will tell you that their greatest regret is that they didn't spend more time with their children when they were small.

You'll have to sacrifice other things to do it, and in the beginning you may feel it isn't the best use of your time, but keep it up and you won't be sorry.

Every minute you give your children is an investment in the future. The rewards will last a lifetime. ■

Top Ten Emotional Needs of Children

Web Reprint, www.EQI.org



Here is a list of what could be called the top 10 emotional needs of children, in alphabetical order.

Children need to feel...

- 1 Accepted
- 2 Believed in
- 3 Cared about
- 4 Forgiven
- 5 Loved
- 6 Safe
- 7 Supported
- 8 Trusted
- 9 Understood
- 10 Valued

If parents adequately fill all of these needs, a child's or teen's behavior will take care of itself. Feelings predict

behavior, so if children have positive feelings, positive behavior will naturally follow.

It was very difficult to decide which of the many emotional needs to include in this list of the top ten.

What about respected, free, important, and validated, for example? We concluded that if a child or teen felt all feelings in this top ten list, they would also feel respected. Likewise if they felt understood they would feel validated and listened to, and if they felt valued, they would also feel important and needed.

Finally, if they felt supported and safe, this would contribute much to feeling free, since they would not feel afraid to try new things, express differing opinions, or go new places. Supported could also include feeling believed in, backed up, encouraged, and helped.

One very important feeling, though, which we almost included in the top ten but left out just for the sake of keeping the list to 10, was **admired**. ■



5 Secrets for Communicating with Teenagers

By Debbie Pincus, MS LMHC, adapted excerpts

Does this sound familiar? Your teenage son is taking forever in the bathroom (again), but you need him to get ready so you can get to work on time. You're thinking, "How could he be so inconsiderate? He's so disrespectful!"

Meanwhile, your child is locked in the bathroom, consumed with his image in the mirror. He's thinking, "No way am I going to school with this pimple on my nose." Outside in the hallway, you start pounding on the door, yelling at him to hurry up. He screams, "You just don't understand! Leave me alone!" When he finally emerges, he gives you the silent treatment.

You end up late for work and completely overwhelmed, wondering, "Why doesn't my kid listen to me? Does he have to fight me on everything?"

You and your teen: two different worlds, two different perspectives—and a giant disconnect that can make communicating a real mystery.

Here are 5 secrets that I've found to be really helpful personally for communicating with kids through the difficult adolescent years.

1. The secret to opening your child's ears.

No matter how hard it might be, try to start all interactions with understanding, even if you don't fully agree or even

quite comprehend what they're talking about. Here's an example:

Your teenage daughter is not doing her schoolwork, and instead is online with friends chatting. It drives you crazy because you're thinking, "If she fails another test, her average will go down and she'll never get into college. What kind of future will she have?"

Your teen, on the other hand is thinking, "I have to get online and talk with Mariam. If we don't make up after the fight we had in the hall today, all the other girls will be against me and I'll have no one to hang out with at school tomorrow."

Again, two different worlds. Try to start by saying, "I understand how difficult it is for you when you have a fight with one of your friends. I also know that you need to pass this test tomorrow. Let's sit down and think of a good way you can manage your time tonight."

Start from a place of understanding, and try to put yourself in your child's shoes first before telling her what needs to change. Instead of feeling like they have to defend themselves against you, they will listen more easily when their feelings are validated.

2. Take the emotion out of the equation.

Emotion is your enemy when you're

trying to get through to your teen. Remind yourself that what he says and does is not a reflection on you. You may not like how he's behaving—or even how he's thinking—but try to keep your emotions out of it, even if his behavior impacts you.

I'm not saying this is an easy thing to do; it's tough, but it's a skill you can learn just like any other. Repeat this slogan to yourself before talking to your kids: "This is nothing personal." He may be making a poor choice, but the truth is, he might have a different viewpoint or not yet have the skill set to make a better one. So your job is to help guide him to better choices so he can in turn develop a better skill set.

When you realize what your job is as a parent, it will help you be less emotional. When you feel frustrated, remember, don't take it personally.

3. Ask curious questions...not loaded questions. Ask your teen for his ideas and be collaborative. Let him see that you believe in him and that you're not mad at him for struggling. When you show that you have faith in his abilities and he has the space to work things out on his own, you will begin to develop true confidence in him.

Don't ask loaded questions that put your child on the defensive like, "Why can't you get up on time? What's wrong with you?" Instead, try opening a conversation with, "Ali, how come you have such a hard time getting up? Do you have any thoughts and ideas that might help?" If he says he doesn't know, offer a few of your own and ask which one would work for him.

Let your teen know that his problems are his to solve. Help him figure out solutions—and let him deal with the

natural consequences of his behavior. The goal is to help your child think for himself, which will in turn help him feel like he has some control over his world. Listen openly to what he says and ask him to think objectively about each choice.


4. Don't be needy; stand on your own two feet. You don't "need" your teen's cooperation, validation, or good behavior. As soon as you need something from your child so that you can feel better, you have put yourself in a vulnerable position because he does not have to give it to you. So if your child is acting up, that's his problem. Your problem is to decide how you will choose to behave toward him. That's in your hands, not his.

Ask yourself, "How do I want to act, no matter how he is acting? What can I put up with and what can't I?" Take back your power and say to yourself, "If my child is screaming at me, instead of needing him to stop, I can decide not to engage, and excuse myself." Let him know you won't talk with him until he can approach you civilly. When you're not trying to control him and you're not reacting to him, he will have to wrestle with himself rather than with you.

5. Don't do anything until you're both calm. Another rule of thumb is to avoid doing anything until you and your child have both calmed down. The fact is, you don't have to respond to your child when you are upset, or when your child is upset and in your face. You can take your time, and when emotions have evened out, you can sit down and talk with him. It's never good to try to bring up a difficult subject or resolve a conflict in the heat of the moment. So if either you or your child is upset, pause and come back when you can address things in a calmer way. ■

Family Day: A Bonding Tradition

By Laura Doerflinger, MS, LMHC, Child and Family Counselor, Freelance Writer, and Parent



Do you ever wonder how you will keep your family bonded? I have worked as a child and family counsellor for over a decade, and keeping families bonded has been a particular goal of mine. Nine years ago, when I held my daughter for the first time, the goal became personal. As my family grew, I knew I had to make a deeper time commitment in order to keep our relationships devoted. That's when I came up with the idea of celebrating a weekly tradition in bonding, called Family Day.

Just like any other major holiday, Family Day is a holiday of sorts that takes place on a weekly basis. We celebrate love, connection, and the uniqueness of our family. We are committed to this day no matter what the obstacles: work, school, activities, sports, or house maintenance. This is the day that we wake up as one and go to bed as one. Every moment is about togetherness, focus, and quality.

We started the tradition in 1999. We kept the day simple but active since our children were three and five. They crawled into our bed first thing in the morning for cuddle time; then we would head to the kitchen and make a special breakfast. After breakfast, we wrote

up a list of activities on a scrap piece of paper. Everyone chose an activity, giving each family member a chance to share his or her favorite games or events.

The activities changed as the kids got older, and included movies, hikes, and day-long adventures. But when the day was done, we felt connected for the long, busy week ahead. Family Day might be a beneficial tradition for you, too. This is how it works:

Pick a day: A day is really a perfect amount of time to fulfill each person's special activity. If you find a whole day is too hard on your schedules, then an evening could work too. For example, a Friday family game night might be fun, or a Saturday meal and a movie could work. Or expand on a time you already have in your schedule, like breakfast.

Wake up together: Our children are still young. They usually make their way into our bed so we wake up cuddling, wrestling, or playing a guessing game. I imagine when they are older we will meet them at the breakfast table, but for now we all still fit across the queen sized mattress.

Breakfast Time: Every holiday has a feast. Our feast is at Family Day breakfast. Everybody has a task as we all work hard to make the meal into

an event. My son learned how to make coffee (with supervision) by the time he was four, and my daughter makes her “famous” pancakes. We do not hold back at this meal. Our breakfast is filled with goodies.

Family Day Journal: Although we spent years writing a list of activities on a scrap piece of paper, one Family Day I suggested we write our lists in a journal. From that point forward, after breakfast we brought out our Family Day Journal and took turns writing our special list. We even added a page of family news. We look back on our list every so often fondly remembering our past Family Days.

Family Day Activities: In our family, we come up with eight Family Day activities. Because there are four of us, we each get two choices. The writer gets to pick who is first, second, and third. The writer shares his/her pick last. Ideas will vary with your children’s age. My son tends to pick hide-n-seek, whereas my daughter tends to pick an art project. My husband likes to pick board games and I like to pick movies. No matter the choice, we participate. My husband scoots under the bed during hide-n-seek and my daughter launches air rockets in the backyard.

Commitment: We are committed to Family Day every week, however, there are some exceptions. For instance, if I am going on a training weekend or my husband has a conflicting job, Family Day will be carried on by the parent at home, or we will reschedule it. Our friends and family know that we are not available on Family Day because we are focusing on each other.

The benefits of committing to your family are enormous. For one, you ensure bonding throughout the stages and ages. Bonding is nurtured when you show your child how important they are by spending time with them, giving them choice, and getting on their level.

A solid bond will decrease the chance of family crisis and ward off troubled behavior for your child. Another benefit is that your child can feel secure in knowing that mom or dad may be busy today, but they will be completely attentive on Family Day.

Although Family Day does not replace consistent love and attentiveness, Family Day sets aside a time for purposeful bonding. ■

Some Family Day activities to get you started

Remember, everyone participates!

- ✓ A disco party
- ✓ Hide-n-seek
- ✓ Playing a board game
 - ✓ Planting a vegetable garden
- ✓ Baking cookies
 - ✓ Making inventions out of recycling
- ✓ Playing with dolls
- ✓ Building a city with blocks
- ✓ Taking a road trip to a small town
- ✓ Volunteering
- ✓ Movies and popcorn
- ✓ Painting each other’s portrait
 - ✓ Hiking
- ✓ Putting puzzles together

Things *Every Parent* Should Know

NOTABLE
QUOTES



We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.—Stacia Tauscher

Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged [with] man.—Rabindranath Tagore

There's nothing that can help you understand your beliefs more than trying to explain them to an inquisitive child.—Frank A. Clark

Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.—Elizabeth Stone

Before I got married I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children, and no theories.—John Wilmot

What a child doesn't receive he can seldom later give.—P.D. James

Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.—Robert Fulghum

Children have more need of models than of critics.—Carolyn Coats

In bringing up children, spend on them half as much money and twice as much time.—Author unknown

You have a lifetime to work, but children are only young once.—Polish proverb

Kids spell love T-I-M-E.—John Crudele

Take time to treasure your children. They are well worth the investment.—Unknown

