

## Parenting: HAPPY CHILDREN and PARENTS

### **Step One:**

Focus more energy in the roles of husband and wife than you spend in the roles of mother and father. Over and over again I have found that children are mostly concerned about the insecurity of their parent's marriage. Children need to know that their parent's marriage is solid and something that will last forever, or at least as long as the child shall live.

### **Step Two:**

When you find that you are a single parent do not make your children your partner, make them your children. This means having an active life outside of your role as parent. Be an interesting adult person to your children. Your own well-being is essential to the well-being of your children.

### **Step Three:**

You are the parent and you will always have a generation gap. This is good! You are not your child's friend; you are your child's parent. Expect your child to obey you. Your child will be happy when he or she knows what are the rules and that he or she is expected to live by those rules. That does not mean your child will not attempt to test the rules or to see what he or she can get away with. When they "get away with" things children lose the solid base of obedience. Obedience is part of earning their parent's respect and therefore their own happiness.

### **Step Four:**

Expect your children to be responsible for whatever they do or say. That includes in the family and in the community. To do this it will be important to assign chores and responsibilities around the house and in the community. Three year olds can do simple

tasks. Four year olds can do little larger tasks. Being responsible is a matter of making a contribution to the family and the community. When a child does not contribute to the family they just exist, consuming what you work for and the more you give the more they demand. Demanding children are not happy children, nor are their parents.

### **Step Five:**

Happiness does not come from what one has and possesses. Happiness is based on what we do with what we have. If we do not buy our children a lot of things that result in our children doing nothing because they have so much and there is a lot more where that came from, they may appreciate what they have and take care of what they have.

### **Step Six:**

Two of the most fun things parents and children can do together is reading and travel. Both require the use of our accumulation of memories rather than things. Begin reading to your children very young and then read to and with them often the rest of their lives in your home. Every time you are inclined to buy your child (grandchild) a toy, considering taking him or her camping, fishing, to the museum, or even to some place they have never been before, or someplace they love to go.

### **Step Seven:**

Control how much you let television viewing and video games into your children's lives. Your children are not found happy doing either of these activities. Television is passive and video games take frantic manipulation. Take your children out of doors, to the park, playgrounds, and in other places that they can see things in three dimensions.

**Step Eight:**

Hobbies or things that your children love to do are very important. You, as a parent, can be helpful in aiding your children in discovery of things they like to do. Hobbies exercise imagination and creativity and that is the purpose of hobbies. Hobbies are not after school sports events in which your children participate. A hobby is something that your child can and does do by himself/herself eventually without adult supervision or other kids to be involved.

**Step Nine:**

Every child needs to develop a respect for other people and thereby earn the respect of other people, both peers and adults. Good manners develop attentiveness to others and also respect for others. When we provide respect to others, others will show respect to us.

**Step Ten:**

Hold your children to high standards in what they do and how they perform. One of the ways you show respect for your children is to expect respect from your children. Work at teaching and expecting good behaviors from your children. That includes an expectation of obedience. Expect your children to work with you around the house and in the yard, often without even being asked. Expect your child to be accountable for their behavior without excuses. Failure to show respect is failure and needs to be corrected.

Show respect and get respect by always expecting that respect will provide you both with a happy relationship.

*I share these ideas and concepts that originate with Family Psychologist, John Rosemond and give him full credit for his work on them.*

If you find these suggestions helpful, please call Lewis R. Bigler at 634-0658 or ask me to call you and I will be please to consult with you concerning your children or grandchildren.

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