

## **Parenting: What Children Can Learn in a Functional Family?**

Structured by love of a man and a woman—to be born into the world—the makings of a family are naturally created. Being a world of agency to act freely and be acted upon, exceptions to a natural order exist. Whatever functions as a family for you make it a functional family.

There are exceptions to every rule, but that is never a reason to make the exceptions the rule. If there is one thing that is apparent from watching parents—whether in real life or even on reality television shows like *Nanny 911*, *Wife Swap*, *Trading Spouses* or recently, the parenting efforts of *the Baby Borrowers*—when a young child is unruly the source usually proves to be the parenting. Born into the world as innocent children, they should not first be blamed for our incompetence to raise them. Give the child a clear understanding of what is expected of them and then you can begin to hold the child accountable for reasonable expectations. At the basis of every healthy society are strong family units so implementing some basic parenting will give your family the solid structure it needs to thrive.

### **Basic Parenting Tips**

Parenting is another opportunity to put another's needs before your own. Children will test your resolve to no end, if you let them. But you are the parent. You want to teach your children how to become parents one day too. Do it with unconditional love, structure, teaching true principles, and fulfilling essential roles of nurturing, while providing and protecting them. Reviewing these one by one will reveal their strengths and then we will consider some of the fallacious arguments in opposition to these methods.

### **Unconditional Love**

No matter what your children do, they will always hold a unique bond with you. Love them. They are not perfect and neither are you. Learn from them. Love them in the way they love you, without exception. Even when they are wrong or wronged children have a way of forgiving and forgetting.

### **Setting Guidelines/Structure/Rules**

Call it whatever you want, but make sure it exists for your family. Order within your family's activities are at the base of functioning well. Teaching—specifically showing them what is right in your expectations of them—is possibly the greatest responsibility parents have to their children. It requires no hypocrisy in our willingness to live by whatever we would require of them. There should be a clear line between rules for a child and rules for an adult, but beware your behavior in ways that you wouldn't want to see your children follow in your footsteps. Ask yourself, what makes your lifestyle worth following? What has really brought joy in your life that you would hope all your family members could also one day enjoy? What in yours or their behavior may rob you or them

of taking advantage of the more important things in life? Then set the rules—out of love—so there are guidelines in place that if followed happiness is ensured. Now set the example and follow those rules, which includes being able to firmly enforce understood consequences and apply teachings of the rules of justice.

### **Teaching True Principles**

Half the battle is already won. By raising children with clear guidelines and consequences you are already teaching true principles to live by. The degree to which you follow your own rules is the degree to which you can expect them to follow rules. Children gradually begin to realize just how much their parents don't know. Nonetheless, you have experienced much more than them; you do know a lot that they should first be apprised of by you, at least in some regard. You don't have to teach everything, but general principles should be ingrained in order to make good choices whatever the situation. Bad things do not have to be experienced in order for us to know they are bad.

### **Fulfilling Essential Roles**

Women are innately better than men at nurturing. Mothers who carried a child have a unique and divine affinity with a child that should not be ignored. While a husband and father may help in the care of a child, men are naturally more inclined and suited to provide and protect their own. When we endeavor to define familial roles where everyone helps in all the needs of the family, we should not forget the general strengths of those in the relationship. However you achieve the needs of nurturing, loving, caring, providing for, and protecting your family, those are essential roles and responsibilities that must be filled.

### **Some Fallacies that are Parent Traps**

Fallacy #1—Unconditional love means unconditional acceptance.

Actually, accepting poor behavior shows a lack of love. It is hard to be contrary to another, but tough love is in the better interest of an individual in the long term. It will improve a relationship of trust when you both live by what you really expect of one another.

Fallacy #2—Being a friend/buddy to my child is more important than being a parent.

When children respect you as their parent you are developing a lasting relationship where they can turn to you as their truest friend. Let them blame you for the standards they want to embrace, but wouldn't otherwise have a true friend who is willing to stand up for the position of parental wisdom.

Fallacy #3—Children don't need to work until they have to be grown ups.

Sheltering a child from the difficulties and pains of the world does them know favors; it deprives them of adjusting to it. Work develops love and respect and understanding of purpose in life more than any other way could.

Fallacy #4—Children don't need parents to play with them.

Children need to see their parents have fun with them and together. Express love in words but show your love in actions. Time is the most precious thing you have to give to your children. They are only young for so long. Be there for all that interests them. Supporting them with your time will be of most worth to their memories and their love of growing up.

Fallacy #4—Living well will absolve us of having problems.

Challenges or problems will always come. Being constant in choosing the better part can be tested in many different ways. Some problems may even arise as a result of good choices. Peace of conscience will provide contentedness. And though all problems can't be avoided, at least we can choose to have some of the favorable consequences that come with good choices as opposed to some of the problems that are directly attributed to poor actions.

A dysfunctional family is funny on TV but not so funny in our own houses. Be flexible and willing to incorporate all wonderful tips you come across in order to succeed in your home. I end with a quote by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known for its emphasis on the family, instructing that there is "no success (accomplishment) in life that will compensate for failure in the home." I echo that sentiment. The drama of the reality shows doesn't have to be your reality.