

PARENTING

Christmas—a time for family gatherings and remembering bygone days. Like many of us, our grown children and their children visit once in a while, and it is difficult not to have tears in our eyes and say to ourselves: “Where is the little girl I carried? Is this the little boy at play? When did she grow to be a beauty—when did he grow to be so tall? I don’t remember growing older! When did they? Wasn’t it yesterday when they were small? Sunrise—sunset—swiftly flow the years! One season following another—laden with happiness and tears. (Fiddler on the Roof, 1971)

Time swiftly goes by! As a parent, are you an example currently, or will you remember being an example of leadership for your family? Will you, at some future Christmas time, look, again, at your grown children and recognize that swiftly have gone the years? Will the time come (if it has not already) when you see your children’s behavior and lifetime accomplishments immolated as to the leadership you currently or have historically exemplified to them?

Your family, as the most important organization in the world, needs leadership. Being a parental leader in your own life and setting an example of positive leadership for your children to witness is the most important prerequisite to your child’s successful future leadership ability.

Some positive leadership behaviors by parents are:

1. Positive communication with your children. Vocal support and being “there” to support, give positive compliments, and show just the simple basics of love. Teach gratitude.
2. Respond to behavior rather than react. Talk softly to redirect behaviors and help suggest and support decisions that represent behaviors of their future leadership behaviors.
3. Provide and appropriately practice making choices and stating possible outcomes and consequences. Experiencing the process of considering and making the right choice from many options teaches the Critical Thinking required for future leadership actions.
4. Show emotional intelligence by controlling personal emotions and verbal outbursts. Controlling behavior is sometimes difficult if you are a child. A parental leader showing composure as a part of problem-solving challenges provides an example of how to survive life in the most difficult circumstances.
5. Provide family time to commit to being together (even at meals) to establish positive relationships and discuss daily activities and personal choices. Make these times “happy times” for love and caring to abound! These times help to make the desire to be with and always participate with family in the coming years.
6. Inspire and reward personal greatness. Spur onward the goal of being the best a person can be. Help children to be a part of something greater than themselves—such as organizations and groups that provide opportunities for greatness and success. Commend and reward with recognition for every child’s successful, purposeful, and worthy accomplishments.
7. View the family as a positive influence on the community values. Involve the family in recognizing the need for effective change and their role in making the world and its inhabitants better for all individuals and other living creatures.

When a parent sees the gleam in a child's eye and watches the fulfillment of positive outcomes of their parental leadership in the years that follow, it is enough to cause tears.

If there is anything worthy and of good report, we, as parents, seek to demonstrate these effective and positive leadership behaviors for our posterity. In the final recognition, commendation, and pride of leadership ability in our posterity, we see the outcome of significant parental leadership.

Merry Christmas to you and your family!

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.