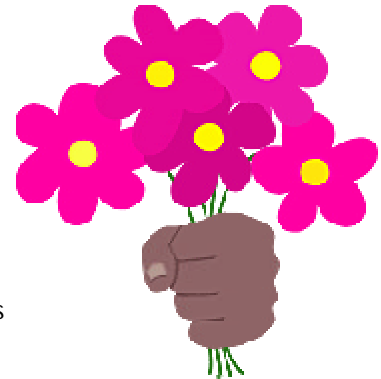


Mindful Parenting©

By Laura Smith-Wynn
From-The Heart Parenting

Are you familiar with “water cooler stories?” We all have one or two such flavored stories, particularly about our ascension from childhood into adulthood. Whether one is more or less challenging than the other, of course, is all relative to the experience of the person telling the story. Nevertheless, it is not rare for water cooler storytellers to talk about their favorite, “How hard life was for me growing up, and it just knocked the wind out of my sail...” story. “My parents...” You know the one I’m talking about.



While many of us use these stories to shadow why we have not achieved certain levels of success, others will tell you that these very experiences were the stimulus that catapulted them into fame and fortune.

I saw something interesting on TV the other day. It was a news snippet about the behavioral observation of an infant responding to play with its mother. When the mother, who had spent time playing with the child, suddenly stopped doing so, the behavior of the child became noticeably different. With big smiles and giggles, the observation showed the child attempting several times to bring the mother’s focus back to playing. As the child’s repeated attempts failed to get the mother’s attention, the child’s facial expression and body language became less and less jovial. The smiles and giggles quickly turned to irritated crying and fidgeting. As soon as the mother returned her playful focus to the child, the child immediately perked up and returned to its playful smiles and giggles. Baby was once again happy and content.

To me, this clearly showed how early on children begin to equate parent behavior to their happiness and contentment. In the above scenario, the mother was not showing a lack of love but rather diverted her attention from direct play with the child. It was clearly observable that the child acted out behavior associated with rejection.

In relationships between parent and child, this exchange may happen many times a day, i.e. the phone rings, dinner must be prepared, other children need attention, etc. If each incident elicits the same response, it is easy to see why some children grow up thinking they are unloved by the parents or that their parents did not give them adequate attention. It is also easy to see why today’s children, because of the absence of parents in the home are rebellious, feel unloved, and are in many instances, unloving toward their parents, others, and themselves.

Current scientific research tells us that the Mind is the collective aspects of intellect and consciousness manifested in some combination of thought, perception, emotion, will and imagination. It is the interpreter of life events as we each see them. It creates our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Through it, our mental events ultimately becomes our physical in nature.

It is common to hear older people say, especially baby boomers, that the attitude and behavior of children today are so different from “our generation.” They say that today’s children show little respect and lack the basic principles of discipline. Omitting the cause or nature of the dissimilarities in the parenting models used in the child rearing in each generation.

Recalling my own childhood, my mother was ever-present in the home. All six of us kids were “attached

to her apron string." We went where she went. Her entire day was about taking care of us. She was never far from our presence - talk about reach out and touch which she often did when we seriously disobeyed a request that turned into a directive. When she was not there, our care giving came from the next neighbor who gave love and attention and as much discipline as did our mother. Daddy, worked. Because Mom made his home-coming an event, we received him as our mother taught us to, with hugs, stories of our day, and knee rides while he sat in "his" chair, and we all dined together (without TV, radio, or phone calls) as a family at the dinner table.

In many families today, both parents hold down full time jobs. Even during pregnancy, women continue working often returning to the work when their child is barely 12 weeks old. Bonding and nurturing children, establishing and carrying out family values that guide children in expected family behavior does not have the same structure that it had during the Baby Boomer generation. Plus, the make up of many families today are single heads of household parents. Suffice it to say, that child rearing as "baby boomers" knew it no longer exists.

The way of parenting in the 21st Century is different. Civil and Human Right's movements, Laws, and the Media and access to the Internet with information on any imaginable subject have equalized all facets of society including the right's of children to raise themselves and make their own decisions. To some it seems that parents are merely vehicles to bring them into world. Television provides the guidance by which parents raise their children, while providing the children with similar guidelines on how they are to respond to parental guidance as well as friends, teachers, employers, and everybody else.

But, let me digress here to my original question..."Why is it then that some will use the hard luck stories of their childhood to catapult them to success while others use it as the cause of their failures in life?

Unless you've been diagnosed, medically, as being mentally incapable, once you become an adult, your parents are no longer responsible for your actions. Behavior and attitudes are changeable even if your parents were the worst on the planet. As an adult, you are your own parent. You tell you what to do and how to do it. Your success or failure is no longer how your parents raised you but on your own motivation to succeed or fail.

The question, is what motivates you more: the desire to succeed, or the desire not to fail? The fear of failure is a stronger motivator than the desire for success. It is fear that usually prevents people from starting things, but once you move beyond this fear, it switches directions and starts working in your favor. We live between success and failure, and, while we would all love to gain respect as one of the truly successful, we definitely don't want to be one of the biggest failures.

We often chose to avoid big wins in order to avoid medium sized losses. In addition, we'll often prefer small emotional payoffs in the present to larger rational payoffs in the future.

If you are not familiar with MOTIVATION and its role in the success of your life and that of your children, take time now to learn more about it. It will help you direct your children in ways that motivate them to be children that are more mindful and you a more mindful parent.

When your adult child gathers around the water cooler reflecting on the experiences of their childhood and their parenting, let it reflect the joy of your parenting.