

Parents, Be A Disciplined Role-Model and . . .

Parents, your children are born feeble and thirsty. They need your nourishment, guidance and strength. A parent who is disciplined is a good role-model. If children see their parents out of control, they will assume this behavior is the way to behave, and the world also must be like this. Your precious children are your moral investment in this life, and like any valuable asset, you must nurture it to its fullest energy and production. Show your children how to have a vivid imagination. Their imaginations brings forth realistic possibilities and it is unlimited. When children know they are loved and valued, they will listen and learn; they will realize they have nearly everything and every reason to succeed in life.

A caring parent listens, responds, offering soothing advice, a little here, a little there, giving a few hugs, daily pats on the back and yes, a little admonishment when needed. Teach your children at a [young age] to practice self-discipline instead of turning to instant gratification. Without discipline they will not succeed socially or mentally—they will not have the *will* to journey down life's road less-traveled. With self-discipline, children will grow to be ambitious, develop work habits, and respect others as well as themselves. Children will realize that their success is partly in their own hands. Show them how to balance adversity and pity with hope and faith. Yes, when we plant a tree we plant the futures of our children. It appears that tragedy, racial intolerance, jealousy, drugs and hatred for the most part, will always be in food and mixed in the air we breathe. However, you must use your spiritual antibodies, strength and *will* to counter such vicious and eroding diseases. Encourage your children to look at the world not with a telescopic lens but rather with a wide angle lens—to do so, will provide abundant light, and those images will appear much clearer. You must not let your children see you eat from the plates of self-hatred, hopelessness and blame. If you do, you give them a forum to exercise excuses for failures.

And don't blame your circumstances for where you are today. Just look hard wherever you can to find those circumstances that you want, and if you can't find them, get going and make them happen. No matter what happens to you as a parent, the important thing is what you allow happen inside of you, something your children will notice. Parents, do not discuss your problems in the presence of your children. It was the writer, Victor Hugo who said, "If a soul [person] is left in darkness, sins will be committed, but he guilty one is not he who committed the sins, but rather he who caused the darkness." Your children must not be left in darkness to wither like flowers devoid of nourishment, water and sunlight. Encourage your sons and daughters to be their best. Be that woman in Langston Hughes' poem who tells her son that "life ain't been no crystal stair for her," and life has been rather difficult, but she's continuing to turn corners and reaching for new heights. Because if she sits down, it will be rather hard and she might get a few splinters. It has been said that our children are our trees which will provide many ships, homes, and buildings. Without your guidance and nutriment, your children stand little chance of being all they can be.

When I was a young girl in my small country town of Idabel—there was a man who collected trash with a wagon and a pair of mules. One day I saw him and stated: "Dad, what a shame. I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world. He should be ashamed to pick-up garbage. My dad replied: Well, you should respect him even more because he's doing something that most folks don't want to do or couldn't do. Their kind of work is needed in this world. Daughter, never be shame of what you do as long as it is honest hard-work." He embedded in me that a

person's character, and respect along with hard work will determine one's destiny, and not criticism of others. My parents taught me to be respectful, humble and empathetic to all people, to myself, and to seek and find wisdom from other people. Every man you meet is your teacher as well as your student.

Caring parents, I challenge you to commit yourself to be there when your children need you—so that you may help prop them up with tenderness, expectation, guidance and hope just as you would a young tree if it needed to be straightened. Finally, being a good parent isn't always easy. You often wonder if you're doing all the right things, and if being a parent is worth the struggles. But you will reach deep down inside and continue to work hard, making sacrifices of your time and fun, suffering a little, losing a little faith and hope here and there, gaining strength, and what is more important, the *will* to go on. But you will not give up or give in. And there is a spirit of freedom and success blowing in all directions, and it's coming from above and you will fill your strong lungs. ■ ***(Thank You for Listening)***.