

*When I approach a child
He inspires in me two sentiments:
Tenderness for what he is,
And respect for what he may become.*
-Louis Pasteur

My Parents Rock!

It's rather sad, but many people today believe that kids are mostly messed up. Of course, that was probably the thought of previous generations as well. One characteristic that does stand out significantly with the current generation is the role of parents. The parent/child relationship is continually being studied, mostly by adults. But what do the kids think? Are there kids out there who think their parents rock? Actually, there are and this newsletter contains some of what they have to say and think.



In a past issue of this newsletter, we discussed what makes great kids great. This time around, we decided to turn the tables and find out what makes some parents exceptional and others barely there.

Off the cuff, I randomly asked a number of kids who claim to like and respect their parents

(amazing!), what makes them think so highly of their parents. Some of them even told me things that they wished their parents would do, as well. Shockingly enough, most of the kids reiterated the same general ideas. In this issue of *EAP Accents*, we'll cover those ideas and make specific recommendations for parents who want to be better parents.

If you find yourself struggling with parenthood, remember that you have help at your fingertips. We're here for you!

Call your Employee Assistance Program today at
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My Parents Respect Me

When kids say "My parents respect me", they're not saying that their parents are lenient and always give them their way. Kids mean something pretty specific when they use that term. Respect, as defined by the kids I interviewed includes but is not limited to the following:



- ◇ My parents speak to me without sarcasm or ugliness.
- ◇ My parents don't "talk down" to me just because I happen to be younger or smaller.
- ◇ My parents don't call me by pet names that are embarrassing or that I don't like.
- ◇ My parents don't make jokes at my expense.
- ◇ My parents say positive things to other people about me, rather than talking about my weaknesses.
- ◇ My parents don't criticize my friends, although they do make suggestions about the friends I choose.
- ◇ My parents ask for my opinion and then really take it into consideration.
- ◇ My parents tell me when I do something well without making me sound like a puppy! You know, a pat on the head and "good boy!".
- ◇ My parents give me the freedom to make decisions and mistakes without allowing me to "hang myself totally".
- ◇ My parents don't say "I told you so." Most parents don't have to say this, kids already know it!
- ◇ My parents don't do my homework, projects, etc. for me. They offer advice and assistance, but appreciate my work even if it's not what they would have done.

At different ages, parents show respect in different ways. Getting your 3-year-old's opinion about a new sofa purchase isn't wise. However, pulling that same child aside to discipline him, as not to embarrass him, does show respect. Definitely involve older kids in family decisions, such as vacations, big purchases, and other areas that will affect the whole family. Not only does this reveal the child's role in the family, it's also excellent life experience.

Some parents say that respect must be earned; it is not freely given. Yet, don't we expect people who don't even know us: the shop clerk, grocer, mailman, etc. to respect us? Often we assume that respect comes with age. Respect should be given to all age groups, and the greatest way to get your kids to respect others is to demonstrate that respect for them.

Children are natural mimics; they act like their parents in spite of every effort to teach them good manners.

-Unknown

My Parents are Consistent

This positive attribute was a surprise coming from kids. Most adults discuss consistent parenting to achieve goals that they have in raising their children. However, kids view consistency in a different light. No matter what style of parenting is utilized, a reliable parent provides the most security.

One serious problem noted by kids is when parents don't respond the same in similar scenarios. This often occurs when adults parent based on their moods. If mom is in a good mood, she'll let me go to my friend's house. However, if she's in a bad mood, she'll come up with extra chores to keep me from going. Or when Dad is busy, he doesn't care if I finish my homework or not. Yet, next week, when he's paying attention, he'll rant and rave for an hour because I didn't complete my work.

Consistent parents are those who basically let their no be no and their yes be yes. They don't let whining, complaining or pouting sway them. What other kids are doing doesn't influence them, and neither do other parents, for that matter.

Consistent parents have reasons for their answers, and their kids understand that. Even, on occasion, when mom and dad say no without a reason, the child of consistent parenting will know that there is one.

One of the greatest areas of inconsistency noted by kids is when dad

says one thing and mom says another. Ironically, kids may use this to their advantage momentarily, but in the long run, they'd prefer to have mom and dad on the same page. **When parents support one another in child rearing, it provides security and excellent role modeling for their children.** Homes where parents agree on the basics of raising children tend to be more peaceful and inviting. Children can cause a great deal of strife when adults don't band together. Amazingly, the kids want their parents to stand up to them and give them guidance. It's hard to respect people who don't even respect each other.

Consistent parents are clear about the guidelines from the start. Although they might occasionally give grace and defer to a child's desire for a specific reason, the child understands that the rules haven't actually changed.

Consistent parents have reasons for guidelines. Typically, those reasons are related to protecting their children. When children realize why something is off limits, they're less likely to go there. However, if the parents are overprotective, with an enormous number of guidelines based on parental fears or ambiguous reasoning, a child may rebel because he doesn't trust his parent's guidance.

Parents are often so busy with the physical rearing of children that they miss the glory of parenthood, just as the grandeur of the trees is lost when raking leaves.
-Marcelene Cox



READ ON! For a helpful resource with teens, check out this book:

Positive Discipline for Teenagers: Empowering Your Teens and Yourself Through Kind and Firm Parenting by Jane Nelson.

