

Parenting as a Friend

How and Why you need to be your Kids best Friend

Introduction

A lot of people will argue that discipline should be on top of a friendship with our kids. But it does not have to be one or the other, it is just that is more natural and easier to get a disciplined child while being a Friend, but not only that, leaving our kids without a feeling of belonging to us their parents, to go out and search for that bond in the street has become really dangerous.

It may be the the other side of the comfort of our lives, but now everybody have tools these days to communicate, hide, and get away, all this when at reach of a vulnerable child can work against her/him.

We have to understand that kids will pick the right examples and rules from us their parents, but first we have to be close to them. They have to understand that before judging them or seeing them as an improvement personal project we see them as equals, as friends and that they can always can count with us.... and with no one else.

Society and their Influence in Today's Families

I was watching TV when they announced the death of the leader of the one of the biggest workers unions, so the network decided to re air his last interview. It was the usual rags to riches story taking place in the union's world, that is as close to a mafia as can be.

One line in the interview caught my attention: "My success is due to the fact that my father once told me: You will only have 2 friends in your life; me, your father, and a dollar in your pocket". At the time I thought that it was an odd comment coming from someone who had to deal -and see through- people for a living, but later I realized the importance of that statement and why it related to his success.

As Parents we understand the critical importance of the social skills of our kids not only for their well being but also for their future success in their career, but in most cases we fail to see that to develop their socials skill and most important to contribute to their well being first we as parents have to be connected to them before we let them loose into the peer pressure scenario, in other words it is our first and main job as parents to become their best friends and keep that spot at least until reach adult age. To explain Why and How are the main objectives of this small book you are reading.

The way society was organized on the old days helped parents to bond with their kids, there were less distractions and the distances and other factors resulted in families with a strong bonds between parents and their daughters and sons.

But things are very different now, and it shows: you see grown up people behaving like kids, cold blooded violence in schools, and the dangerous peer pressure in which most kids get caught up.

There is not a problem in kids having friends at all. The problem is when those friends became

the main source of love and approval surpassing us as parents as the main mirror from which they get an idea of who they are. We push our kids in to the social world with our best intentions and in many cases we later discover that strategy backfires when we as parents are pushed aside by our kids, who go out to get the leftovers of approval from their peers. But not only are we pushed aside, when kids fall in to their friends environment as the main source of identity a whole set of problems arise as our kids believe that who they are is whatever their peers think of them, and on the other side our ideas and feelings as parents are neglected. You could pretty much compare it to a marriage where one person starts an affair, it does not become a divided love, it rather becomes a situation where the total affection and interest goes to the new lover and none to the spouse.

In this small book we will show tips to communicate as well as some tips to help you build a relationship with your kids. And that will be about it, because once you and your kids are best friends, parenting will be as natural as breathing.

Building a Relationship: Communicating

The first step to build a relationship with our kids is the communication, and the golden rule to communicate with someone is respect. We should trust and respect our kids intelligence in order to develop a healthy communication with them.

An important step to have a healthy communication with our kids is simply to listen to when they open up to us. A lot of parents are just so anxious of improving or helping their kids that they interrupt them with advice and opinions. This will just accomplish 2 things: your kids will get used to someone else thinking for them, and wont come to you the next time they need to take something off their chests.

You may be thinking: Is this guy crazy, should we not give advice to our kids? Yes, advice is not wrong when asked for, but many times our kids come up with a problem and we interrupted them with a solution and we do not let their feelings flow and truly communicate, but most important for their future success in life: do not let them learn to think for themselves.

In a recent post on Hacker News, somebody asked "What was your biggest regret in professional life?" The number one answer was "Not thinking for myself", so although our intentions are to help them with our opinions or advice, in reality, what we are doing when given advice that was not asked for is *not* helping our kids to deal with their emotions and letting them know that we think they can *not* come up with a solution for their problems by themselves.

When our kids come up with a problem or any topic, we should first listen (turn off the TV, look them in the eyes), then help them identify the feeling they are having (Did that make you sad or angry?).

After that let them explain the situation or problem they are having. But here is the thing: do not offer some philosophical, or simple, or angry or any type of solution, what your kid really wants is just someone to listen and help them get off those thought feelings out of their chest, **SO KEEP QUIET AND LET THEM SPEAK.**

If you help your kids to recognize their feelings and let them talk, they eventually will come with a solution for their problems by themselves (or most likely, learn to deal with the feeling you help them identify) and also you would have give them the confidence to trust themselves in making decisions, all this yourself in their top spot as their support in hard times.

Handling Trouble

Bonding could be a natural thing in every Family, but it seems it gets lost most of the time when Parents make the mistake of putting relationship second to discipline. We have to know that with connected kids, orders and manners are kept more easy and naturally, and that as long as we focus on the relationship, the discipline will come along. This does not mean that it is not a bumpy ride some days, but still it is the easiest and more natural way.

So there is a few things that will help us in not loosing our kids connection when confronted by trouble, the first one is, No Shouting: there should be no shouting in the house, this raises the tension and base the relationship in fear, sooner or later the fear is gone but the closeness of the relationship gets damaged. Although there may be situations when this becomes unavoidable, raising the voice should never be common, as it is something useless in parenting in the long run.

Trust: do not treat your kids like criminals; handle things from trust and do not call them liars or see them from a negative angle. Kids will always try to fill our expectations so do not shoot yourself in the foot for that matter.

Times Out: I was amazed to see how well Time Outs (when a kid misbehaves you leave her in a different room by herself, a minute for every year of age of the kid) worked with my kids when I used them (although I did not use them a lot, simply because my instinct did not like completely the results even before I understood how important was a relationship when raising kids).

Now it is clear to me why Time Outs work so well: nothing is more frightening to kids as being by themselves, they get so scare of the situation that comply to our orders right away, which would be great, if eventually the time out not resulted in losing our connection with our kids.

The problem with Time Outs and punishment in general should be clear to you now, they should not be made if first the bond is not strong between parents and kids. To punish your kids without first being their main support in their lives or by sacrificing your relationship just makes them fall in their peers to search for that special bond they wont get from us. Once this happens you as Parent will be neglected and your kids world will be set up by their friends ideas and opinions, and you can not even begin to compare the love of a parent with one of a kids friend, in fact not even know what their Friend's intentions will be.

Let your Kids face the consequences of their misbehavior but by not means lost or sacrifice your relationship with them for some bad attitude or incident that may have happened. It is worth to notice that is precisely when kids seem to behave more badly and need our love and affection the least is when is more critical we give it to them. I wish there could be a mathematical or magical formula to deal with these situations but I guess is when your creativity and judgment should surface to deal with those days that inevitably will come.

Crying: when kids cry or are moody, let them do so: crying is just a way for them to reset their minds from frustrations and fears that have added up, it is a natural way for them to energize again, so when your kid seems to be crying a lot for some trivial thing keep in mind that in reality is just rewiring from bottled up feelings and situations.

How to Bond

Conversation: The most straight forward way to bond with your kids in talking with them. Set up 20 minutes each day when you simply exchange comments and talk about anything that comes to mind in an equal manner, not like father or mother with daughter or son, but as two people discussing the world. The idea is to do it with each kid separately, so the bond is more easily set.

Thank you: Tell your kids everyday "Thank you for being my daughter/son", this may be an obvious thing for us, but they need to make sure our love is always and will always be there.

Respect: The way you treat your kids is the way they are going to treat themselves, if you treat them like babies they will think of themselves like babies. I do not mean to expect them to make decisions or behave like adults but let them be themselves with full respect from their opinions and behavior like we do with adults.

One way to easily let them feel like partners is with board games, at least once a week schedule a game family night, or play one on one with your kid. (Someone told me her father used to play chess with her, but took pieces out before the game started to give her some advantage, as she became a better player the pieces were fewer until eventually they played a regular game).

Start with Yourself

In order to be in a position to connect with your kids you first need to be on touch with your self. Do not be too hard on your self expecting everything to be perfect, or worry too much on the material stuff. Just relax and stay healthy, learn to take quick cold showers in the morning while letting the water run mostly below your belly because there is were a lot of nerves are; at night take a warm shower with soap, and also massage your back while the warm, almost hot, water runs through you lower back then go right to sleep. First thing in the morning drink a glass of water to recover the liquids your body did not have at night.

Regarding exercise, the secret is that it does not take time away from you, but it rather buys you more time, as your mind and body is less cluttered the rest of the day. Running is the simplest, Tennis is great for taking your mind off things and the best is probably yoga (I highly recommend [AM PM Yoga with Rodney Lee](#)). If you really want to slow down your stress nothing like watching baseball.

And let music be part of your life, a digital mp3 device and an Internet connection is all you need. We have a CD player/alarm clock with [Beethoven music](#) next to our kids beds, works like magic at bed time, my kids are sleep before track 4 everyday, they have developed some kind of unconscious reflex.

Summary

We want to make the best Parents for our kids, and the way to do it is by being the closest to them, let them belong to us, all the time. If we don't accomplish this we force them to look for it outside our homes, and the frustration and the consequences of this is not good at all.

On the other side if we take the time and effort to connect with our kids, we will have an easier time as parents and a more interesting time as partners.

Now that you understand that there are some dangers in the peer relationships of kids, be more aware of changes of behavior, and attack them with a weapon nobody else have: a Parent love for their child. You will make some very good buddies along the way.

Good Luck and God Bless You in this beautiful and sometimes difficult task of raising kids.

Comments or suggestions, any tips on how to bond better with kids? E-mail me at: jcsalazar@gmail.com

If you liked these few lines and you can, please "buy me a coffee" at ParentingasaFriend.com