

Principal's Note - Reflections on a Big Transition

As I prepare to send my son to college this year, it has allowed for a summer of reminiscing and reflecting. As we do as parents, I constantly ask myself whether what I am doing is right for my child. Should I intervene? Should I allow him to learn on his own? What is the right balance there? My best answer to those questions is "yes."

I truly believe parents are doing the best they can with their children in the moment they are in with the resources and knowledge they have. We each know our children better than anyone else, and though you might have made a different decision on certain things in hindsight, you are always doing the best you can in the moment. Believe that about yourself.

So, I chose to focus on the things that I felt worked well for me and my son, and share them with you. I always tried to listen carefully to his side of the story, but kept an open mind to what the other side could be. I ensured he was held accountable for his part in his actions and praised him for doing the right thing. I truly believed that he was placed with the right coach, teacher, group leader, etc. during his growing up. Even when I was not sure the fit was going to be right, he always found some positives in the situation. I made every effort not to put my thoughts about the situation out to him or others, and allowed him to develop his own thoughts on the relationship. In reflecting with him this summer, there were some great experiences for him that would have never occurred had I intervened. I started early making him responsible for managing his life. He carried his own backpack, made his own lunches and had household chores in primary school. I knew all of his friends and his friends' parents. When someone new came into the mix, I met the parent and talked a lot with the friend when they were around. I encouraged him to hang out at our house – and they did, and still do. The grocery bill can be huge, but it is worth it to have the kids around and be involved in what they are doing. I gave them space, but was a presence in the house.

This summer when I saw an Amber Alert on the road and realized this was not a worry for me for my son anymore. I thought about my worries throughout his life. When he was born until about the age of three, I worried about what I would do that could harm him (eat the wrong foods, have immunizations, forget him in the car seat in the back, etc.). Then, until he was about 15, I worried that someone else would harm him (a mean classmate, a stranger, etc.) Now, I worry about what he will do to himself to harm himself in the decisions that he makes. As I write this, he is texting me to say he had to get three shots at his physical for college athletics. My heart hurts that I was not there, but I realize he is an adult, and he has to start having these experiences without me. It's hard to let go, but I also realize it has been a long process that has been happening since the day he was born. You hope you made the right decisions always, and you never stop worrying about them. EVER!! Cherish your time with your children.

Here are some parenting reflections I've been having that I'd like to offer to you:

- Start saving now for college – have them start saving a percentage of their money for college also.
- Spend time with them as much as you can. Go on one-on-one dates, outside of the house, on a regular basis with them each individually.
- Support and guide them, but don't do things for them that they are capable of doing, even if they are late on timelines, or not doing it "right." This only delays their growth in this area.
- Travel with them, take them to museums, the arts, the parks – these make unforgettable memories!
- Look them in the eye when they are talking to you.
- Remember that they watch everything you do – not necessarily what you say. If you text in the car, they will text in the car. If you talk in a positive manner to and about people, they will too. The same is true for negative talk.
- When you make them a priority, they see themselves as important.

My son does not move into the dorms for a few weeks, so I cherish this time with him and wish I had more. I look forward to seeing what he does with his life and truly feel I did the best I could. It may not have been perfect, but I have loved every day of raising him!

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Enjoy your children and let me know if you ever want to talk about your them. I love that piece of my job and will have more time now. I look forward to sharing it with your families!

The following poem was in my home as a young child, and I think it sets a great example.

**Children Learn What They Live
By Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D.**

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*If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.*

Best wishes for a great school year,

Heidi Perry, Principal