

Five Principles for Spiritual Parenting

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We know more about nutrition than past generations. We've identified learning disorders and new educational techniques. We give our children every advantage we can afford, and some we cannot afford. We organize, direct, enroll, coach, and transport our children to and from lessons, games, practices, social events, doctor's appointments and schools. We are trying to be good parents and give our children all they need to develop into well- rounded and successful adults. We may, however, be missing the very core of our child's being, his spirituality. Spirituality is the base from which grows self-esteem, values, morals, and a sense of belonging. It is what gives life direction and meaning. I believe we have entered into a sacred contract when we bring children into the world. A contract that says we are willing to help these children understand and wisely use their spiritual powers expressive of a greater Divine energy.

All children begin life with an innate sense of wonder about their world. They are naturally intuitive and open. We, as parents, can foster this precious state of being with our words, actions, and attentiveness. Where there is wonder there is spirituality. The ordinary becomes the incredible when we live life as a prayer, a soulful journey when we endow the daily routine with magic. When we stop the chaos of daily life and celebrate the small moments we provide our children the joy of the moment, we affirm and acknowledge their true state of being.

"How, you ask?" "I'm so busy now, where am I possibly going to get the time to nurture my child's soul?" I assure you, as a mother of two young children who also strives to put my voice

and work out into the world, that it is not only possible but can easily work in any kind of family and in any kind of home.

Here are a few ideas to get you started and 5 of my 10 Principles for Spiritual Parenting.

1. Listen to Your Child! Children have wisdom and they are naturally in touch with their intuition. If we listen and honor their instincts, they will learn to do so as well. When a child says, "It just doesn't feel right Mama," it's time to go deeper and find out why. Not only does listening help children to validate their own deepest intuition, it also is a joyful, insightful and often inspirational time for the adult. I have learned so much from kids. In my book *Drawing Angels Near: Children Tell of Angels in Words and Pictures* children have touched thousands of readers with quotes such as "A long time ago when I was born, I thought of all the things I had made before. It was that time that I knew the angels." (Age 4)

Set aside time to listen to your child in the evenings just before bed, or a walk in the park, Saturday morning breakfast, or a special date for just the two of you. Listen! Don't do all the talking. Hear what he/she is saying and you'll be amazed at the things that come up.

2. Add Magic to the Ordinary! Starting today, add a little magic to your daily life with your children. Don't just wash the dishes at the sink – look for the fairies in the bubbles. Eat breakfast for dinner. Music is a great way to touch the spirit. Try different kinds with your child. Soon, he will know what frees his soul. Drop peppermint oil on the light bulbs and sprinkle scented powder between his/her sheets at night. Put a flower on the breakfast plate. If there isn't one growing nearby you can make one out of tissue paper or draw one on a napkin. Use your imagination and remain open for inspiration.

Young children see the magic naturally in their lives. Let's

not belittle their ecstasy, but join in it. Look at the ladybug that is flying around your kitchen – count her dots – write a poem about where she is going. This makes magic. Creating magic out of the ordinary builds celebration, rituals and loving, lasting memories that nourish the souls of everyone involved.

3. Create a Flexible Structure! Kids of all ages need order. They need to know what to count on in an unpredictable world. Depending on your personality and your life situation, your routine and structure may vary. If you take a long hard look at a typical weekday in the life of your family, jotting down what the pattern is, you can then judge whether you need to create MORE order or perhaps loosen up a bit. One seven-year-old recently told me, “I feel like I’m in prison. Everyone tells me what to do. My mommy, teacher, even the bus driver tells me where to sit. Then I go to Sunday school and I have to glue the picture just like the teacher’s. I feel just like I’m in prison.”

The trick is to be structured without being rigid and to be secure while being spontaneous. Within family rules flexibility can exist for the child’s expression of individuality and spirituality. It is safe when boundaries and expectations are clear.

Have fun adding flexibility. If you are stumped for ideas just ask your kids!

4. Be a Good Mirror for Your Child. You are a mirror for your child and will show by example how spirituality and daily life merge. Everything you do or say, every habit you have, your tone of voice, your expressions, all teach your child what the world is and how he fits into it. What he sees in you is a mirror of the bigger world. What he sees in you is a mirror of who he is.

If your child sees a parent who has a loving comfortable

relationship with spirit, chances are he/she will too. If you share your feelings about God/Goddess/All That Is/The Higher Power and demonstrate a faith and a trust in that power your child will model this behavior. If you want a child who is spirit-filled and comfortable with his connection to The Higher Power show him/her how you do it. Is meditation something that works for you? Children as young as three enjoy sitting for a few minutes and meditating. Altars are individual shrines that children can create. Prayer is a habit that a child will integrate as part of his day if you demonstrate your prayerful times and methods. For your daughters, check out Celia Straus' fantastic book, Prayers on My Pillow.

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