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TRAINING CHILDREN

The whole subject of the training of children is huge and in this brief session we can do no more than scratch the surface. However there are some very basic principles, which in general **hold true for every situation**, so I will try to capture them here as briefly as possible.

Firstly, a child needs both an attending Father and Mother for proper and normal development. Without one or other, some permanent damage will always ensue to the character and development of the child. Whether that will be more or less damage than living with parents who fight repeatedly is difficult to ascertain, but children will always pay the price for parents' unwillingness to **learn how to love and value each other**. This nurture-void will usually show up in ways such as emotional withdrawal, depression, anxiety, surliness, adolescent delinquency, promiscuity or criminality. The best thing to do for such a child is to seek reconciliation with the absent parent – and emotional, if not geographical, is far better than nothing, as it will encourage repeated contact. If your son or daughter ruins his or her life because you didn't want to face up to your responsibilities, or learn how to love, then any success

Secondly, just like pets, children will always repeat what ever behaviour gets them what they want, so consider the implications of this carefully before you indulge them, simply to quieten them down or gain their approval or short-term co-operation. You may be making a rod for your own back if **you allow them to train you** by virtue of their anger, demands for food, tears, sulking or violence. Parenting is not for cowards, and real love must show itself tough, as well as tender, if you are to avoid allowing the child to gain the upper hand. That means the ability to resolutely and firmly say **"no"**. (Calm Verdict Parenting). If you find yourself unable to be resolute enough to win the power struggle at home because of an undiagnosed UBF, it's pointless trying to do it in public, for the indulged child will win every time. It may be that you cannot be firm enough because of your own memories of childhood trauma, or that your child has a stronger will than your own, but you must show that "Mummy and Daddy are the boss". If that sounds draconian.....

Thirdly, remember you cannot grow a child beyond where you have grown yourself. If you are still reverting to childish ways of coping - if you still live by your childhood survival kits - how will you hope to teach your child maturity? First work on increasing your own personal growth by discovering those understandings about anger, conflict and emotional security, which your parents were unable to teach you, in order that you may then pass them on. If you over-react in rage, the child is now setting your agenda for you.....

Fourthly, emotional disturbance is often born out of family disturbance. If there is marital and/or sibling rivalry and repeated petty put-downs as children and adults fight for power, the stress and anger will be soaked up by the children – usually one child in particular. **Parents, get control of the mood of the family home**. A good move is to sit the offending parties down; explain about how different they are, to the point where they cannot and need not compare themselves. And to illustrate your point, show them an apple, an orange and a banana, and ask them to choose which is the 'best' fruit.....

Fifthly, a learning child has a great need for stimulus. Can you keep a step ahead, by taking the time to teach them 'stuff', including how to entertain themselves, rather than to rely on you (or technology) whenever they are bored. Perhaps you could draw up a large list of things which they themselves can refer to do on those wet days, or when you are too busy to focus on them.....

Sixthly, respect the fact that your power to parent is 'on loan' to you by the child. And (unfortunately) a child learns early on that no one can truly make them do anything if they really don't want to. Therefore it follows that if trust is betrayed, trust will be removed, i.e. co-operation and submission will be withheld. So if they perceive that you are not being fair, or are really only acting in self-interest, they may become stubborn, resistant and uncooperative in order to reaffirm themselves. At this point you may have to back up a bit (humble yourself) and take time to discover what it was you did, which they saw as a breach of trust. Perhaps a broken promise, favouring a sibling, or abandoning / abusing their father or mother has deeply offended them.....

Seventh, I often say that **children are excellent recorders of their family, school and life experiences, but very poor interpreters of those experiences**. This means that each day they need a parent to listen to them and debrief them from the events of the day. In other words, to check for any wrong conclusions they have come to in their search for truth, and out of which they will begin to view their world.....

FOUR SELF-TESTS FOR PARENTS

1. **HAVE YOU WELCOMED YOUR CHILD'S CLAIM ON YOUR LIFE?** Feral children are those who, because of divorce and / or delinquent parenting, have detached and brought themselves up. They have taught themselves how to cope, how to think, how to comfort themselves when depressed, angry or discouraged, and they have nearly always got it wrong. (These comforters are almost always primitive – i.e. masturbation, self-pity, cannabis, alcohol, violence or food). Often they are the offspring of adults who wanted sex, not children, and so they have been born to parents who have never given them permission to make a claim on their lives – who resent their presence as 'unplanned' and who daily dump their emotional excesses on them.....

2. **CAN YOU PROPERLY TRAIN A PUPPY?** It's interesting to me to note that the same kind of skills needed to train an animal, also work on children. Thus, it's not surprising that in the home where the family dog is crazy, unsupervised, disobedient or distrustful, the children often exhibit similar tendencies. (Perhaps couples should try their skills out with a puppy before they qualify themselves to have children.....)

3. **VIOLENCE BREEDS VIOLENCE.** Can you smack safely? Three checks to keep a smack safe: -

1) Is it substituting for more proactive parenting - is it reactive rather than responsive? i.e. Is it childhood correction or parental ventilation? A smack without control or dignity reduces discipline to violence, and turns parents into thugs. A smack under control is on the leg, bottom or hand.

2) Could the child predict it was coming, because they already knew where the boundary lay and what their violation was? (It must be both consistent and fair). If they consider it unfair, you will smack them into permanent distrust (defensive detachment).....

4. **DO YOU UNDERSTAND ANGER?** Children need help to understand the power, dynamic and emotion of anger, for it can be harnessed to provide creative energy, or it can be released destructively. In many regards, New Zealand and Australia are nations of angry people who live in reaction with the children reflecting the anger of their parents. If you yourself are carrying resentment towards their father or mother or life itself, healing this frustration should be your first priority.....

Empowering Questions for parents

- If you wanted to frustrate a child deliberately, how would you go about it? ('Provoke not your children unto wrath').
- If a really naughty child is addicted to holding the power and calling the shots, how can they be weaned off it?

- What is the feeling that the misbehaving child is invoking in you, that you really can't stand? (By this button they can rule, can't they?)
- Whose physical affection does the child need – Mum or Dad's – and is it forthcoming? A physical bond may need to be built before co-operation is received. A mother, who is cold, touch-wise, will often produce an uncooperative child.
- Can you hear what they are NOT saying, simply because they can't?

IN CONCLUSION; Above all else, a child will unerringly reflect the quality of training and attention available to them. These may be just a few insights to help you in your life's most difficult and demanding task, yet they can help you discover that parenting can also be the most rewarding occupation. That's if you are willing to enter your child's world and make **repeated efforts** to get the recipe right. Just a few (very) short years to shape a life for eternity, so if you hadn't yet prayed for some divine guidance, don't put it off any longer. We need all the help we can get, to gain all the courage we can, to train our children with the truth. Ultimately, it may not be up to you to decide whether or not your life has finally been a success – that may be left to your children to decide.....

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