

Life Lessons from Lavender: Please Pay Attention

Myrna Lapres
May 1, 2023



Coach Myrna May 1, 2023

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I have a troubled past with plants. I buy them with every intention of watering and nourishing them. But often, I get busy, distracted and I forget to take care of them. Recently, I was so excited to see that my lavender plant (pictured here) is blooming beautifully. Then, after a hot spring day, I

went to my back patio, and all the purple heads were bending over from lack of water. After giving it a good soak, the plant revived but it made me think about what else I need to pay more attention to.

Paying attention to others can be as simply as noticing something positive and mentioning it in a casual way. It might be that I commented to my adult son that I noticed how patient he is with his daughter. I can appreciate my sister who is the one to take care of our parents when they need a new phone or help with something at their assisted living. Thanking her for her loving care and asking how she is doing is putting words to my gratitude. Or it is noticing how carefully my granddaughter is watering the lavender plant in the backyard, mentioning that I see that she is trying to not get the bees wet.

Children benefit from the attention grown-ups give them in ordinary, everyday ways as well as harder moments when they are struggling. And this process of attuning to each other can benefit parents too—paying attention is a way to establish and strengthen their connection. Provide each child with at least 10 minutes of your undivided attention each day. When kids receive regular doses of healthy, positive attention, they reduce their attention-seeking behaviors. Kids are less likely to whine, ask the same question over and over, or start poking at their sibling when they've been given regular doses of positive attention.

Adult children, spouses, parents, siblings, and friends all appreciate being noticed as well. Expressing an appreciation about something we are grateful for to another helps them feel seen and loved. When someone shares something that they are dealing with, asking, "Is there more about that?" expresses our interest in how they are doing.

Lastly, we all need to pay attention to our own needs as well. Self-care isn't selfish--it helps us be our best selves which makes the world a better place for ourselves and all those we care about.

Who or what do you need to pay attention to this week?

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