


Leading The Way - As parents, we are tasked with the responsibility to lead

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"Treat a child as
though he already is
the person he's
capable of becoming."

-Haim Ginott

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Leading The Way

As parents, we are tasked with the responsibility to lead. If we want our children to learn how to love and care for themselves and others, be responsible, and have self-control and respect, we need to model and live it every day. Dr. Greg Baer in *Real Love in Parenting* says, "Our children can't achieve those qualities...until they feel more loved, and that is our responsibility, which requires that we find Real Love for ourselves and then

share it with them. It all starts with a desire to change ourselves.”

Kids’ greatest sense of security comes from the confidence that the people that they love the most—their parents and family—love each other. It has been said that the family is the school of love, the place where loving relationships are meant to be learned. Through our examples as parents, we teach and show that happiness comes from being loving. We can also demonstrate accepting and loving other people through our interactions with employers, coworkers, store clerks, neighbors, friends, relatives, and even other drivers on the road.

The way that children learn to be responsible is the same way they learn to play an instrument or ride a bike—with practice. Giving them plenty of opportunities to practice is important. Equally important are the lessons learned through the mistakes of poor choices. When we can remain calm and respond to a mistake with empathy, the relationship remains intact, and the mistake is the problem. However, if we respond with anger, the child quickly becomes resistant, upset, and learns little from their poor choices.

As a parenting coach and educator, I teach that responding with empathetic, compassionate, and unconditional love is the goal. However, it also means we love our kids so much that we are willing to set and enforce limits. Logic happens when we allow our children to make decisions that sometimes result in affordable mistakes and experience the natural or logical consequence. Our love is powerful enough to allow them to learn through their mistakes. Consequences are opportunities to help them learn from the mistake, not a reason to respond punitively.

We model through our actions, but we can also think aloud, saying things like:

- “I feel so much better when I keep my desk neat and organized.”
- “This task is difficult, but I know I can finish it.”

- “It was really difficult to be honest about how I felt about the new rules for the neighborhood swim club at the HOA meeting, but I am so glad that I spoke up. I learned that others had similar concerns.”

It is important for children to know that we sometimes must work hard at tasks that aren't easy for us.

We can teach our children respect, self-control, and so many other qualities through our relationships and daily interactions with them. The entire goal of life is to be happy, a feeling of profound peace that does not come and go with changing circumstances. Real happiness comes from feeling loved and from loving other people, and that feeling is meant to stay with us through any struggle and hardship

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