

Gifts We Can Give Our Children: Model the Qualities We Want Them to Inherit

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In families, parents are tasked with the responsibility to lead. If we want our children to learn self-control, respect, responsibility and love, we need to model it in our daily lives. 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 can teach and show that happiness comes from being loving. We also model accepting and loving other people that we interact with and talk about -- employers, co-workers, store clerks, neighbors, friends, relatives and 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--practice. Give them plenty of practice and opportunities. We model through our actions but also, we can think out loud 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 is important for children to know that we sometimes have to work hard at tasks that we don't like.

We can teach our children respect, self-control and so many other qualities through our relationships and daily interactions. 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 stays with us through struggle and hardship.

As parents, we are responsible for loving our children and teaching them to love others. All of us are doing the best we can but we need the support and love of others to become more loving ourselves.