**RAISING CHILDREN WHO ESTEEM THEMSELVES**

**(AND RESPECT OTHERS TOO)**

Perhaps your children act like they think too much of others (idolizing them), or too little of them (dehumanizing, demonizing). Or maybe in similar ways, they think too much or too little of themselves. The easiest way to find a happy medium with respect is to teach them an attitude of gratitude. Ask them to count their blessings, showing they appreciate what’s been given to them that they didn’t earn, that others don’t get. Ask them to do the same with those they idolize, looking at all they have been given. Ask them to consider the many disadvantages of those they look down on.

Those who think too much or too little of themselves have one thing in common – they are self-centered. Whether your children show arrogance or shame, they believe they are somehow special. No healthy person is going to treat them that way, so they need to get over themselves while they are still young.

Kids who don’t receive time and undivided attention from their parents will struggle with self-confidence unless somebody else gives them these things. Whoever gives them self-worth this way often gives them their values and beliefs as well. So make sure that’s you.

***The 10 A-pills***

Honor, value, and esteem are shown by how we give and receive these ten expressions of respect: **acceptance, acknowledgement, admiration, adoration, affection, approval, appreciation, atonement, attraction,** and the first thing that starts it all, **attention**. These “A-pills” are the building blocks of self-esteem. Tracking where our children get their A-pills, and who they give theirs to, will explain a lot about the other choices they make. Teach them to *lean into people who give them more of these A-pills than they expect to receive.* That should include you. And likewise they need to beware those who expect to be given more than they seem to give. This might show them their idols are toxic.

During the Covid pandemic, wearing **facemasks** and how we talked about them were opportunities to show respect or disrespect, for both self and others. **Manners** are key to giving and receiving respect. Saying *please* and *thank* *you* brings help and self-respect our way. When someone disrespects us, we need to use mutually respectful comebacks, most effectively with a smile: *“Are you asking or telling me?”* or *“That’s your opinion.”*

***Pre-school Years***

Respect is taught in rules for play, how we treat our siblings and friends. Let’s teach our children how we enjoy life more when we are honest, kind, and fair. *“The reason you’re bored/lonely/unhappy is that nobody wants to play with you. If you want to play with others,* ***take turns, share, and show joy when other people win****.”* That grows their self-respect. **We get what we give, we reap what we sow.** A practical reason for the golden rule is that people tend to do unto us as we have done unto them.

***Elementary School Years***

Being kind to those who are kind to us is a start in building self-esteem. But being kind to those who can’t give us much back grows our self-worth even more. Give your children their favorite A-pills at this age whenever they are kind to new kids, teased kids, or those of different race, religion, or standard of living. Teach them to respect others not for what they have, but for *what they have done* with what they have. Ask your kids if they and their friends are making the world a better place to live for themselves, or for everyone they meet. That where *your* honor should clearly go.

***Middle and High School Years***

It is all too common to see teenagers lose interest in other people. They reserve most of their respect for their love interests and their peer group. **When most adolescents come into a peer group or love relationship, too often they start showing less respect for outsiders,** especially for authority figures. Parents can track where the disrespect comes from, and make the teen’s contact with these sources more difficult. Whatever they abuse they can lose. Teens who want to earn back lost privileges, devices, and relationships will, *if you require it,* show more thoughtful words and deeds toward others.

Finally, ***we all need to learn to laugh at ourselves.*** It is healthy to enjoy teasing about our common human failures and limitations. If your child refuses to see this, you can show them how funny it is to watch a person who always takes themselves seriously. The point of this, of all these parenting tips, is for your children to **show modest and moderate respect** for themselves, and likewise for all other people. The smaller their circle of respect, the faster they will spin in circles. The wider that circle of respect gets, the farther they can go in life, and the more they will enjoy the journey.