

Do as you want them to do

by Michael Rebel, LMHC #MH3532

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Parents, especially mothers, wishing to impart good habits and attitudes to their young children, can do so by **doing** and **being** what they want to teach the child.

There is an old cliché, “if Mama aint’ happy, ain’t nobody happy.” The single most important person in the family is the mother. If she wants to raise happy, well-adjusted children, she models living a happy, well-adjusted life. She must invest enough of her energy into her own rewards to keep her feeling positive and fulfilled. It is important that she not make her children more important than herself. She may spend brief periods in a sacrificing mode, but it must not become the norm. If Mom allows herself to become depleted, she will become irritable or hollow. It is my belief that the more willing a mother is to fulfill herself as a person and a mother, the more understanding, warm and connected she will become. If she makes the children a chore, it is human nature to begin to resent them. Mothers who believe that they can act differently than they feel and protect the children are forgetting that their children are inter-psychically connected to their mother. As a matter of fact, out-of-control children reflect the covert anger and frustration of one or both of their parents.

At a less intense level, a mother who wants her children to learn to love art does art to fulfill her life. She doesn’t force it on them. She allows them to see her enjoyment and then they want to tag along. the same is true with father. Some of the factors that enhance this transfer of attitudes are frequency of the parental participation, the verbal expressions of personal pleasure by the parents, access to the behavior by the child, absence of excessive praise by the parents or criticism and absence of parental interference.

Very often I am asked to work with families with angry, oppositional children. Often in the interview, I find that the children are being forced to fulfill their parents’ unfulfilled lives. These children are very angry. They feel used by their parents and not nurtured by their parents. I have noticed a correlation between this last scenario and Asperger’s Syndrome*. If you have a very angry child at home, remember: they are very angry with you, their parents. There is always a reason and it can almost always be overcome. Model for your children and do what it takes to change the situation.

*Asperger Syndrome (or Asperger’s Disorder) is a neurobiological disorder named after a Viennese physician, Hans Asperger, who in 1944 published a paper which described a pattern of behaviors in several young boys who had normal intelligence and language development, but who also exhibited autistic-like behaviors and marked deficiencies in social and communication skills. In spite of the publication of his paper in the 1940’s, it wasn’t until 1994 that Asperger Syndrome was added to the DSM IV and only in the past few years has AS been recognized by professionals and parents.