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Parents As Role Models

By Kadence Buchanan

While television and other media have made it a practice to anoint well-known celebrities as positive role models for kids, the great majority of people still believe that parents should be the foremost role models of their children. The following is a compilation of various ways that can help parents become better role models for their kids.

In terms of nurturing children, the most common comment is to show your love and concern. Tell them you love them every day and show affection daily through hugs, kisses and touches. In spite of busy schedules, make time for special family fun activities. Also make the effort to meet your child's friends to build stronger rapport with them and to gauge the influence they exert on your kids.

Understanding is another key in becoming an effective role model for your child.

As the saying goes, "Understand – don't take a stand." Communication is vital and should always be a two-way street. Listen to your kids and find out what's going on in their lives and if anything is bothering them. Let them know that they can talk to you about anything under the sun. It is important to remember that children who have good communication with their parents are more likely to ask for their advice than turn to their peers.

Parents constantly demand respect from their children, but remember that it is not something that can be taken for granted. Like most things of real value, respect has to be earned. And oftentimes, the best way to earn respect is to give respect. This also means that you have to learn to empathize, to put yourself in your kid's shoes and understand what it means to be him. And always try to avoid putting your children in situations where they feel disregarded, disrespected, humiliated or embarrassed. Such situations can sometimes leave deep emotional scars.

Remember that you have to teach your children to respect themselves as well. Teach them to stand up for themselves without putting their safety at risk. Discuss ways to solve problems without fighting. Make them aware that fighting never solves a problem. Most importantly, advise them that physical force or intimidation does not win respect, rather, it is the quality of one's character that wins respect.

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Role Models for Your Teen

By Rachel Paxton

By the time your children reach their teens, there is only a limited amount of time left to influence them and get them started in life in the right direction.

The teen years are a critical time for role models in your children's lives. Often you will find teens have a hard time talking to their parents. This isn't always the case, but even in the closest families, teens often feel more comfortable talking to another trusted adult about some of the things going on in their lives.

Of course you would prefer your teen would go to an adult when they need to talk something important out, instead of relying on their friends who may not have the insight an older, more experienced adult would have.

Obviously you have no real control over who your teen goes to for advice, but there are a number of ways you can steer your teen in the right direction.

The best chance your teen has for interacting with other adults is in extracurricular activities. There are all kinds of activities your teen can be involved with, here are some that come to mind: church youth group, scouts, sports, music, school clubs, community service, just to name a few. Personally I don't encourage parents to involve their teens in so many activities that it leads to burnout for both the parents and the teen, but carefully selected activities led by good and capable leaders will enrich your teen's life in a way few things can, and will increase the likelihood that your teen will establish a relationship with one of the group leaders.

One word of caution, however. Talk to your teen about their activities and get a feel for yourself the effectiveness of the group leader. Not to say that they have to excel in every way, but just make sure that they are a good role model, and not a negative influence in your teen's life. There is the potential of bad leaders in any activity, including in a church setting, and it is the parents' responsibility to make

Parents As Role Models

sure their teen is in a positive atmosphere, influenced by mature leaders.

Involvement in group activities is especially great for teens of single parents. Teens who don't have regular contact with mature adults of both sexes often have a hard time later in normal adult relationships. Being exposed to "normal" at this age very much increases the teen's chances of growing into a well-adjusted adult. I have seen this often with boys who are raised by their moms with not much influence or negative influence from their dads.

Placed into group settings, with responsible adult male leaders, these teen boys have much less difficulty transitioning into adulthood. It also takes a lot of the pressure off the often overworked mothers.

From my own experience, I have found that often other adults can help my teen in ways that I can't, mostly due to big differences in our personalities. I am more of a quiet introspective thinker, and my

daughter is very outgoing, and has a lot of potential leadership qualities that are hard for me to help her develop because I do not possess those qualities myself. Knowing how important it is to help her develop her natural abilities at this impressionable age, I make sure there are other adults in her life who can help influence her in ways I can't. My daughter and I are very close, but there are just a lot of things that I can't help her with, so I encourage her in developing relationships with adults who do have those abilities.

My daughter and I both respect our different abilities. It is very easy to be critical of people who are not like us, and parents and teens very easily fall into this trap. The best thing to do is be honest about your own abilities, and of the abilities of your teen, and do whatever is necessary to find outside influences for your teen. The more you can help your teen develop their abilities now, the less they will have to do on their own later (often, the hard way).

And don't forget, you are a role model too. Get involved in the lives of your teen's friends, or volunteer to help in a group activity in some way, even if only occasionally. There are teens out there who really need to hear what you have to say.

Rachel Paxton is a freelance writer and mom who is the author of *What's for Dinner?*, an e-cookbook containing more than 250 quick easy dinner ideas. For more recipes, organizing tips, home decorating, crafts, holiday hints, and more, visit Creative Homemaking at

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