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The Courage to Be a Loving Parent

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

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Title: The Courage to Be a Loving Parent
Author: Margaret Paul, Ph.D.
E-mail: <mailto:margaret@innerbonding.com>
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Web Address: <http://www.innerbonding.com>
Word Count: 716
Category: Parenting

THE COURAGE TO BE A LOVING PARENT

By Margaret Paul, Ph.D.

Most of us really don't like it when someone is angry at us. We don't like it when people go into resistance to helping us when we need help, instead of caring about us. We don't like it when people withdraw from us, disconnecting from us and shutting us out. We don't like it when people make demands on us and do not respect our right or need to say no. Many of us will do almost anything to avoid the soul loneliness and pain we feel when people treat us in angry, resistant, demanding and uncaring ways.

It takes great courage to stay loving to ourselves and others when faced with others' angry and closed behavior. It especially take courage when the people we are dealing with are our own children. Yet unless we have the courage to come up against our children's anger, resistance, and withdrawal, we will give ourselves up and not take care of ourselves to avoid their uncaring reactions. The more we deny our own truth and our own needs and feelings, the more our children will disrespect and discount us. Our children become a mirror of our own behavior, discounting us when we discount ourselves, disrespecting us when we disrespect ourselves. The more we give ourselves up to avoid our children's

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unloving behavior toward us, the more we become objectified as the all-giving and loving parent who doesn't need anything for ourselves. When we do this, we are role-modeling being a caretaker.

On the other hand, it is unloving to ourselves and our children to expect our children to take responsibility for our well-being. It is unloving to demand that our children give themselves up to prove their love for us and to pacify our fears. It is unloving to demand that they be the way we want them to be rather than who they are. It is unloving to set limits just to make us feel safe, rather than limits that support their health and safety. When we behave in this way, we are role-modeling being a taker.

The challenge of good parenting is to find the balanced between being there for our children and being there for ourselves, as well as the balance between freedom and responsibility – to be personally responsible to ourselves rather than be a taker or a caretaker.

Our decisions need to be based on what is in the highest good of our children as well as ourselves. If a child wants something that is not in our highest good to give, then it is not loving to give it. If we want something that is not in the highest good of our children, then it is not loving for us to expect it. It is loving to support our children's freedom to choose what they want and to be themselves, as long as it doesn't mean giving ourselves up. Children do not learn responsible behavior toward others when their parents discount their own needs and feelings to support what their children want. Our own freedom to choose what we want and to be ourselves needs to be just as important to us as our children's freedom and desires.

On the other hand, if we always put our needs before our children's, we are behaving in a self-centered, narcissistic way that limits our children's freedom. We are training our children to be caretakers, to give themselves up for other's needs and not consider their own.

The challenge of loving parenting is to role-model behavior that is personally responsible, rather than being a taker or caretaker. This is our best chance for bringing up personally responsible children. However, we need to remember that we can do everything "right" as a parent, but our children are on their own path, their own soul's journey. They will make their own choices to be loving or unloving, responsible or irresponsible. We can influence their choices, but we can't control them. They have free will, just as we do, to choose who they want to be each moment of their lives. All we can do is the very best we can to role-model loving, personally responsible behavior – behavior that supports our own and our children's highest good.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D. is the best-selling author and co-author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You?", "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By My Kids?", "Healing Your Aloneness", "Inner Bonding", and "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By God?" Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course: <http://www.innerbonding.com> or <mailto:margaret@innerbonding.com>

Your Children Are On Their Own Soul's Journey

By Margaret Paul

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In a phone session with Gerald, one of my clients, he expressed to me that he was feeling very sad about his son, Luc. Luc, 29 years old, was not doing much with his life, and Gerald was berating himself for how he had parented Luc.

"I should have spent more time with him. I should have motivated him more. I should have been a better role model. I should have been more firm with him." On and on he went, judging himself for how he had been as a parent.

"Gerald," I said, "Luc is on his own soul's journey. Even if you had been a perfect parent - and none of us really knows what that means - Luc might still be having the challenges he is having."

"Really? Wow! That makes me feel much better! I never thought of it that way. Tell me more about what you mean by his own soul's journey."

"I mean that each of us comes here to learn certain soul lessons. Regardless of how good or bad your parenting was, Luc is on his own journey, making his own choices. You can take responsibility for how you were as a parent, but you cannot take responsibility for the choices he is making for his life."

"But I keep feeling that if I had been a better parent, he would not be struggling the way he is."

"Maybe and maybe not. You have no way of knowing this. Your self-judgment is your attempt to have control over something you have no control over - Luc's choices. You are trying to avoid your feelings of helplessness regarding Luc. But you are helpless over him. You cannot make him be different.

"Each child is different and each child will respond differently to our parenting. We do the best we can for our children. Most parents want the very best for their children and feel deep pain when their children go through pain. Yet we cannot prevent them from their own soul's journey."

"So what can I do to help him?"

"The very best thing you can do is to continue doing your own inner work, while praying for him. Even though he is 29, you are still a role model for him. Certainly judging yourself is not good role modeling. Luc needs to see you doing all you can to take loving care of yourself. When he sees you feeling really good about yourself and happy with your life, he might decide to make some changes. Aside from becoming a loving role model and praying for him, there is really nothing you can do about his choices. You need to accept your helplessness over him instead of trying to have control over him. Any attempts to control him will likely result in resistance."

"Yes, he seems to be very resistant to anything I say. This is part of my frustration and sadness."

"Right. That's why you need to let go of trying to control him. You need to let go of being invested in the outcome regarding his choices and just keep on your own journey. The more you let go of him, the better chance you have of him making loving choices for himself, especially when he sees you making loving choices for yourself."

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Most parents want to think that they have more control over their children than they do. We want to think that if we "do it right" we can control the outcome we want for our children. It will make it much easier to let go of trying to control our children and just be the very best parents we can, when we understand and accept that they are on their own soul's journey.

Margaret Paul, Ph.D., best-selling author of eight books, including "Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By You" and co-creator of the powerful Inner Bonding healing process. Learn Inner Bonding now! Visit her web site for a FREE Inner Bonding course:

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