**Parent Training 20-11-2019**

**Education is a Relationship**

*“Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life!”* CM

*“Education is a relationship.”* BMc

EMOTIONAL BATTERY CHECK- Many parents tend to correct a child’s actions but allow the child to harbour attitudes that are negative, complaining, selfish, uncooperative or disobedient. Even more important than what children actually do, is the attitude or motive behind their actions. The parent’s consistent example of good character displaying gracious speech and positive attitudes, provides the best model. Just be aware that children also pick up attitudes and character traits from their peers, television, computer games, or comics.

However, a more hidden/subtle reason behind a person's behaviour has to do with the filling or depleting of their needs. Most often poor behaviour is a sign that the child is getting depleted in one of their essential 'needs'. Every person has a range of needs that are like storage batteries or fuel tanks. Dr William Glasser suggests the basic human needs include 'Love & Belonging', 'Fun', 'Freedom', 'Power to accomplish', 'Purpose', and 'Survival Needs' (food, water, rest, clothing & shelter, etc). We would include a ‘spiritual need’ (a common human need for the transcendent, for connection to Someone bigger than themselves and their tiny world, a need for connection with God).

Glasser explains that our behaviours (things we do, say, think, feel) are our best attempt at filling our needs (even if it is an inappropriate way of meeting one's needs). If your child is acting inappropriately, think about how long it has been since you have spent some quality time with them (the love & belonging need). If they've been working inside for two hours, maybe they need to run around outside for a while (the needs for fun & freedom). If they have been struggling at school in a competitive environment – a sense of hopelessness may have crept in (a lack of power to accomplish). Are they running on empty regarding food, water, or rest (survival needs). Adults have these needs also. If you or your spouse are depressed or grumpy, then think about when was the last time you encouraged or hugged them, or how long has it been since you both did something fun together?

PARENTS AS CO-LEARNERS: See learning as a natural part of everyday life. Wherever possible, work together and learn along-side your children, rather than expecting them to complete a task while you achieve something else (eg., housework). Do the housework together as part of the learning routine. Show by example – when they ask a question, answer *“Well that's a very good question. What do you think? ….* [then] *...That's an interesting theory. Now let's look it up in the World Book Encyclopedia.”*

Learning together can be fun if you respect your children as 'people', and maintain their respect for you. If we really listen to our children's dialogue, aspirations and queries, then we can intuitively discern their motives and needs, enabling us to encourage, edify and enlighten them in the way they should go. By learning to *'learn and live with'* their children, many home-educating parents find that their children also become their good friends. This approach of teaching and imparting in a natural way through one-on-one, open communication, is similar to the ‘discipleship’ method used by Jesus with the training of His disciples, and also the method that the Bible recommends for teaching children.
***"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up"***(Deut. 6:7, N.K.J.V.).

EDUCATION IS A RELATIONSHIP: This is one of the most important principles. Many parents fall into the trap of expecting the school system or the curriculum to solve their problems: *“This resource hasn't worked, and the children don't like that resource. If only I could find the perfect curriculum, or school system.”* However, these parents often miss the fundamental revelation, that it is not about finding the right curriculum or school system. What the children need is **relationship** with you (parent, mentor, and friend). A relaxed, loving, fun and productive time of learning together; enjoying exploring God's Creation (the world), reading quality interesting literature, being swept away in a far-away time and place, the child retelling the story, discussing characters and how life works.

Charlotte Mason warned that the teacher or parent does not have to be the 'showman of the universe', the all-knowing teacher and walking encyclopaedia. She warned that the parent should not get too much in the way of the text/subject, over-explaining or moralising everything. Allow the children to use their own minds to make connections and build their own personal relationships with the character, artist, musician, idea, or thing being studied. If anything, arm yourself with a few choice open-ended questions.

It is very helpful to keep routine, regularity, and order in the home; however, don't stress about *'getting all the stuff done'* or *'memorising all the facts'* or even *'covering all the assigned topics'*. Rather, focus on building a healthy relationship with your child, where learning is enjoyable and the child is developing deep relationships with many things and ideas, people, places, and events. Keep the 'wonder' alive. Certainly, spend a regular time each day to develop reading, writing, and arithmetic skills; but keep these sessions short, while encouraging neat and accurate work, the children fully focussed and doing their very best work for the short time allocated. Train them in good work habits; but even this can be accomplished within a friendly encouraging atmosphere. If children are in an environment of threats and harsh discipline, they won't be able to relax enough to truly learn anything. The atmosphere in your home is absolutely vital. It is as indispensable as the air we breathe – and it is primarily the parent who is responsible for keeping the atmosphere sweet and positive.

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