

More Than Anything Else, This Teaching Tool Will Affect Your Children

My experience working two decades as a schoolteacher was rewarding, interesting and exciting; it also taught me a great deal about human nature.

Among other things, teaching gifted me with a unique perspective on raising kids, a view of people that made me realize the most effective teaching tool is how you live.

Especially telling was the opportunity to observe my students' interactions with their parents. One dad, invited in to talk about his son's ongoing issues with cursing and fighting, grabbed his child by the arm, slapped him hard across the face, and yelled, "You stupid little _____! How many times do I have to _____ – _____ smack you? Keep your hands to yourself and don't _____ curse." Then he turned to me, smiled, and said, "Let me know if he _____s up again and I'll beat his _____ _____." (Feel free to insert your own blankety-blanks in the spaces provided.)

As parents, we are always on. We teach 24-7 with no letup. We use words, and we use actions.

But more than anything else, we teach volumes via the way that we are. The way we are is the most effective teacher our kids will ever have and the most effective teaching tool is how you live.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you are preparing the curriculum:

1. Cultivate an attitude marked by kindness, encouragement and support. When we're unkind and when we discourage our

children, we're taking away their confidence in us as leaders.

2. Kids are giant sponges. Kids absorb everything; they have a remarkable capacity to learn. Learning is their natural approach to life. So let's not waste the opportunity by teaching them anything other than integrity, courage, faith, patience, love, hard work and all the positive attributes that will lead them to experience successful, meaningful lives.

3. It's not *if* they learn from you but *what*? We can't abrogate our responsibility to teach. Teaching and learning are the go-to postures for dads and their children. So the question moves from *if* to *what* we will teach.

4. You are your kids' hero; it's not an option. Good, bad or ugly, as Dad, you are your children's hero. Just like teaching, this isn't an optional role. This fact begs the question, *What kind of a hero am I going to be?*

5. How you treat your spouse is the best predictor of how your son will treat his family. You are already teaching your son how to be a husband. So how are you doing? Not only will your son likely treat his wife the same way you treat his mother, your daughter will find a man who will continue the lessons learned from Dad. So how would you like your kids' marriages to look?

6. When you think they're not listening, they are. This is one of those Murphy's Law situations. You simply can't be selective when it comes to teaching your kids how to live. Your life is written large on their consciousness, and it seeps through walls, across the miles between home and work. They will—they do—always “hear” us live. There's no getting around this fact.

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