

When You Don't Feel Like Loving Your Child

At times, do you wonder if you truly love your child? Face it, if we're honest, there are times when they've tried our patience way beyond the limit when we love—but don't especially like—our children at a particular moment. You're experiencing something very natural. You are having *ambivalent feelings*.

Ambivalence is defined as “simultaneous conflicting feelings toward a person or thing, as love and hate.” Because I experienced both love and dislike toward my strong-willed daughter as she grew up, especially when she was a toddler, I wondered if I truly loved her. I thought my “hateful” feelings ruled out the possibility I loved her. I didn't think love and dislike could exist side by side. When I heard about ambivalent feelings, I was comforted and reassured to know love can co-exist with unloving feelings.

As a result, I began to understand love is more than feelings. Love is a choice, a decision each of us makes. And in loving others, we must love by faith. We must choose the highest good of another person, even though we may not “feel” loving.

God didn't feel good about our sin. He hates sin because it's not good for us and destroys His creation. Romans 5:7-9 says, “Rarely for a righteous man will one die. Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him.”

God's example taught me I could say to my daughter, “Yes, I don't always feel like I love your behavior, but I really do care about you. And I'm committed to make loving choices

toward you.”

We all must go through this struggle. Only God doesn't. We want to love our children, but because the things they do upset us or make them “unlovely” to us, we sometimes have difficulty feeling love toward them.

Therefore, we need to love by faith. We need to decide to love, as a matter of our will, not out of our emotions. When we choose the best for our child, we are loving them, and eventually the feelings of love will follow. And God wants to empower us for that very thing. {eo}

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This article originally appeared at