

## Growing Up Again

There is a good reason why children don't come with a manual – if we actually knew what we were in for, most of us would be too afraid to ever have children. But the fact remains – parenting gives us a unique life opportunity.

Parenting is probably one of the biggest challenges most of us will ever face. We start with the belief that this cute little bundle is like a clean slate – just waiting to be written on. When they are babies we do a lot of dreaming about who and what we want our children to be. We often have a lot of expectations put on these little bundles well before they can even sit up for themselves. What we often forget though, is that these cute little bundles already have a personality of their own, and in short order will be letting us know who they really are. We find out that the most we can hope for is to be good guides and stewards.

I once heard a wonderful saying – **“Often our greatest weakness is our child’s greatest strength”**. How we were parented affects how we see and put ourselves out into the world and in turn can affect how we parent.

As we grow and develop we all go through different stages and each has its own importance. It is sometimes hard to believe that the crying baby is performing an important task – asking for care and nurture. Or that the two-year-old having a temper tantrum is starting to learn about anger management. Or that the six-year-old that has just run a race is learning about striving for a goal, as well as the art of winning or losing gracefully. Or better still, that it is the job of the teenager to push boundaries as they take steps towards independence and emerging from childhood with their own identities and values. As parents each stage that our children go through are both a joy and a challenge.

The challenge comes from not only acting as guides and stewards for our children, but also the growing up again that many of us find we have to do as we travel with our children through the various stages of development, from total dependence as babies to interdependence, as adults. There are few of us that experienced such perfect childhoods that we moved through these levels of development with nothing else to learn.

I would suggest that the most important gift that our children give us is the immediate mirroring back of our attitudes and beliefs. This mirroring often affords us an urgency to re-look at, and often re-feel, our own stages of growth and development: what worked, what didn't, how we felt, what we feel we missed, and most important, what we want to change or correct. Often, to parent our children well depends on this.

Growing up again, and again, is doing the work to fill in the blanks so we don't have go on living without what we need now. This reevaluating also allows us to recognize and appreciate what was good for us – how our needs were met, what lessons we learned

along the way. It is sometimes easier to focus on what wrong, but it is also important to see what worked. We need the whole picture as it is all part of growing up again.

Another word for growing up again is recycling. We assess our reactions in different situations. We ask ourselves – “Where did that reaction come from? Is my reaction appropriate?” We do this not only for ourselves, but also for our children, knowing that there are no perfect parents but we are doing the best we can with the information and skills we have at this point in our lives.