

The Secret to Your Relationship with Your Child

By Larry Deavers

Do you ever wonder how, just a couple of generations ago, parents used to be able to be much more strict with their children, yet children had much greater respect for parents? Granted, times have changed and the societal expectations for parenting have been redefined. A frequent occurrence in contemporary parenting is the parent attempting to impose discipline and exercise authority in their child's life, only to be exasperated by the child's disregard for that authority and strong-willed sense of self-determination. Sometimes it can seem that parents just don't have the influence they used to and that their authority has been undermined by current cultural norms. However there is one secret that played a major role in the influence of parents in generations past that still has a predictable result today.

In a time before iPhones, video games, television and internet, families used to spend a great deal of time together.

Now, those little moments of relationship building, positive affirmations, shared beliefs, family stories, oral history and personal values are consumed by addictive distractions. For many parents, and most parents of children who routinely act out, their relationship is primarily defined by the parent's efforts to exercise authority and the child or teens efforts to assert their independence. Without an underlying relationship to reinforce love and care, a strictly authoritarian approach to ANY relationship ALWAYS leads to rebellion.

As a parent, it is your responsibility to set the terms of your relationship. Too often we have set expectations too low on the positive experience side and too high on the behavior side. There is no balance. In a time before electronics, families had plenty of time just leisurely being around one another, engaging and learning from one another in mostly informal and even relaxed ways. It's during those down times that we convey a sense of values, purpose, priority, belonging, safety and security. When we allow, or even enable and encourage, our children to "escape" contact with us, we actively trade away our influence for a little peace and quiet.

Here are some suggestions on ways you can begin to recapture your influence with your child without seeming intrusive or demanding.

Give up control. Recognize that, as your child grows, your ability to control diminishes and you have to nurture your ability to influence instead.

Recognize them as individuals separate from you. Allow them to have their own opinions, offer their own solutions to problems and even to suffer the natural consequences for their own decisions.

Mud Play Fosters Self-Directed Learning
FLUM Weekday Kids



Enroll Now (758-6623)
Spaces are Available

Preschool

6 wks - PreK-4/5 Year-round



Like us on Facebook
FLUM Weekday Kids

website: www.forestlakeumc.org/weekdaykids
email: flumwk@hotmail.com

Forest Lake United Methodist Church
1711 4th Avenue • Tuscaloosa

Parents Protect Yourself And Your Family

Protect What's Important



IdentityUSA
Live Safely. Live Securely. Live Well.

Over 1,000,000 Children Ages 3 to 8
Have Their Identity Stolen and Sold
on the Dark Web Each Year
CALL 1-833-500-0310 TODAY

Prioritize valuing them over controlling them. The older your child grows, the more they are concerned with your affirmation that they are becoming capable, intelligent, and responsible young people.

Avoid being critical or judgmental. When you have insight to share with your child, do so in a way that respects their ability to make decisions, yet encourages them to see it from your perspective.

Be your child's safe place. When they share something with you that is emotional for them, be sensitive to their pain, fear or uncertainty and allow your relationship to be the one safe place where they can think through their most anxious thoughts with being judged or dismissed.

Be curious and inquisitive to show that you care about what is going on in their lives, but avoid interrogating or accusing them.

Make your time with your child more about your child and less about you.


Make it your goal to really get to know your child - What is important to them? What do they worry about? What gets them excited? What motivates them? Be patient and invite them to teach you about them.

Never give up your primary function of protecting your child, even if it seems like you are sacrificing your relationship in the process - being too accommodating is just as dangerous, or even more so. Children do long for safety and security, which only comes through established and predictable limits and consequences. The most difficult job as the parent is the ongoing struggle to find the best balance.

Spending time investing in your re-

lationship with your child is not easy. What comes most easily is to allow things to continue as they are, especially if you know that pulling your child away from their electronics is going to be its own challenge, not to mention the extra energy you will have to put into relating to your child in a way that seeks to truly appreciate and encourage them. While this won't be easy, it will have almost immediate and long term benefits. Plus, you will be teaching your child the dying art of communicating, listening and understanding people beyond what can be conveyed by an instant message!

Larry Deavers is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and Executive Director of Family Counseling Service of West Alabama.



Averette
Veterinary Hospital PC
We treat your pet like our own.
Let us take care of
your pet's needs!

S. Allen Averette, D.V.M.
AND A DEDICATED STAFF
510 M.L. King Blvd. (Watermelon Road) 752-7444



INTRODUCTORY COURSE
3 Lessons for
\$29
INCLUDES TRAINING JERSEY

MAKE THIS THE BEST SCHOOL YEAR EVER!

Make the Grade at
TIGER-ROCK
MARTIAL ARTS

Northport
339-7071

Hillcrest
343-6449

Tuscaloosa
759-4711

BaileysTKD.com