



Debbie Edmunds, MA, LPC-S

Get it in gear with Psychotherapy

H.O.P.E. Psychotherapy of Houston, PLLC

www.HopePsychotherapyOfHouston.com

Parenting 101: Whom am I raising anyway?

It leaves a bad taste in my mouth to begin with a cliché, but here goes anyway. Babies aren't born with manuals. For most, when babies are born it is a joyous time and their needs consist of feeding, changing and bonding with their caregivers. There are other needs, but the ones I mentioned are the ones most caregivers look forward to and remember fondly.

As your offspring grows his/her needs change and this is when things become interesting. This is when the proverbial seemingly nonexistent manual could really come in handy. Caregivers begin to think it was so much nicer when little (you fill in the name) couldn't talk because now all he/she says is "no." He/she doesn't do what I ask and I don't know him/her anymore. Growth continues and he/she who isn't so little anymore has opinions and seems more alien than that baby who was brought into the world not that long ago. Well get used to it because this is all a part of life and the stages of development. In many ways it is healthy and necessary. But there is help!

What does all of this have to do with the missing manual? Everything! Your offspring learn from their environment, and for many years you are the biggest part of it. Little did you know that when you decided to reproduce you had the manual all along. One of the chapters is titled Role Modeling and it is central to raising your offspring.

One of the first things the manual should contain is that **you are in actuality raising an adult** despite hearing most caregivers say, "I'm raising my child." Hopefully this makes sense because for most, a child would not be turned loose in the world without the independent living skills to survive. Therefore, a caregiver's number one job is to be a healthy role model and foster the growth and development of a healthy adult. "Healthy role model" might have different meanings to different people, but for the most part the definition should have major similarities. The Golden Rule also comes to mind and if you want to be treated with respect from your offspring you will also treat him/her with respect. Some cultures may have different views, but hopefully the following will help. And it goes without saying you are the adult caregiver, not a friend!

Having said all of this look through your manual and see if you don't find some of these tips:

✓Remember it is important to listen to your young person. His/her thoughts and feelings are important! Because you are the adult you need to make final parenting decisions,

1

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17510 Huffmeister Rd., #103

Cypress, TX 77429

281-373-5200 ofc. 281-373-5202



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but your young person needs to know his/her opinion counts. And, if you make a different decision he/she needs to know you took his/her opinion into account and why you made your decision. Don't give in to his/her decision just to satisfy him/her if doing so would put him/her at risk.

✓Never say, "Do as I say and not as I do."-What kind of message does that send?

✓Never say, "Because I said so."-Young people need explanations when you say "no."

It is what will help him/her develop analytical thinking and to understand the various reasons why you feel "no" is the best response in that situation. For example, their request might be unsafe (you need to explain why), or not in the budget. First and foremost the young person needs to know the word "no" doesn't mean I don't love or care about you. If you don't know why you are saying "no" figure out the reason so it doesn't become simply a control issue.

✓Expose your young person/people to healthy activities. – You can provide cultural opportunities that don't always cost much or can be free. Go to a park, the library, a museum, opera, concert, play or other event that stimulates the mind (MediaTeach©) and understanding of the world around your young person/people.

✓Expose your young person/people to people from all races, cultures, beliefs and faiths. –One only fears what one doesn't understand.

✓Remember your young person needs your attention even though it might seem they are older than their years. If you have several young people and have a time consuming/demanding job or other activity that takes you away from them make sure they know there will be time for them to be with you and time for them to get their needs met.

✓Try not to spank if words will work just as well, and don't let your young person/people get hurt (e.g., touching something hot) as a means of teaching because, "That's what my parent(s) did and it worked for me." You don't want your young person/people to learn love hurts.

✓Know that you need to write most of your own manual based on the culture in your family and the needs of your young person/people.

✓Know when you need outside help in the form of psychotherapy either for your young person or to learn healthy parenting if necessary, and make the decision to remain healthy by making an appointment with a psychotherapist.