

CAN WE LOVE OUR KIDS TOO MUCH?

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

We all know what 'loving our kids' means, right? It means showing them affection and taking care of their needs. Well, that is the common perception anyway. We are probably aware of children that seem not to have been loved enough. These children are often the ones who crave attention.

Many kids who don't feel loved enough end up medicating themselves to fill the void. Some join gangs to fulfill the need for acceptance and camaraderie. My own brother left home and joined a motorcycle gang when he was only about 16 years old. My father had remarried and it was difficult for us, as older children, to get used to sharing our father with someone else. I think my brother felt he had lost 'his place' in Dad's heart and went to find a new 'family' of like-minded souls.

My question is, "Can we love our kids **too** much?" Perhaps we should re-examine what our perception of 'parenting' is? Parenting is not just a matter of showing our kids affection and taking care of their needs. It is our role to train our kids to become responsible, self-motivated, contributing adult members of society. We aren't always popular when we do this. Our kids don't want us to be their friends. They want a leader who is a positive role model and who will train, discipline, and praise them. They want someone who will say, "No", sometimes. When we give them everything they want, or give in rather than listen to their protests over having to do chores or having restrictions imposed, we are not doing them any favors. We are not preparing them for the real world. We are not showing them what real love is. They will not thank us for that.

Loving our kids means preparing them for disappointments, and not shielding them from hurts. Kids need to know how to deal with failures. Failure is real and it happens to everyone. Kids need to realize they can't have their own way just by throwing tantrums. Tantrums are pretty ugly at the best of times, but absolutely unacceptable from teens and adults. Part of loving our kids is to show them how to deal with anger and frustration appropriately.

I guess most of us have been tempted to say, "After all I have done for you...!" Our kids don't owe us anything but to abide by the values we set down as a family – respect, honesty, obedience, and loyalty to one another. Training them to deal with issues and succeed in life is our job. We cannot place a heavy mantle of obligation over them just because of the sacrifices we have made, money we have spent, or things we have protected them from. This is called conditional love.

Parenting is not always a popular job and it is not a matter of just inventing fun things to make our kids happy. Loving our kids is creating values, setting

boundaries, training, disciplining, and praising them. If this is your perception of loving your kids, there is no such thing as “loving your kids too much.” My husband, Brian, an expert in parenting and child behavior, has just published a book (230 pages) called, “Kids don’t come with manuals.” It is very practical, has many illustrative stories from real life, and contains many helpful suggestions for successful parenting.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.