

ENJOY PARENTAL GREATNESS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

I am sure that no parent would refute the fact that parenting is a hard and thankless task sometimes! Whenever our company runs seminars we hear lots of examples about what goes wrong in families and many questions are asked about what should be done to rectify them. It is easy to become despondent and think that life, as we once knew it without kids, was a far, distant and unsalvageable dream. NOT! Now that our children have left home and are making their own way in the world, we are feeling pretty pleased with ourselves. We didn't always feel that way.

When we were down in the engine room of early parenting, there were times we felt that we were barely making it from day to day. There were just so many things to manage. Not only were we raising our kids, but we were balancing the check book, working in our careers, trying to study, while maintaining friends and family relationships as well as our own. Staying sane was a bonus! We tried to pick our battles with the kids.

Let's face it, there were times when all we really wanted was to retreat to the trenches and give ourselves a rest. Sometimes we did just that! So why do we sit back now and feel satisfied with our efforts at parenting our children? We realize now, and our kids have confirmed this numerous times, that we created a positive home environment with plenty of love and consistent discipline. We must have done enough right to see our now adult kids doing so well.

I think that when we are in the middle of raising our kids, we don't see the great things that we have achieved with them. When someone compliments you on your kids' good manners, or their accomplishments, stop and enjoy it. Pat yourself on the head. Give yourselves some credit and thank the Lord. It is too easy to say things like, "You should see Suzy at home!"

Part of the struggle in attaining a peaceful, positive home environment is finding the imbalance required between negatives and positives. The more positive comments and praise you can give, and the more positive activities you can arrange for your children, the more your home will be the place where your children and their friends will want to be. If you find yourself constantly nagging the kids, then stop. Change tactics. Start recognizing the positive things they do and concentrate on those things. To monitor progress, set goals for yourself as well as for each child. Succeeding in meeting those goals is contagious.

Some time ago my husband decided it was important to encourage parents when we saw well-behaved children in restaurants. He had a business card made up and handed it to all those he felt were doing a good

job with their children when they were out in public. The card said, "You are a great parent." Brian would explain to the parents why he thought that family deserved the card. You wouldn't believe the faces of those parents when they were complimented in this way. A simple gesture, yet I bet those parents never throw away the card. We all need encouragement, even when we feel we are only half way there with our kids. Kids love encouragement. They want to please their parents. They will know you appreciate them when you tell them so. 'Attaboy!' and "attagirl!" should be heard in your home frequently. Be liberal in your compliments to other parents. If you love it, then they will, too.

We all need as much encouragement as we can get. It is one thing to be a great parent and another to have it confirmed by others. Enjoy greatness and share it.

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.