

WHO CARES?

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

It seems that the phrase, 'Who cares?' comes up more and more these days, but what do people mean when they say it? To some it means 'C'est la vie' (that's life) indicating that the person feels as if they have no personal control over their situation. Life is a foregone conclusion - some have it and some don't, and there is nothing that anyone, especially 'me', can do about it. It doesn't matter how much effort 'I' make, the results will be the same, so who cares? These people may have been let down by broken promises and are protecting themselves against protracted disappointment. It is a fatalist philosophy.

To others the phrase 'Who cares?' infers more of a 'So what!' attitude. What kind of person responds this way? It might be a person who feels defeated as previously described, or perhaps an indulged person who isn't impressed with anything unless it involves constant excitement, adventure and recognition from others. Then there are others who really do ask the question, 'Who cares?' They dare to have a glimmer of hope that all may **not** be lost, that someone, somewhere might yet come to their rescue or genuinely give them value.

All three scenarios above are initiated by self-need and, in many cases, those needs are justified. During the present economic climate we may tend to become self-conserving, self-protective, self-centered. There is a definite undercurrent that if we don't care for number 1, we certainly cannot rely on anyone else to care about us. So, is now the time to be ramping up a caring attitude in our families towards others? I say a big 'yes' to that question. The first step is to think about what caring for others really means. How does it feel when someone demonstrates love and care for you? Caring comes in many forms – kind words, kind deeds, giving time, giving money, becoming a volunteer, and sharing our stuff. Caring comes from not only adults, but kids of all ages, too. Our pets often show us up by the unconditional affection they show their owners.

Kids will learn about caring for others when we, as parents, model it. When we do random acts of kindness for others outside the family, they see it. When our spouse is sick and we gently lavish care on them, our children see it. When we demonstrate love, affection, and compassion towards our children, they experience it. How do they know we care? We train them, praise them, set boundaries for their own good, encourage them in their passions, and support them through the good and the bad times. This is where their thought patterns are turned and they begin to look outwards instead of being egocentric.

It isn't natural to think of others first. Do we ever have to teach a child to be bad or naughty? No! Do we have to train our children to share what they have with others? Yes! Does compassion ever come without first discovering a need? Not usually. I must concede, however, that there are some people who are born with temperaments that lend themselves more openly to caring for

others. They put others first and deny their own pleasures in order to assist others. They are certainly blessed and so are the recipients of their thoughtfulness.

We may not all have the advantage of that temperament, but everyone can be taught to care for and care about others. As parents we can train our children to think about others from toddlerhood onwards. Sharing their possessions with siblings, creating things for others, giving some of their allowance to a needy cause, assisting with chores other than those they were assigned, helping mom or dad cook a meal for a sick neighbor or friend, are all ways to demonstrate a caring attitude. Your instruction and subsequent encouragement of this behavior will form a pattern for your child's future. You will be so proud of your kids as you see them reach out compassionately to others.

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.