

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

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Throw a pebble in a still pond and watch the ripple effect. It's intriguing to see how far those ripples travel. On a larger scale a Tsunami can send huge waves crashing onto the shores hundreds of miles away. An extra large Tsunami's ripples can travel around the world. What on earth has this got to do with parenting?

Everything we do and say has a ripple effect for good or for bad. Every decision we make affects others positively or negatively. A sickness or death reaches out far beyond the person that it afflicts. In a family situation, when a father chooses to praise his child, she feels fantastic and probably that day will do something positive for someone else. The father receives positive attitudes from her in return and it is a win/win situation. A mother may scold a child without first investigating the background to the situation. The child feels resentful and vows to be uncooperative that day. Parents may choose to be too busy doing their own thing over a period of time and resentment by the child is the result. This attitude, if left unchecked, may lead to various negative behaviors.

An addicted man not only affects himself, but his wife, his children, his father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends, work personnel, neighbors and so it goes on in a ripple effect. A mother who is outward looking and seeks to help less fortunate people shows her husband, children, relatives, friends, neighbors and people at work that life's not all about her. She demonstrates acts of kindness. The recipients feel blessed and they in turn may do positive acts for others.

On YouTube I saw a random act of kindness reported that fascinated me. A lady buying a cup of coffee at a Starbucks drive-thru decided to also pay for the person in the car behind her. The recipient was so shocked that she paid for the next person. The ripple effect apparently went on all day. What an amazing story! Yet, when we make a poor decision as a parent the effect may also go on all day. It may last a week. It may go on the rest of the affected person's life and even for generations. We may say something in anger that a child never forgets like, "I wish you'd never been born!" Or, "You're just a lazy, good for nothing slob." There are many other spirit-killing phrases that parents say when they are tired, irrational or overwhelmed by life's circumstances. The ripple effects are humungous. A child with a crushed spirit is often crippled for life. Their future relationships are impaired. Their self-esteem is shattered. Their future family will dread the doom and gloom of a parent relegated to a level of indignation that affects their everyday life and those around them.

You may say, "He's exaggerating!" No, I'm not. On numerous occasions I have had to counsel people who have suffered from the effects of negative and thoughtless statements to or about them. As much as they try, they cannot shake it off. The problem can be dealt with and the perpetrator forgiven over years of costly counseling, or it can be prayed for by a Christian counselor trained in the

gift of inner healing in a single or several sessions. Only then can the person move on.

Rather than deal with the negative impact of poor decisions I would rather us focus on the positive ripples that radiate from good choices and decisions. Let's ensure that we create a very positive home environment in which we affirm our children regularly. Where we are fully involved in their education. Where we become our child's heroes. Where we give them plenty of time and take an interest in all their activities. Where relationships are more important than our work life. Where we honor each other and show respect. Where we model and expect positive behavior.

Where we create positive memories for our children. Where our children avoid doing negative things for fear of hurting others, including their parents. Positive ripples will have lasting effects through generations. Life will be great and parenting will not be a chore. I encourage you to remember the ripple effect caused by both positive and negative choices. I know which one you'd like to make. With God's help you can!

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.