

Passing Wisdom On *by Dawn Shorts*

There aren't enough 'How To' books for parents. We often are stuck muddling through parenthood just hoping we don't mess up our kids too much.

I was often struck dumbfounded when it came to situations concerning my children. Like when the principal of my daughter's grade school called to tell me that Lauren had been going around hugging and kissing all the boys in her kindergarten class, and that we needed to have a talk with her. My first immediate concern was that my five-year old could be charged with sexual harassment. What do you say to a five-year old to get her to understand what 'invading one's personal space' means?

Perhaps her father would have more insight on what to say. We sat her down and asked her why she was hugging and kissing all the boys. She just smiled and answered, "'Cause they're so cute!" We eventually convinced her boys don't like to be hugged or kissed by anyone except their parents.

What do you do when your three-year old son gets his head stuck in the bars overlooking the fountain at the mall? I knew his big Dumbo ears were the problem, so I had someone call 911. While we waited for the rescue team to arrive, I tried to keep my son calm, yet he could sense the worry in our demeanor and began to cry softly. The fire department finally came and after assessing the situation, put some grease on my son's ears and his head slipped right out.

What do you say when your three-year old son is standing in the doorway to your bedroom wanting to ask or tell you something? At that same moment I jumped up from my bed to run to the bathroom, having morning sickness with the current pregnancy, only to throw up before getting to the bathroom, right on top of my son's head, as he stood looking so surprised. It's a wonder our children end up normal.

I have to admit, I have made plenty of mistakes though, and done things I regret. But I try to focus on the things I have learned: 1.) Make sure your kids know you love them; 2.) Sit down on the floor at a lower level than your child, instead of towering over him, if you want him to open up to you; 3.) Be the adult.

So I was hoping I had passed on some of my wisdom and experience to my children. What I found amazed me. Reading through some old Mother's Day cards and letters from my children, I found what they valued most was that I had shown them to never give up, that there is always hope despite the circumstances, that God cares and would always help them through whatever life throws at them.

So I realized actions speak louder than words for children. I remember when I stopped watching TV. The TV would be off when my two youngest children got home from school and they wouldn't turn on the TV. When I began drinking nothing but water, I noticed my two youngest children taking water bottles to middle school. They were perfect imitators of me. So while we may be tempted to share with our children all we have learned and pass on our great parenting wisdom, what we have really passed on to them, is how we have lived our life.