

The 4 'C's Of Parenting

By: Everett Christensen

If only children came with a handbook of instructions. What they do come with is a script-of-sorts; a blueprint of what they can become.

We are all products of our heredity and environment. Heredity can't be changed so, as a parent or parent-figure, you can only impact your child's environment. There is ongoing controversy as to what percent of who we are is determined by our heredity. Some suggest as much as 80%. But even if environment determines only 20% of who we are, that's still a lot.

Parents are critical in shaping their children, because once you have significantly impacted a child's development, it is difficult, if not almost impossible to change it.

In a play, everyone is given a script that tells the cast members what to say and what to do. That's what parents do. Consciously or unconsciously, they provide the script for their children. Children are like sponges. When a sponge is new and dry, it soaks up any liquid with which it comes in contact. However, the more liquid it absorbs, the less room there is for more. That's why early scripting of children is so important. Once habits are established, they are very difficult to change.

The good news is, you don't have to be correct in your decision making process, every time, so long as you're concerned. Parents need to have a plan. They need to say -- or more importantly, to do -- what they want young people to emulate. If there is a lot of emotion in the family (screaming and hollering) children will pick that up and do the same thing. Conversely, if communication is measured and thoughtful, children will develop that habit, too.

Most importantly, parents should have a goal in mind for what they want their child to be. We're not talking about "an athletic hero," or "a stellar scholar," or "a great musician." Rather, a good general model could be the "Four C's." That is a caring, confident, considerate and competent person. And for that to happen, parents need to provide an environment where the child will develop that way. Caring and competent parents want their children to be happy and enjoy life.

There's nothing wrong with being a great athlete or student or whatever, but only if the person has a talent for it. Children should be taught that it's not necessary to be the best, to be happy and content -- just to be the best one can. Because everyone can do something and no one can do everything, it's important for parents to help their children find their own unique talents and direct their efforts in that direction.

Effective parenting will not always win popularity contests with children. Short term, they might not like you; but if you really care about them that's not important. Over the long term, they'll love and respect you because they will have become caring, confident, considerate and competent and they will know you had a lot to do with it. And then they will like you, too.

About The Author:

Everett Christensen has spent more than 50 years analyzing and evaluating the development of interpersonal relationships. Christensen is the author of **60-40 OR FIGHT (How to get along with someone besides yourself)** and **73 Magic Management Words +2**.

Everett M. Christensen

everettc@chriscomco.net

**Dill Street Press
104 West Main Street
Madelia, MN 56062**