

Parenting Is Like a Roller Coaster Ride

As many parents may say, children have no idea of the joys and pains that a parent goes through in raising them until they have children of their own. Who can ever prepare for this type of journey? I relate parenting to a 'roller coaster ride' because many of the same emotions take place. For some of us this looks like a place they would not want to be near, for others there is an excitement about it and want to try it, some are pushed into it by peer pressure, and some are ready and prepared for the exhilarating ride. The decision has been made to get on this roller coaster for the first time, you may be excited to start but a little anxious and scared because you have no idea of what you're getting yourself into. (Although many of us think we do). There are moments of anticipation, excitement, joy, as well as fear, and even regrets. Asking ourselves, "Will I make it through this ride?" Though, this ride never really ends once we step into parenthood.

I discovered that being a parent magnifies what we do well and what we do poorly. It has a way of constantly teaching us something about ourselves as well as others. After my experience of raising three children and working many years with new families, I see the obvious, yet sometimes am more confused than ever. It is such a mystery to try to master parenting. We face all these parenting stages with some being wonderful, with moments you never want to forget, and other stages that are painful, scary and full of worry and even hurt.

I usually felt very content about raising my children and other times I felt overwhelmed-wondering what on earth am I doing here, which were usually during those times of discouragement, fear and frustration. Yet, I have really been so blessed as a child, wife and mother and asked myself at times why I sometimes felt so frustrated and alone. I may blame my husband for not being a certain way or my kids for not always living up to my expectations. It is always easier to blame and feel sorry for ourselves when going through negative emotions but I then realized that I needed to recognize and figure out what it is in me that caused me to feel this way, what are my needs that are not being met or have not been addressed. This is important for parents to do for themselves when raising children. It is often about us and not about them.

I often ask myself 'have I done the best that I can in raising my children?' It is easy to always think of things that we could have done better or differently and focus on regrets and the 'should haves'. Most parents try to do the best they can with what they have. I have met and worked with many new parents, and not one said 'I want to be a bad parent.' That is never our intention. But I have always shared with them that it is very easy to be a bad parent and it takes very hard work at first to be a good parent but it pays off in the end.

There is a responsible for giving our children the best chance of a healthy life with what we do for them while they are in our care, which has an impact of who they become as adults. Yes, there are circumstances out of our control that impact our children and we deal with that the best way that we can. But knowing you have given them a good start or made healthy changes makes it easier to handle all the challenges that come along. We will all make mistakes, but it is important to learn from them. Knowledge is power and following through with what we learn gives our children a strong foundation and healthy start in life. And, we learn from our children!

I believe it is never too late to improve our parenting and relationships with our children. As I said at the beginning, the roller coaster ride does not ever end once we step into parenthood. Parenting is for life, the joys, thrills and worries go on and the learning continues and from my experience I would not change it for the world.

By Alice Beuker, Healthy Families Coordinator. For information on parenting programs, call Family Services of Central Alberta, your Parent Link Centre at 403-343-6400 or visit www.fsca.ca.