

## **The Leader: Learning From Children**

by **Frederick E Roach**

The June issue of Good Housekeeping magazine includes a great article by Ann Marie Kerwin, titled "Lessons I Learned From My Kids." My administrative assistant, Doris Embree, said the article might be the basis of a Leadership Brief.

When thinking about the life lessons my children, and particularly my grandchildren, have taught me, the list is long.

Why is it we can learn so much from children? They seem to have free spirits that use every opportunity for creativity. In a sense, children know no limit. They seem to find basic truths and techniques that create positive results.

Our children's minds have not been pre-conditioned as to what will work and what will not work. Children are more open to try new things. If one idea doesn't work, they try something else. The discovery process is fun for them; lack of success is not considered failure.

Children are not afraid to lead. One of my grandsons, Grady, regularly leads me from one experience to another. He is an explorer, a fun seeker. The greatest joy in my life is being a part of the lives of our eight grandsons. In his "Journal" in 1868, Henri Frederic Amiel wrote: "Blessed be childhood, which brings down something of heaven into the midst of our rough earthliness."

All of us need "stress relievers." My No. 1 stress reliever is time with our children and grandchildren. Learning more about life is a plus in that process. What a fantastic challenge it is to share in the young family members' fun, enthusiasm and learning.

## **What We Can Learn From Children**

### **1. How to Have Fun**

Children teach us that our attitudes have more to do with having fun than the specific activity with which we're involved. Throwing a "sticky spider-man" on the wall can be as exciting as playing with an expensive toy.

### **2. How to Live**

Ann Marie Kerwin says kids love to "live in the moment." Of her son, she writes: "No one has to tell Jack to enjoy today; for him right now is all there is." This gives us the potential of enjoying not just one, but a string of exciting events.

### **3. How to Trust**

Children have a tremendous capacity for trust. Even if they lose some trust, many children seem more ready to forgive than some adults. They think the best of people and don't concentrate on weaknesses.

### **4. How to Risk**

Children take more risks than adults. In their adventure, they take on their share



of scrapes, cuts and bruises. Still, it is often adults who teach them about fear and apprehension.

## 5. **How to Bounce Back**

When children fail, they recover quickly. With reinforcement, they are ready to move on to a new activity instead of dragging out what we might see as failure.

## 6. **How to Share**

I appreciate the willingness of my grandchildren to openly share their love with me. In this, they become good role models within the family setting. As we grow older, we less enthusiastically share our love for each other.

## 7. **How to Love**

It's great to see how easily young children establish strong, loving relationships. They sense they are loved, and they openly return love. They lack guile, and that's refreshing in our cynical world.

## 8. **How to Learn**

Children's learning curve is particularly impressive. They go through periods of literally absorbing information. Having such a strong desire for learning is not available to all of us.

## 9. **How to Enjoy**

Children inspire adults in their ability to enjoy life. That love for life becomes contagious in the family setting. It wouldn't hurt if more of us showed the "bubbly" spirit we see in children.

## 10. **How to Think**

As children grow up, they begin challenging adult thought. They feel less encumbered with the status quo or with fixed ideas, and more open to alternative approaches.