

## *Pk's Perspectives...* Personal Trainer

Well known psychiatrist Carl Jung once stated, “Children are educated by what the grown-up is and not by his talk.” Jung knew you can’t simply tell your kids what to do – you must lead by example. Your grown-up child will reflect your behavior and attitudes much more clearly than they mirror the list of do’s and don’t’s that you laid down during their growing up years. W.E.B. DuBois said this about the importance of parental example: “Children learn more from what you ARE than what you TEACH.” Joyce Maynard beautifully framed the essence of parenting this way: “It’s not only children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can’t tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it, myself.”

Probably the most quoted “parenting” verse in Scripture is Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” I like the metaphor of training to describe parenting. Maybe it would be helpful if parents thought of themselves as “personal trainers” preparing their children to take on the challenges of full-time adulting. If I’m looking for a personal trainer in the physical sense, someone to help me get into physical shape, I’m probably not going with the guy who is 113 pounds overweight, smokes a pack a day, lives on a diet of Mountain Dew with a side of spicy pork rinds, and sits in a chair telling me to perform a certain exercise until he gets tired. Nope. I would want a personal trainer that practiced what he was teaching; a personal trainer living a healthy lifestyle; a personal trainer that exercised w/me as opposed to one who was checking his text messages while I was grunting through a set of squats. I would be much more inclined to pay attention to the words of my personal trainer if he was a living example of the veracity of his methods/teachings.

Parents (grandparents, too, to some extent), you are on a guaranteed road to future heartache if you think your child does not notice when your words contradict your attitudes/behavior. A child who is told “following Jesus is the most important thing in life” yet rarely witnesses Christ-like behavior in his or her parents will grow into an adult who doesn’t place much significance on following Jesus. Learning the lyrics “...red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight” will not help a child overcome attitudes of racism and bigotry they perceive in their parents. “Watch your mouth, young man” loses its punch if a child is surrounded by parents who regularly use harsh expletives to communicate thoughts and feelings. I’m telling you, children have a built in bull-hockey radar that alerts them when parents are saying one thing but doing the opposite. And when a parent’s words and actions don’t match, a child starts listening less (your instruction) and watching more (your example).

Frederick Douglass, African-American abolitionist and author, wrote, “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken adults.” Mr. Douglass is spot on. Mom and Dad – what kind of personal trainer are you? Do your children see you walking the walk or mostly talking the talk? Actions really do speak louder than words and parents, most of all, need to practice what they preach. Cya in Sunday School & Worship, PK.