

THE WIT AND WISDOM OF BARBARA COLOROSO

Our goal as a parent is to give life to our children's learning—to instruct, to teach, to help them develop self-discipline—an ordering of the self from the inside, not imposition from the outside. Any technique that does not give life to a child's learning and leave a child's dignity intact cannot be called discipline—it is punishment, no matter what language it is clothed in.

The greatest part of each day, each year, each lifetime is made up of small, seemingly insignificant moments. Those moments may be cooking dinner...relaxing on the porch with your own thoughts after the kids are in bed, playing catch with a child before dinner, speaking out against a distasteful joke, driving to the recycling center with a week's newspapers. But they are not insignificant, especially when these moments are models for kids.

There is one thing you and I as parents cannot do, nor do we want to do if we really think about it, and that's control our children's will—that spirit that lets them be themselves apart from you and me. They are not ours to possess, control, manipulate, or even to make mind.

Every time a child organizes and completes a chore, spends some time alone without feeling lonely, loses herself in play for an hour, or refuses to go along with her peers in some activity she feels is wrong, she will be building meaning and a sense of worth for herself and harmony in her family.

If we parents accept that problems are an essential part of life's challenges, rather than reacting to every problem as if something has gone wrong with a universe that's supposed to be perfect, we can demonstrate serenity and confidence in problem solving for our kids....By telling them that we know they have a problem and we know they can solve it, we can pass on a realistic attitude as well as empower our children with self-confidence and a sense of their own worth.

We need to encourage members of this next generation to become all that they can become, not try to force them to become what we want them to become . . . You and I can't even begin to dream the dreams this next generation is going to dream, or answer the questions that will be put to them.

During the later childhood years...is not a time for you to stop bringing up correct information about sexuality...information is

flowing just as fast in the school yard, on the streets, through the media, and sometimes in your kid's head. Don't be lulled into thinking that because you've explained it, the school taught it, or your child saw it on TV, he really got it.

The best time to start giving your children money is when they will no longer eat it. Basically, when they don't put it in their mouths, they can start putting it in their bank.

Our children need to be able to see us take a stand for a value and against injustices, be those values and injustices in the family room, the boardroom, the classroom, or on the city streets.

Compliant children are very easily led when they are young, because they thrive on approval and pleasing adults. They are just as easily led in their teen years, because they still seek the same two things: approval and pleasing their peers. Strong-willed children are never easily led by anybody—not by you, but also not by their peers. So celebrate your child's strength of will throughout the early years...and know that the independent thinking you are fostering will serve him well in the critical years to come.