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Family Focus Parent Regrets

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Thanks for writing to share your regrets about your parenting experiences. It can be helpful to hear how others have handled their problems and how they would do things differently. As much as we might like to be perfect parents, we all make our share of misjudgments and mistakes.

I went through a very ugly divorce, and my deepest regret is that I did not shield my children from it in the way I should have. I believed that honesty was the best policy, and I answered all of their questions as truthfully as I could. I did not tell them everything, of course, but now I know that I told them too much (especially the older one). We all try to do what we think is best, and sometimes even our best doesn't seem to be good enough. Circumstances can evolve beyond our control. I had an older brother who told me, as I was beginning to think about divorce and worrying about how it would affect my kids, "A kid's got to play the hand he's dealt," and that I had to do what I needed to do. As it turned out, although he didn't know it at the time, my brother would die of cancer a couple of years later, leaving a young son behind. I hold on to this advice at those times when I'm forced to accept that which I can't change, but I see that my children were deeply affected by the divorce trauma and probably will be for a very long time.

Anonymous

One regret I have is that I didn't make my daughter stick with her piano lessons. She took lessons for five years and did very well. But during the fifth year she started complaining about having to practice, and my husband and I decided to let her take a break. She never went back to it and recently told me how she wishes she had kept it up.

Kathy Grant

I have three wonderful children, but I regret having them so close together, all within five years. We can't enjoy our children as much as we'd like because life is such a constant whirlwind of activity. I feel stressed and overwhelmed much of the time, and I worry about not being a good wife and mother. If we had spaced our children better we could have more time to give to each child and ourselves.

Anonymous

I have one regret as a parent of three boys: not teaching them how to cook! Now that they are in college and two have a kitchen, this would have been very helpful to them.

Frances Montalvo Palacios

My biggest regret is that I have to work full-time while we are raising our kids.

I didn't expect this would be the case when we moved to California several years ago. Unfortunately the nature of my job requires a full work week, and we need my additional income to live in this area so that our kids can go to good schools and grow up in a safe environment. But it breaks my heart sometimes when I can't participate in their activities during the day or have enough energy for them at night.

Anonymous

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