

Questions parents should ask

The more we talk to parents and review our own journey, the more we conclude that ultimately we raise our children with certain absolute values (without which would be difficult or useless to parent!) Husbands and wives quarrel when these values differ. The conflicts during the teen years may also be due to values differences. Even though we thought that we have taught, demonstrated and communicated them! Nothing seemed to have sunk in! Perhaps it is important to review our values and how we communicate them – maybe we have been inconsistent, causing confusion to our children!

Many of the teachings today are based on a concept of relativism. For example, some feel that whether we agree with pre-marital sex depends on our perception, culture and the century we live in. After all, it is a changing world and we need to keep up with the times! If there are no absolutes, frankly we need not get angry or upset when our children have a differing stand. The reality however, is that we do get upset. That seems to mean that we cannot raise our children with relativism, there must be some absolutes. Actually if everything is relative, there isn't any real need for parenting or governance. Without governance however, chaos usually result.

Of course at home, when our family values differ from the world, our children may end up asking, "How come they can and we can't!" That is probably another topic but just because we cannot easily answer that question and maintain a stand does not mean we forgo our absolute values!

We would just like to throw out some questions for review. More importantly, how are these similar or different between daddy and mummy and what we plan to do about them! We should be thinking of these questions regardless of our children's ages but where the questions appear below means it is time to act around that age group if we have not acted.

For parents with children up to 7:

- What do we think of letting younger kids spend more time at home and have a relatively fixed schedule? That may mean sacrificing outings so that the kids can come home earlier and have their afternoon naps or some quieter moments at home.
- How do we view our frequency of eating out? We believe the home is a safe, warm and quiet environment. Such an environment can be cultivated even with a simple home meal.

However, if home meal is a rare occasion, then it will probably send a different message.

- Do we expose our children to all sorts of television programmes, computer games and internet applications without restrictions? If there are restrictions, what should they be?
- How are we cultivating our young ones to respect authority figures? Are we doing that at all? This applies to verbal communication and tone of voice – what do we do when we see or hear something disrespectful?
- Singapore is a very academically driven society, how can we balance that with other family, sporting or artistic activities, including household chores?

For parents with kids from (7 to 14):

- How are our children's overall developments: academic, social, physical and emotional? Are we helping them to develop beyond the academics?
- What do we think about budgeting – giving them an allowance? How much? How frequent? Anything wrong with just giving them as and when they need the money?
- What about BGR? How do we approach it with them? How do we view them? Do we delay communicating this till later?
- When we do not give our kids what they want, we are usually fearful that they steal. How do we deal with that? Do we simply give in?
- When we have value differences with our kids, how should we handle them?

For parents with children above 14:

- What are our views about pre-marital sex? How are our teenagers' perceptions on this? If there are differences, how can we bridge the gap?
- What about homosexuality? What's the difference between not approving of the lifestyle and yet accepting the person?
- What kind of person should they grow up to be? How are we as examples?
- How can we guide and influence without being intrusive?
- How can we provide a better listening ear?
- With growing kids and competing schedules, what do we do to maintain the family ties?

No answers need to be given. We believe if you and your spouse ask yourselves these questions, you will be on a journey of discovery. The process of reviewing together will turn out to be more fruitful than reading canned answers, even if some answers do not come immediately! Have fun talking about them on your 'couch' time. ☺