



Parent-in-Training

You are not alone in this thing called "parenting"

WRITTEN BY Decca Knight



Transference

art project or romping through our muddy pond elevates my husband's blood pressure. When our sweet darling creatively spreads his favorite stickers throughout the house, my hubby's brow begins to furrow. And, when our son insists on helping with the cooking and gets flour and cornstarch everywhere except the counter, his father has to leave the kitchen.

But, our son will never know the inner turmoil we face. He will never be privy to our inner-obsessive dialogue. Why? Because he is his own unique being. At four years of age, his world is full of wonderment, possibilities, and messes. All of his exploration and decision-making are helping to expand his mind and enhance his personality.

If we insisted that his paintings contain every color of the spectrum, would we squash his artistic side? If we required him to put his toys in certain categories, would we discourage him to form associations of his own? If we prevented him from becoming filthy as he happily played in the mud, would we dispirit his fascination with nature?

Often we, as parents, transfer our "issues" to our kids. These issues might involve our germaphobia, our fixation with our appearance, our propensity to procrastinate, or our constant complaints about our weight. We avoid many foods, but get irritated with our kids when they are picky eaters. We get angry when our kid yells at us, but we are screamers too. Why do we hold our kids to a higher standard?

As a parent, I constantly have to "check" myself. If my son's creativity on a project is in stark contrast to my über-organized manner, I take a few deep breaths and allow him to design his masterpiece on his terms. If, when we are building with blocks, his "city" looks like a tornado ripped through it, I step back and appreciate the chaos. When my son is covered in paint and smiling from ear-to-ear, my hubby delights in his joy rather than rushing him off to clean up.

Remember, we are role models for our children. They watch every move we make very closely. They listen to every word we mutter with interest. We cannot expect more from them than we expect from ourselves.

So, the next time my son mashes together his Play Dough colors to make a strange mutated animal with four heads, I will hold my tongue and allow the creativity to flow. Later, when he is taking his nap, I will obsessively pick apart the iniquitous mixtures he has created and I will feel at peace.

As parents, we all have our obsessive tendencies, strange habits, and irritations. My OCD thoughts lean towards order and away from spontaneity and chaos. I love filing papers. I love the books on my bookshelf to be organized by height and facing the same direction. I get overly excited when my desk at work is totally clear at the end of the day. When someone pops up and changes dinner plans on me at the last minute, I feel off-kilter. I cringe when I see stacks of seemingly unrelated papers lying around on someone's desk. I feel woozy when I walk past a house with a front porch that looks like a consignment shop. However, I accept that all people are different and that my way isn't the only way. I know that I am a little bit crazy (OK, maybe a lot) when it comes to organization and that I am Churchillian in my work habits.

The scary part is that these personal aggravations attempt to sneak into my parenting. They grab hold of me and say, "The Play Dough colors should not, under any circumstances, be mixed together." They tell me that the toys in the playroom should all be organized into boxes according to type and size. They cause me to swoon when my son mixes the paint colors together and creates that awful brown or when he really wants to use all black on the Thank-You card he is coloring. When he helps me decorate cookies, and his designs look like some strange mutated being, my heart begins to race.

My sweet husband (sorry hun!) has his issues too. Helping our son with a messy

Decca is a wife, mother, counselor, and parenting educator. In an effort to further help kids and parents, Decca began studying the Love and Logic Parenting® philosophy. She teaches classes to other "Parents-in-training" and runs Blue Ridge Parenting LLC (www.blueridgeparenting.com). You can also "like" Blue Ridge Parenting on FB for more parenting tips and advice.



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