

Perfect parents, perfect children ... fact or fantasy?

By VIRGINIA JUSTICE

A lot of questions arise in the pursuit of being the “perfect parent.” Should everyone aspire to be one or is our goal of perfection creating neurotic, needy children with unrealistic expectations of us as parents and ourselves? Where is the line between having high expectations and expecting perfection? What’s perfection, anyway, and is it even possible? Alternatively, do our children benefit from seeing us as fallible human beings who take responsibility for our mistakes?



As parents, we bring home our bundle of joy without an instruction manual; however, I do recall signing something akin to a no refund agreement. It is pretty darn scary being a parent, especially a new one. Some parents figure one small mistake and you are dooming your child to a future of failure. If we really feel that way, consider how it affects your child. Children can read our emotions, including frustration and anger, but sometimes they misinterpret with whom we are frustrated.

When evaluating child development, experts have a range regarding childhood milestones. Developmental milestones do not state that at one year every child should be able to walk without assistance rather, they indicate that between certain ages a child should be accomplishing certain things. As a parent, it’s important to recognize the difference between what a

child can do and what she will do. Children with an older sibling may be able to speak quite well, but do not need to if their older sibling speaks for them. This doesn’t mean the child is “behind” developmentally but has determined that she does not need to do something that someone else is willing to do for her, which seems smart when you think about it.

As with children, the theories of “child development specialists” differ, so what’s a parent to do? Many experienced parents suggest you do the best you can and not sweat the small stuff. They may also tell you that they modify their parenting style based on their children’s personalities. In other words, time out may work with one child but not with the other. As a parent, you will likely find yourself “experimenting” to figure out what works best for your child — teach them that F.A.I.L. equals **F**irst **A**ttent

In Learning. From experienced parent and grandparent Lisa Hanson: “Parents have to be okay with making mistakes and the children will see that everyone, young or old, can learn that practice and effort to accomplish something will bring satisfaction and self-esteem.”

Just for perspective, Google the word “perfection” — it is quite enlightening. Is there really such a thing as a flawless person, a thing without imper-



Parenting Tip

fections? From BreAhanna Stephens, single mother of three in Richland, Washington: “There is no such thing as perfect. You can give with all you have, love with every fiber of your being and still never reach perfection.

“But,” she adds, “luckily for us our babies don’t need perfection, they just need our love. Everything else follows.”

Home economist Virginia Justice holds an education degree. The Pendleton resident and her husband have two college-aged daughters.

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