

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

. . . on Teaching Children to Laugh in Life

By Bill Welker, EdD

Laughter is one of the most successful defenses that mankind has found to cope with the problems of daily living. All of us must teach our children to laugh. In turn, they will mature into adults prepared to teach others the significance of laughter.

Today I want to address my thoughts on the importance of humor in the home, at school, during athletic competition, and on the job. Carefully consider the following.

Humor in the Home

An essential element to the success of any family unit is that intangible state of mind known as “happiness.” If the mother, father, and/or guardian can instill a climate filled with laughter; likewise, their children will learn the joys of humor in life. Remember, children are outstanding imitators. So start them early on the road to laughter.

Without question, as parents, see to it that your children are given wholesome examples to follow, including the promotion of humor in the home. Unfortunately, our society has had to create such institutions as juvenile detention centers and foster homes for children who have lacked happy home environments. Hopefully, such conditions will never occur in your family unit.

Humor at School

When teachers prepare daily lesson plans, they often come upon sections that could have humorous undertones. They should not allow these opportunities to slide by unnoticed. Teachers must understand that if such sections are funny to them (and stimulates their interest), then perhaps the students in their classrooms would benefit from the “laugh” as well. I believe that such humor can make the educational environment a much more enjoyable and rewarding experience for students and teachers alike.

Likewise, compassionate teachers must not only teach their students that “to err is human,” but in many cases, “to err is humorous.” We all make mistakes, and sometimes these errors are funny. As teachers, don’t be afraid to laugh at your own blunders in the classroom.

Let me give one classroom example. The teacher just emphasized the importance of proper spelling when writing composition papers, and then proceeded to misspell a word on the whiteboard. Immediately, the students started to laugh. Should the instructor react by telling the students to calm down, or laugh along with them?

Obviously, the latter response would make for a much more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. Students love when teachers mess up, so laugh with them. It always worked for me.

Humor on the Playing Field

Even coaches need to exhibit humor during the rigors of competition. Occasionally sports can be very disappointing for the participants. During such

times of frustration and failure, athletes are in need of a consoling agent. Here is where the use of humor can aid in reducing the tenseness of the moment.

Of course, losing a game due to inferior performance is no laughing matter. However, I do contend that coaches, along with reviewing errors made on the playing field, should add a pinch of levity to assist the athletes in regaining their self-confidence and individual worth as members of the squad.

Humor on the Job

A number of years ago I read an insurance pamphlet entitled “Your Job Interview” for college graduates preparing for their first employment opportunities. Included in this booklet is a section dealing with those factors that frequently lead to the rejection of the applicant during the interview phase. Guess what one of the factors was: “The applicant lacks a sense of humor.”

Of course, business executives are very concerned about the productivity of all their employees. Moreover, these company officials realize the importance of being able to laugh during work hours. In fact, the lack of humor within an office or plant facility can make for very uncomfortable working conditions. Furthermore, most employees cannot perform at optimum efficiency under such circumstances. So, it’s “OK” to laugh, even on the job.

In conclusion, I would like to share with you the following three basic rules I’ve tried to live by as a parent and teacher:

* Be Fair – To teach the child a sense of justice and to respect the rights and possessions of others.

*** Be Firm – To teach the child the importance of self-discipline and self-control in all his or her endeavors.**

*** Exhibit a Sense of Humor – To teach the child not to take life so seriously that he or she forgets to smile or laugh.**

Parent Proverb

“One laugh from a child will make the holiest day more sacred still.”

- A. G. Ingersoll

Next Month’s Column: “Communicating with Your Children”

(Editor’s Note: Dr. Bill Welker is a retired reading specialist who was a K-12 classroom teacher for 40 years. He was selected as a “2009 Teacher of the Year” by the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce. His e-mail is mattalkwy@hotmail.com.)