

Nice on My Feelings

When my child speaks and when she is silent
let me listen to her feelings.

Let me really *listen* and hear what my child tells me.

When she says look at this, let me stop what I am
doing and look now. "In a minute" is eternity, and
the special moment is lost.

Let me remember that her development and sense of value
is more important than anything I am doing.

Let me show my genuine interest in the things that
absorb her and open myself to sharing
those experiences.

Let me encourage her exploration, spontaneity
and creativity.

Let me help her see the good in herself and the
good in others.

Let me give her my most valued possessions:
my time and love.

Let me be nice on her feelings.

Terry Orlick

Keeping the Magic In Your Life

In our early years we are unwittingly coerced into giving up the magic of childhood, and forever after long to gain back the magical qualities we gave up as children.

First, you must take care of your own needs. If you fail to do this, you will fail to meet all other needs as well. When you are feeling best about yourself, you will give your best to others; when you are feeling your worst, you have little or nothing of value to give. This is why it is essential for you to take care of your own needs.

I am not a perfect model of balance but I have worked at keeping a spirit of joy and balance in my day and life. Like most of you, I have multiple demands and responsibilities—to my family and students, to my writing, research, speaking and consulting, and to sharing with parents, teachers, coaches, athletes, children, readers and audiences around the world.

There are times that I feel I spend my whole day or my whole life giving—and getting very little in return. I may listen to 50 or 100 calls, and everybody seems to want something. It's an extremely rare pleasure when someone calls and offers to help me with something, or to give rather than want.

These experiences are reminders that I have to take care of my own needs, as well as others' needs. I have to become responsible for finding a sense of joy and balance in my day and my life. No one is going to do that for me.

Likewise, as a parent you have to find or create situations that allow you to feel positive about yourself and positive with others most of the time. This is your challenge and your

The Challenge of Parenting

Parenting is the most important job in the world. Nowhere else is your influence so directly felt, or your existence so important to the development of another human being. This is why each of us must do everything in our power to become the best parents we can possibly be. The quest for excellence in parenting is challenging and sometimes frustrating, yet it brings with it some of life's greatest rewards.

The guiding light for quality parenting was communicated to me simply and eloquently by my five-year-old daughter. One morning after I had been playing with her group of preschool children she skipped over to me, looked at me wide-eyed and said, "I really like you—'cause you're nice on my feelings." Then she sauntered off. That was a magic moment.

On another occasion a mother was dragging her child along by the arm, down a city street. The child pleaded with his Mom to stop for a moment so he could play. When she refused, his request turned to despair and he uttered, "Mommy you broke my feelings".

To grow towards their true potential and flourish as

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human beings, children need someone in their life who believes in them, who accepts them totally, who loves them without placing conditions on that love, who is nice on their feelings. It's not, "I'll love you if you do this or if you don't do that; it's simply "I love you." People who excel at living have had one such person in their life—a mother, father, grandparent, teacher, coach . . . someone. Who will that person be in your child's life?

Children at all ages are bright and responsive little people with high needs for love and acceptance. Very small children have very big and sensitive feelings, and they are tremendously affected by our response or lack of response to their feelings. When children cry out for our love or contact and no one responds, they feel abandoned, rejected and very much alone. This is very hurtful on their feelings of self-worth. It makes them feel unworthy, incompetent and less valued as people.

If we were simply nicer on children's feelings, they would take a giant leap forward in terms of their total human development. "Nice on a child's feelings" implies that we respect the child as a sensitive and fully feeling human being, at any age and stage. It means that we stop and think about a child's feelings *before* rather than after we act or react. Every time we are positive, loving and supportive with our children, other people and with nature, we nourish the genuine humanity which is alive within all children—all around the world. Every time we hurt a child's feelings we chip away at their spontaneity, self-respect and love for life.

Children's early judgements about their own value, capabilities and worth are based primarily on how they are treated and nurtured by important people around them. There are so many good reasons to give time, love and high-quality care during these early years. You will never again have the opportunity to be so important, or so close, to another human being. And you will probably never grow as much yourself, as you will by taking full advantage of this opportunity.