

Teaching Humility and Appreciation

Hello and welcome back to our Parenting Tips corner! With all of the jobs a parent has, it can be hard to know how to teach children the concept of humility. Humility basically means being interested in other people and having the ability to listen and learn from others. It means not being completely absorbed in one's own life. Dr. Leonard Sax addresses this concept in his book. In North America, attempting to instill this virtue is become more and more difficult. We live in a culture that is increasingly becoming more and more self-absorbed. We also have what we need at our finger tips to make life easier. Teachers often ponder this issue as well.

According to research, humility leads to gratitude, appreciation and contentment, which is ultimately what we all want for our children.

The first and probably easiest thing a parent can do when trying to instill humility is to require their child to do chores. It doesn't have to involve hard labour! Something as simple as setting the table, helping to prepare supper, feeding the fish or making one's bed can do the trick. Not only are you teaching your child valuable skills but you're teaching them hard work and having a role in a family. This can start even when children are 3 or 4 years old by asking them to pick up toys or by dusting a piece of furniture.

We often use words to try to teach our messages, which is a great start. When there is a conflict, adults love to ask children, "How would you feel if?" Interestingly, simply using words isn't enough. For example, if we want to teach our children to learn to do things for ourselves instead of relying on others, we may teach them how to cook and require them to make meals on a regular basis. Simply saying, "Learn to things for yourself" isn't enough. If we want to teach our children to be grateful for all that we have, you may require them to volunteer at a drop-in centre for those that are less fortunate. Again, saying, "Be grateful for the home you have" just isn't enough. Research shows that if you teach children when they are young, they will continue with these behaviours and habits as they grow up. It becomes much harder to teach humility, gratitude and general virtues as we get older. Although we don't want to scare our children, it is okay to give them experiences that allow them to see how others who are less fortunate may be living.

A child will not always be thrilled to do the work you require and may resist. This is where the "work job-fun job" that teachers love to employ comes in. For example, "No TV until you finish mowing the lawn." Jobs that children are given can be gradually more complex as they age (so don't worry, they don't need to mow the lawn if they're still learning to tie their shoes!).

***The "Parenting Tips" articles will take a break over the summer. If you have any ideas for future topics or questions, please email or speak with Mme Reynolds or Mme Manaigre. Thank you for reading and enjoy your summer!**