



# **Raising Personally Responsible Children**

## **Helping Children Become Personally Responsible**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

### **Discover the key to raising personally responsible children.**

Children become personally responsible when parents role-model taking personal responsibility for their own feelings and needs. In addition, children need to be allowed to make their mistakes without punishment, and to fail without a loss of love. Children learn responsibility when their parents set firm limits regarding what is and is not acceptable.

Let's take an example - bedtime. In many households, bedtime is a nightmare for the parents of young children. Typically, the parents nag about getting ready for bed and the children resist - dawdling and ignoring the parents. The parents are tired and want some time for themselves, so the conflict escalates until the parents are yelling before the children finally capitulate. It's not much fun.

When our children were young, we set a firm limit regarding when we would be available to tuck them in, spend some loving and cozy time with them, read to them, and so on. We said, "We will be available to put you to bed at 8:30 (or whatever time was appropriate for each child). If you are not ready at that time, you will need to put yourself to bed. You can stay up as late as you want, but you cannot disturb us, each other, or watch TV." We taught them how to read a digital clock by the time they were three so that they knew what time it was.

The result was that each of our children tested this out a couple of times and stayed up very late. Finding themselves bleary-eyed the next day, they discovered that they needed their sleep to feel well. They also discovered that they looked forward to the cozy time with us before going to sleep and didn't like the loneliness of putting themselves to bed. Therefore, they got themselves ready for bed and would come to get us to tuck them in. I'll never forget the time my three-year old daughter came in to the living room where we were spending time with friends and said in her little indignant voice, "Mommy, it's time to put me to bed." Our friends were stunned that this tiny child was ready for bed without a fuss, and even asking to be put to bed!

Another chaotic time in many households with young children is getting up and ready for school. Again, parents nag and yell as children dawdle - not getting dressed, not eating their breakfast. Parents are often exhausted by the time their children finally leave for school.

Once again, it is important to make this their responsibility, rather than yours. If you teach your children how to set their alarm, then they can be responsible for getting themselves up on time. If your children are in a carpool or if you take them to school, let them know that they will have to get into the car in whatever state of dress or undress they are in, when it is time to leave, whether or not they have had breakfast. If they are still in their pajamas, hand them their clothes and they can put them on at school. If this happens one time with one of your children, it will never happen again. They will know you mean what you say and will be ready on time. If they walk to school, let them know that their lateness is their responsibility and that you will not give them notes to excuse their tardiness. They will have to take responsibility for the consequences of their choice to be late.

How about getting children to brush their teeth? Rather than nag at them every night, we told our children that if they got cavities as a result of eating badly or not taking care of their teeth, they would have to pay for them out of their own money - money they worked for or received as gifts.

The point of all this is that when you are clear regarding your own limits about what you will and will not do, and you stay solid in your limits, not allowing whining or crying and tantrums to sway you, children will learn to respect your limits. What we all want for our children is for them to be personally responsible. This has to start early so that by the time they are adolescents, they have a good foundation for making responsible decisions. You might be able to control your children to a certain extent with yelling, punishments and threats while they are young, but once they reach adolescence and are likely bigger than you, you will have no control at all. So rather than trying to control them, your energy is better spent setting a good example and controlling what you can control - you and your own limits.

Setting your own limits and setting a good example for responsible behavior avoids the power struggles and resistance that plague so many family interactions. We want parenting to be fun rather than a

burden, and it can be when you decide to take care of yourself and allow your children to suffer the consequences of their own decisions, other than in issues of health and safety. For a further understanding of these concepts, see *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By My Kids?*

## **Giving Children Responsibility for Their Own Learning**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**Do you take responsibility for your children's learning and homework? In this article, you will learn a whole new way of dealing with this issue.**

Parts of this article are excerpted from *Do I Have To Give Up Me To Be Loved By My Kids?*

Conflicts over homework plague many families. Parents are worried and want their children to do well. Believing that encouragement, praise, explanations, setting limits, and even threats and anger are well meaning, deserved, necessary and loving, parents often interact with their children in ways that lead to a number of difficulties.

At an Inner Bonding Workshop, Martin was struggling with the consequences of having grounded his 14-year-old daughter, Elisa, because she was not doing her homework and was getting bad grades. Now Martin and Elisa were caught in a power struggle, with Elisa refusing to do any homework and not coming right home after school, resisting both the homework and the punishment. Martin was feeling frustrated, angry and powerless, with fantasies of locking his daughter in her room to have some control over her.

From the time my children began school, we took the radical position that their learning was their responsibility. We let them know that we would always be available when they needed our help, but it was their job to let us know when they needed help, or if they just wanted us to sit with them and keep them company while they studied. We let them know that our love for them was not dependent upon their performance - that we would love them whether they succeeded or failed. If they did well, we wanted it to be for themselves, not for us. We let them know that we wanted them to discover their passions and

© 2011 All Rights Reserved

Margaret Paul, Ph.D., Inner Bonding® Educational Technologies, Inc.

do what brought them joy. We wanted them to discover what their gifts were that they wanted to offer to the world.

We rarely asked our children if they had homework, or if they had done their homework. We never told them they couldn't do something until their homework was finished - watch TV (that was automatically limited in our house to 1 1/2 hours a day), play, or go to a friend's house. We never offered them rewards such as money for good grades, because we wanted them to receive their own internal rewards and to learn to be personally responsible.

This worked very well for us and our three children, who are now happy and successful adults, doing what they each love to do. They all did very well in school without any prodding from us. Children naturally like to do well; they are self-motivated when they receive love and acceptance, and are not in a power struggle with their parents. I have worked with hundreds of families on this issue of schoolwork, and over and over, when the power struggle is broken, children generally begin to do well.

Many parents have been perplexed when their children turn away from some of their important values, especially education. This is almost always the result of a child resisting being pushed to study and get good grades. Children don't like to be controlled and may resist in an area which is most important to the parents. It is often difficult for parents to let go of their attempts to control how their children do in school, because much fear comes up regarding failure.

Karen tells this story about her own struggle with herself and her son, Tim. Believing that she was responsible for motivating her fifth-grade son to do his homework, she reminded him constantly. Rather than working faster and better, Tim worked slower and with increasing resistance, although he was a very bright boy. One weekend, Tim had an essay assignment, so Karen sent him to his room on Saturday morning, saying he could come out when his essay was finished. Alone in his room, Tim dawdled the time away. By mid-afternoon, with no progress, Karen's frustration and anger were building, so she began visiting his room every so often, making a variety of threats and demands. Still, Tim made no move to write. Karen slept poorly that night and awoke Sunday morning more determined than ever to get her son to write his paper, admittedly afraid of the consequences if he didn't. By Sunday evening, she had spent most of the weekend in and out of Tim's room with various ploys - yelling, threats, criticism - trying everything she knew to control him. Finally, in tears of

frustration, anger and fear, she gave up. And as she did, she was forced to come face to face with her beliefs about what she could and could not control as a parent. Also, she was forced to consider alternatives, since what she was doing wasn't working.

Monday, after school, Karen and Tim met with Tim's teacher. "I just wanted you to know," Karen said to the teacher, "that Tim will now be in charge of his own work. I won't be helping him or reminding him. Whether he does his homework or not will be his choice." All three of them agreed on this new plan. The teacher was a little surprised, but Karen felt relieved and Tim was obviously happy. The difference in his attitude was like night and day. For the rest of the year, Tim did his assignments without being asked, most of them done very well. Tim felt the pleasure of being personally responsible, and Karen learned a lot about what she could do to be the best help to her son.

Not all children respond as quickly as Tim. Often, when parents finally let go of control, children dig in and do nothing, testing out the parent's resolve. Parents have to be ready for their children to suffer the consequences of their own choices, without trying to control or rescue them. It may take months, or even longer, for some children to decide to do well for themselves. You need to have the faith that if you have role-modeled personally responsible behavior, your children will eventually follow your example.

## **Raising Conscious Children**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**Are you interested in raising loving, responsible and conscious children? Through the daily, ongoing practice of Inner Bonding, you can become a role model of consciousness for your children.**

What does it mean to be conscious?

In my view, consciousness means that you are present in your body rather than being primarily focused in your programmed mind - that you are aware of your feelings, and you desire to take full 100% responsibility for your feelings and wellbeing. It means that you are aware of your Guidance and open to learning with the love and truth of

© 2011 All Rights Reserved

Margaret Paul, Ph.D., Inner Bonding® Educational Technologies, Inc.

your Guidance. It means that you are aware of your thoughts and whether they are originating from your mind or through your mind, from your Guidance. It means that you deeply care about the effect your behavior has on others, while not taking responsibility for their feelings. It means that you are aware of your surroundings, of others' intent, and of caring about the planet. You are awake.

How do we raise children to be conscious?

In many ways, children are born more conscious than most adults. Because they have not yet developed their programmed mind - their ego wounded self - they are aware of their feelings and their Guidance. However, they cannot yet take responsibility for their own wellbeing. How do they learn to be personally responsible for themselves, and take responsibility for the effect they have on others and on the planet?

By watching you. Not by hearing what you say, but by experiencing what you do.

You are the role models for consciousness. If you are practicing Inner Bonding throughout the day and taking responsibility for your own feelings, your children will learn to do this. If you are avoiding your painful feelings and suppressing them with addictions, or blaming someone else for them, they will learn to do this. If you are following your Guidance, and supporting them in following their Guidance, instead of trying to control yourself, others and them, they will learn to do this. If you are peaceful and joyful, and operate from deep inner integrity, they will learn to do this.

If you disrespect the environment, they will learn to do this. If you care about others without giving yourself up or taking responsibility for others' feelings, they will learn to do this.

Practicing Inner Bonding throughout the day is one of the very best ways of being a loving parent and raising responsible, conscious children. The more you become conscious, the more opportunities your children have for developing their own consciousness and moving beyond you in consciousness.

Some children come into this life with a high level of consciousness - far beyond the consciousness of their parents. They are our teachers, and hopefully their parents will recognize this. These children are older

than their parents in their soul's development and have much to offer their parents.

If you have a child whom you have recognized as wise beyond his or her years, you are indeed fortunate. All children can be our teachers, but children who have deep wisdom can offer us even more. Just because they have little bodies does not mean that they don't have big wisdom from eons of experience as a soul.

However, being little, they may not know that they are so evolved. It is our responsibility as parents to support our children in being all they can be. It is sad when parents feel they have to compete with their children instead of relishing all that they are. If you have an extraordinary child, it is your responsibility to do Inner Bonding and reach a point where you can fully support your child, instead of feeling threatened by his or her wisdom, talent or achievements.

The consistent, ongoing practice of Inner Bonding not only allows you to become a great role model for your children, it supports you in allowing yourself to be taught by your children. What a gift this is!

## **Good Parenting: Caring about Yourself and Your Children**

By Dr. Margaret Paul

**How do we raise caring and personally responsible children? By being caring and personally responsible parents - parents who care about their children, but also care about themselves.**

Many of us were brought up in homes with parents who had no idea of how to take care of themselves. Their identity was defined by other people, so they needed to control us and each other with their anger, shaming, blaming, demanding, withdrawal, compliance, resistance and so on. They role-modeled many ways of trying to control while not being controlled. They also wanted control over their painful feelings, which they may have attempted to gain with substance and process addictions - such as food, alcohol, TV, work - as well as the above controlling behaviors. What they did not do was take responsibility for their own feelings and needs. Most of our parents role-modeled being

© 2011 All Rights Reserved

Margaret Paul, Ph.D., Inner Bonding® Educational Technologies, Inc.



victims - blaming others for their unhappiness and trying to get others to change.

Most of us grew up with parents who were wounded, with no loving Adult at all. Even if they did believe in God, they probably didn't have a direct and personal spiritual connection to help them evolve and grow in their lovingness. Most of our parents were not on a growth path and had very little inner life.

Many of us were brought up to believe that taking care of ourselves was selfish - that our job was to be selfless and just care for others. In turn, others were supposed to love and care for us. We were trained to be codependent!

None of this is good parenting.

We want our children to grow up being personally responsible, which means being responsible for their physical health and financial wellbeing, as well as for their own feelings and needs. We don't want to raise needy and demanding children who are self-centered brats, nor do we want to raise children who are caretakers, giving themselves up to take care of others but not taking care of themselves.

So, how do we raise caring and personally responsible children? By being caring and personally responsible parents - parents who care about their children, but also care about themselves. This means that you don't make your children's needs more important than yours; nor do you make your needs more important than your children's. The challenge is to be there for your children without giving yourself up in the process.

This means being available for your children with your love, acceptance and understanding when they need you there, but also staying tuned in to your own needs for love, acceptance and understanding. It means that parenting is not a one-way street - not just you caring about your children, but you and your children caring about yourselves and each other.

Let's take an example:

Judith is the mother of Julie, age four. Julie tends to be a demanding child, wanting Judith's attention full time. When she doesn't get her

way, she will cry and whine and generally act miserable - sometimes throwing herself on the floor in a full-blown tantrum.

Judith has tried getting angry, giving her more attention, or walking away, but none of these worked. The problem was that Judith's intent was to control Julie, rather than take care of herself. As subtle as it may seem, children pick up on our intent, and as soon as our intent is to control, they will often go into resistance, as well as escalating their own controlling behavior.

Judith decided that it was time to take care of herself instead of trying to control Julie. The next time Julie became whiny and demanding, Judith took a moment to connect with her spiritual Guidance for help and support. Her Guidance instructed her to calmly leave the room - with no anger or blame - saying, "This doesn't feel good."

Judith was amazed at how quickly Julie stopped the demanding behavior and the temper tantrums. When Julie got that her mother was really taking care of herself, and would no longer allow herself to be manipulated by Julie's controlling behavior, and that her mother was not going to try to control her, she could understand that her behavior was not going to work. She also had no reason to resist, since Judith was not trying to control or change her.

In addition, Judith role-modeled personally responsible behavior for Julie, instead of controlling and victim behavior. This is the best gift Judith could give to her children.

The key to loving parenting is to stay aware of our own intent. It's easy to fall into being safe and protected, by trying to control our children with anger or compliance. By staying focused on the intent to be loving to yourself - and remembering that whatever is loving to you is also loving to your children - you will be offering your children the incredible gift of role-modeling personal responsibility.