

Love and Caring for Balance

by Angayuqag Oscar Kawagley

Sharing Our Pathways, Vol. 7, Issue 5

Because I have not always loved myself and was thus a parent who did not experience fully the maturation of my children during their teenage years, I missed out in that critical time of their growing up. I have one important piece of advice for those of you who may not have a love for yourself, and that is to do some thoughtful self-examination. The problem may arise due to being dysfunctional as a result of poverty, alcoholism or some sort of mental or physical disability. If you find yourself lacking in self-worth, then you must change yourself first. To love someone else, you must first learn to love yourself. This allows the process of loving your children and others to become a part of your life. I applaud those of you that have this emotional and spiritual quality in you already.

Several issues ago, I wrote an article about talking to, singing to and making the child feel good while still in the mother's womb. This is important for the child to learn the sounds you make as the mother, the father or the grandparent. They will learn to identify you as parents and as members of the family. They most importantly will recognize the love being shown to them. Through this love they will obtain a sense of belonging—belonging to the mother, the father, siblings and grandparents. At a later time the child will learn that s/he belongs to a village/community, a group of people, and in some instances, a tribe. You as the parents begin to teach the youngster by example. which is a more powerful teaching/learning tool than any formal method you may use.

And now here is my secret, a very simple secret; it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye (Antoine de Saint-Exupery).

This builds the self-respect and pride of the child by knowing who they are and where they are from. As the Golden Buddha is made of pure gold, so there is a golden essence in each child. We, as parents, must nurture this natural self, so that the child grows up strong with the golden glow of self and never loses it.

Below is a poem written by Kahlil Gibran. Ellam Yua, God, has a plan for each of us. It is these inner assets that the child already possesses that we want to develop so s/he can grow up to become the very best they are capable of becoming.

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's
longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they
belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your
thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their
souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
Which you cannot visit, not even in your
dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not
to make them like you,
For life goes not backward nor tarries with
yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.
The archer sees the mark upon the path of
the
Infinite, and He bends you with His might
that
His arrows might go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be
for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
So He loves also the bow that is stable.

*The poem and story were excerpted from Canfield, J. & Hansen, M. C., editors.
Chicken Soup for the Soul: 101 Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the
Spirit. Deerfield Beach, FL.: Health Communications, Inc., 1993.*

The modern world has been struggling with the education of our children for quite some time. We in Alaska are trying to change education so that its foundation becomes our Native worldviews using the languages that constructed them. We continue to struggle against those that oppose us, laws that present obstacles and money that is reduced or

taken away. Yet, when you think about it, our ancestors and parents knew what they were doing when they provided an education based on knowing who you are and where you are. They produced children with minds that have a home. Many of us have homeless minds because of lack of being told our stories.

I am again going to provide another story from the book, *All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum:

Most of what I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not be at the top of the graduate mountain, but there in the sandbox at the nursery school.

These are the things I learned. Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch for traffic. Hold hands and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the plastic cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the plastic cup—they all die. So do we. And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned, the biggest word of all: LOOK.

Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics. Sane living. Think of what a better world it would be if we all—the whole world—had cookies and milk about 3:00 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nations to always put things back where we found them and cleaned up our own messes. And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the World, it is better to hold hands and stick together.

From this we learn that we acquire a lot of knowledge without realizing it from conception to birth to death. For our children in schools, it is necessary that they not only learn the three "Rs", but include a fourth "R", relaxation. We have forgotten how to do this. Children from the first grade through high school need time for quiet. A time for reflection, a time to imagine, a time to visualize what one would want to be in the future. Teach our children to dream and then help them make those dreams come true. Qu yana.

