
insights and encouragement from the “home front”

MEMOIRS OF A MOM

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Waiting, Hoping and Gratification

Abraham Maslow, the well-known American psychologist, was best known for his *Hierarchy of Human Needs*. As a parent committed to raising self-actualized children, I found one quote which gave me inspiration. “One for whom no future exists is reduced to the concrete, to hopelessness, to emptiness.”

As we enter a New Year, we think optimistically about the future. The money we will save or the pounds we will lose. We can reflect on the last year and celebrate future opportunities. This year, the majority of us are very willing to leave 2008 behind and hope for a brighter 2009.

But this is the ideal time in history to teach an important childhood lesson. The concept of delayed gratification is essential to raising children who are self-actualized and know what is true, are aware of justice and harmony and focus outside of themselves.

Like many parents we tried piggy banks and savings accounts – and some of this early financial training took hold. But more significantly, teaching delayed gratification is a much bigger picture. It is about planting seeds and watching marigolds grow and blossom, raising a puppy or waiting for a turn in a friendly game of Chutes and Ladders. It is about cooking stew in the crockpot instead of serving burgers and fries.

I tried to encourage my children to set and meet some long range goals. We began planning for a family vacation. The maps, schedules and price lists were laid on the table and we discussed each and every hopeful moment of camping, the coast or the mountains. We planned rides at the amusement park and dinners at very special places. This year, my son, now in his late 20s, took a trip. I was delighted that he chose to visit the Oregon coast in December but was even more delighted when – on the morning of his departure – he e-mailed me the itinerary complete with locations and accommodations. Something started 20 years ago was paying off.

My daughter may have inherited the list-making gene from me. It gives me great pride to watch her pull out those lists of errands to run, groceries to buy or books to read. But, upon reflection, it may have been the time we spent together making lists (what to take to camp, what to bring to school, what needed to be done before the end of the semester) that transferred the concept of planning for the future and seeing that small actions lead to big results.

My children were blessed to be children during a time of prosperity in Nevada. But as we all know, these conditions are changing. Much of this may be beyond their control. But hopefully, because they learned lessons of delayed gratification, they will live well through the “downs” as well as the “ups”. They will use their planning skills, their savings skills and most importantly their skills in seeing the “big picture” to assist them through what appears to be a difficult time.

As for me, 2009 will be a year when I will count my great wealth. Oh, I’m not rich. My retirement account is sagging and I worry about the value of my home. But, as a true believer in delayed gratification, I am wealthy with the value of children who can see the future, who see hope and have full, interesting lives.

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