



Parenting: The Most Important Leadership Position

Father's Day is just around the corner. A recurring scenario in leadership learning communities hosted by The Leadership Connection happens as we hit the half-way point in the program. Leaders begin to make connections between the philosophies, behaviors, and skills of effective workplace leaders and leading their families.

This realization leads to discussions about parenting being the most important leadership position. As a result, I've come to understand more about the connections between workplace leadership and parents as leaders. By the end of these lively discussions I smile and think of a revised version of my favorite quote, "Everything rises and falls on leadership, even at home."

There are workplace leadership concepts I encourage people to apply at home. Effective leaders apply specific concepts at work that inspire people to do great things at work. When these same concepts are applied by parents at home they can inspire a family to do great things too.

Create a family mission statement. Family mission statements identify what is important to a family. Involve children in developing the statement so it is owned by them too. Family mission statements are great for setting goals, making decisions, and supporting discipline. Hang the mission statement as a constant reminder of values, beliefs, and desired future outcomes that matter most to the family.

Encourage open communication by hosting family meetings. Family meetings can be convened and led by anyone regardless of family position or age. When a meeting is called everyone must show-up. There is one rule: anything can be said as long as it is said respectfully. Something powerful happens when families create space for dialogue and debate. These meetings teach effective communication, negotiation, and how to respectfully have tough conversations with loved ones. These meetings allow parents to learn what children really think about - everything from rules, to family dynamics, and even the state of the world. This is important information for parents who desire to lead children to successful adult lives.

Live "One Life" and model this behavior for children. Dr. Henry Cloud's, *The One Life Solution: Reclaim Your Personal Life While Achieving Greater Professional Success* focuses on the concept of setting specific boundaries in life that create the opportunity for one to feel integrated and calm at work and home. Leaders often feel like two different people. They are one way at work, and another at home. This is equally true for children. They struggle being one way at school, and another at home. This is part of their developmental journey. However, it is important to teach them the importance of being one authentic person with one amazing life all the time. Leaders who practice this strategy are often known for being healthy personally and professionally, and deliverers of results. Isn't this what we want for our children too? Ultimately, having one life is about being balanced and calm. Children live in a world that bombards them with so much. Now is the time to teach them the importance of being balanced and calm by modeling this behavior at home.

As Father's Day approaches this is a great time to think about being an intentional leader at home. Discuss this with your spouse or significant other and make a plan for leading at home. I salute the parents who understand that leading at home is as important, if not more, than leading at work. The development of mission driven, balanced, calm and happy children is one of the greatest contributions a parent can give to the community.

Adapted from The Leadership Journey, published in the Auburn Citizen newspaper