

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Loving Your Kids—the Basics

The long list of ways to love our kids could span the globe a thousand times; and we would still not run out of paper for our path to loving our children. Yet, I have found that there are three basic needs of every human being and every child. With these three, your child will gain the greatest opportunities for the life they are destined to live. No matter how much they may stray, experiment, seem to go the opposite direction, I believe with all my heart they will come back to that special place you gifted them when they were young. What are these three basic needs? They are *To be Accepted, To be Secure, To be Significant.*

To be Accepted—What does that mean to you? Did you experience that unique gift that says by word and deed that you are accepted just as you are? If so, in what ways in your own childhood? If not, how are you experiencing that kind of acceptance today? Are you struggling in relationships trying to receive that which you didn't get in your childhood? I bet just about all of us have struggled with feeling accepted at some point in our lives. For your own children you care for today or hope to have in the years ahead, write down ways you want to show this kind of acceptance. Share your thoughts with your family or close friend. Remember, it doesn't mean you have to accept or condone unhealthy behavior. Yet, it does mean you respect and accept them as human

beings just as they are in their own special uniqueness; and they know it by your words and actions.

To be Secure—What does this mean to you? In this complicated world we live in, this is a hard one to hold onto. From a very slight offense to the ever present dangers of terrorism throughout the world, how do any of us really feel secure? Maybe it just begins with where your security rests. For most of us, it is in faith, family, and friendship. Yet, as parents it all really began right at home with our own childhood years and how we now help our own children feel secure each day. Take a moment right now and write down ways you felt secure in your own childhood and ways you want to gift your children the kind of security you know they need.

To be Significant—What does this also mean to you? As adults, we tend to run a fast-track life racking up points toward feeling significant about our profession and our personal lives. We tend to place our identity squarely on what “we do”, not “who we are.” When we live our lives in only the “doing” we miss out on seeing how really significant we are just as human beings on this planet. Do you believe you are placed here for a purpose? Do you know what it is in general and specific ways? Take another moment and write down your thoughts. Share them also with your family or close friend. Then place on a card to keep with you five ways you have been told you are significant, not just by the “doing” but even more by just the “being” you. Read the list often, particularly when you feel down about yourself or a situation.

Add to this card the ways you are also *accepted* and *secure*—keeping this card handy to remind yourself and family how unique and gifted you are. These three basic human needs when met break down every barrier—whether it be race, gender, creed,

politics—any relationship. When these needs are nurtured in your children, they will grow up knowing they can overcome just about any obstacle in their lives. Whether by circumstance or attitude, they will gain a larger perspective of life and relationships. They too will say by word and deed to their own family, friends, neighbors, co-workers you are accepted, you are secure, you are significant.

You will then be offering each person the opportunity to freely choose how to live their lives without strings attached—like trying to control them so you feel, at least, temporarily important in your own eyes. But in the long haul of life, you come up empty and still in need of acceptance, security, and significance yourself. Let's begin to free others to be all they are, rather than what we think they "should" be. Let it be their choice, freely given, freely embraced. And give help whenever requested and possible.

Begin today to give these gifts to your children, your friends, your neighbors and watch the wonder around you happen in the months and years before you. What you will gain is a deep understanding of what unconditional love is all about—with so many surprises along the way. Start today.

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Festival Fun Your Kids Will Love—Start Planning!

Would you like your kids to have some great fun while giving them a fantastic opportunity to see, hear, and have their own hands-on experience in the Arts? Well, here is your chance. In the middle of this October 2008, there is going to be one of the best ever *Fall Festival of Arts & Music* right here in the Boerne community, sponsored by the Cibolo Arts Council (www.ciboloarts.org). There is going to be just about every kind of fun art activity for children of all ages—young in years and young at heart. So, sign up, put October 16 through 19 on your calendar, and start planning to have a great 4-day arts event with your family of all ages.

Here is a glimpse of what you and your family will experience throughout these four days of celebrating all the arts in our beautiful Texas Hill Country.

2008 Fall Festival of Arts & Music

- ❖ **Thursday, October 16 = Festival Kickoff Celebration 6:30-9:00pm**
(location: Ye Kendall Inn)
 - Culinary Art Wine Dinner & Exclusive Auction**
 - UTSA String Quartet**
 - Exclusive Auction bidding**

- ❖ **Friday, October 17 = Hill Country Invitational Art Show Pre-View Party, 6:30-9:00pm** (location: Ye Kendall Inn Courtyard & Halle)
 - Preview of Invitational Art Show**
 - Boerne Theatre Singers**
 - Music w/ Lil Bit & the Customatics**
 - Raffle Celebration**

- ❖ **Saturday, October 18 = Children's Activities, Art on the Lawn, & Music on the Square, 9:00am-6:00pm**
 - Children's Activities – morning hours** (location: On the Square)
 - Chalk Art Contest**
 - Boerne Community Theatre Teen Troupe**
 - Dance Dominion**
 - Cookie decorating**
 - Face painting**
 - Clowning around w/ Clowns**
 - Performance by Karate World**
 - Literary Corner**
 - Hill Country Invitational Art Show & Art on the Lawn – 10:00am-5:00pm**
(location: Ye Kendall Halle & Kendall Inn Lawn)
 - Culinary Arts Event – afternoon** (location: On the Square)
 - Music on the Square – 12 noon-10:30pm** (location: On the Square)
 - Redd Volkhardt, Joy Davis, Rafiki Project, Elijah Zane Trio, Mystic Sister, Patrice Pike, Music between featured bands provided by Mike Vanderberg**
 - Film = Palo Pinto Gold** (location: Old Pool Area on West Side of the Square)

- ❖ **Sunday, October 19 = Jazz Brunch & Surprise Finale! 10:00am-5:00pm**
 - Jazz Brunch & Ice Carving Demonstration, 10:00am-1:00pm**
(location: Ye Kendall Inn Courtyard)
 - Hill country Invitational Art Show & Art on the Lawn (con't) – 10:00am-5:00pm**
 - Finale! = People's Choice Art Award & 2009 Poster Artist – 5:00pm**
(location: Ye Kendall Inn Halle)

Just pick any or all of these great events and activities for each family member. For parents and grandparents, adult friends, co-workers of businesses and organizations, reserve an exclusive table for the *Culinary Art Wine Dinner & Exclusive Auction* on Thursday night. Be wined and dined along with music by the famous UTSA String Quartet. Then join in on the exclusive art auction of some of the most superb art offered by our very own Texas artists.

Then come along on Friday to the *Hill Country Invitational Art Show Pre-View Party*. This event is a great way to view and be a part of the world of art and artists. Come as a business or organizational group, or just by yourself as you meet and find new friends enjoying the highlights of this Friday night festival of arts and music, offered by the Boerne Theatre Singers, Lil Bit & the Customatics. And don't forget to sign up for the Raffle Celebration Giveaway.

On Saturday, October 18, your kids will really love this day with children's activities such as the Chalk Art Contest, Boerne Community Theatre Teen Troupe, and Dance Dominion. In addition, don't have them miss a fun time with cookie decorating, face painting, clowns, performance by Karate World, and a special literary corner offered by the Boerne Library.

For everyone, the *Hill Country Invitational Art Show & Art on the Lawn* officially begins; with the *Culinary Arts Event* in the afternoon, and *Music on the Square* from noon on—featuring a variety of artists—Redd Volkhardt, Joy Davis, Rafiki Project, Elijah Zane Trio, Mystic Sister, Patrice Pike, and music between featured bands provided by Mike Vanderberg. Then to top it off for Saturday is the *Palo Pinto Gold* film you don't want to miss.

Then comes Sunday, October 19, with the Jazz Brunch & Surprise Finale! You will not only hear some great jazz and have a fantastic brunch, but also see a terrific Ice Carving Demonstration. The *Hill Country Invitational Art Show & Art on the Lawn* will also continue throughout the day. The Festival Finale will be announcing the *People's Choice Art Award & 2009 FFAM Poster Artist*. What a great way to wind up your day and weekend celebrating all the Arts with your family, friends, and neighbors. See you there!

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Creating Fun Cyber Relationships with your Kids

Ever wonder what your kids are doing on the computer and the internet when they get home from school? Is it a trade secret that says, "Parents not allowed!?" We all know it's important to give our children space and privacy. Yet, we parents are a curious lot and may sneak into their room while they are at school to check out their favorites and emails. Before you venture into that risky relationship territory, here are some tips for engaging in some cyber fun with your kids that just might help them say "no" to the riskier and uglier side of cyber space. With the next issue, safety tips for you and your kids will be covered.

For the moment, let's have some fun creating ideas for sharing cyber space with your kids that say "My Mom and Dad are really cool!" Yes, I used the word "cool." Although for some generational researchers, "Cool" is no longer the operative word for Millennials. Yet, I still hear it everywhere I go, no matter the age.

For Lewis Macadams' book *Birth of the Cool* "Cool is a knowledge, a way of life." For Marcel Danesi, in his treatise, *Cool: The Signs and Meanings of Adolescence*, "Cool is an age-specific phenomenon, defined as the central behavioural trait of teenagerhood." Personally, when I hear my kids call me "cool" I beam all over; and I'm

in my 60s and still connected to the 60's generation in so many ways. Yet, you can actually call me a Conservative Hippie. Now that's "Cool!"

So, how do you want to connect with your kids in cyber space and be called "cool" too? First, it's actually very simple. For many Millennials (age 6-25), they want simplicity, not "cool." They may want things easy and fast, without fancy bells and whistles. They don't want hype. They just want a product, service, and relationship to be authentic, honest. So, Mom, Dad, let's give it a try.

Here are some ideas I've tried out over the years and some new ones too:

- Send them "I love you" hellos via email and Instant Messaging.
- Create a digital scrapbook of your kids growing up, and periodically send them an image or video they would enjoy (not just pictures of them but of special things they collected on a trip, an event, or something a friend gave them that they may lose later on as they become adults; be careful with this one regarding a picture of them; you might not get the response you wish if they had a bad hair day!).
- By all means send them a MP3 song for their age and yours. Give them a chance to hear the music you loved when you were their age. Enjoy the response you get!
- If your kids have a MySpace, and they say it's ok to visit it, go for it. You will learn much about your kids and may find ways to enter into the fun...wholesome stuff of course!
- Invite via email, text messaging, etc. to do something special with you. Make it spontaneous as much as possible. Kids love it! It makes the

routine of school, homework, chores more tolerable. They may even have an upbeat attitude about those responsibilities.

- We all need a surprise once in a while. Send them a mystery riddle that when they figure it out, there will be a prize at the end.
- Get them connected to community activities, events, and volunteer organizations via email/website links. You will be amazed at their genuine interest.
- Send them travel website links and talk about the possibilities of the family going there. And at some time, age appropriate, that they could go on their own. If an interest is shown, talk about how to budget for it together.

Check out the PBS Kids organization (<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/family/>) for ways that kids answered this question, “What's the coolest thing your dad (mom) has done for you recently?” In addition, during the rest of September, create your own list of possibilities to make the cyber space connection. You will never regret it. You just might hear them call you “cool” to their friends. Now, that’s worth all the effort and fun you will have with your kids.

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Cyber Space Safety For Kids

There is probably not one topic or word we can't find in detail on the internet today. I can only imagine what it will be like in another ten years. That means your kids can too. Today, the internet is now an essential learning tool at just about any grade level. Yet, it depends on what they link into that determines what they learn—for good or bad.

They can learn about one of nature's rarest Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat of Greensland, read about their favorite soccer star, or study a Tyrannosaurus. Your kids can then email or text message their best friend about it. They can also move through the darker side of cyber space almost at will. Today, millions of people around the world anonymously communicate in a virtually uncontrolled e-world. So, how do you keep them cyber safe?

KidsHealth.org (www.kidshealth.org/kids/grow) and PEW Research Center (<http://www.pewresearch.org>) say it really comes down to just a few simple guidelines:

- Don't communicate with strangers online and never agree to meet in person.
- Tell a parent or another adult if a stranger contacts you in a chat room or through email or text messaging.

- Don't enter contests, join clubs, or share your personal information for any reason, unless your mom or dad says it's OK. Personal information includes your name, address, age, phone number, birthday, email address, where you go to school, financial information, and other facts about you.

Since we all were kids, our moms and dads have told us to not talk with strangers. Today, that also goes for any strangers online. It's so easy to meet anyone on the Internet—through chat rooms, emails, text messages, computer bulletin boards—someone your children nor you don't know. We all enjoy making new friends; but online, the risks are very high for young kids when it comes to strangers.

In addition, 97% of teens ages 12-17 play computer, web, portable, or console video games—E-rated "Everyone" games (i.e. Solitaire and Dance Dance Revolution), deemed suitable by the ratings board for players of all ages, to games rated Mature (M) for violence, blood and gore, and language (Halo). For most teens, gaming is a social activity and major component of their overall social life—including interactive online (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/953/teens-video-games-and-civics>). Risk is also present in this environment.

Although we would like to think our kids are savvy when it comes to knowing the danger signals, most kids are basically new and naïve at the tactics of some people. For those in a safe, wholesome family environment, most kids just want to trust other young people and adults. Whoever is chatting with them may seem really nice and sound fine. Yet, you just don't know how they may be misrepresenting themselves. Kids would soon

find themselves in a dangerous situation, particularly when they agree to meet the mysterious online "friend" in person.

So, kids, follow these three basic tips, and you will be safer all around. And be sure to let your parents know if a stranger emails you, sends a text message, or starts a conversation with you in a chat room. They may be just trying to sell you something or worse. Your parents should decide what's best to do—which could mean you will need to change your email address. If so, parents should notify the BBS SYSOP (systems operator) about the problem. If the SYSOP does not give you satisfaction in stopping the abuse, call the police.

For parents as well as their children, be sure to keep your privacy as private as possible online when thinking about signing up for something through creating a sign in, log in account or personal profile. The webpage may look official but may not be. Kids need to check with their parent or grown-up before doing so. This information could be used for reasons you or your kids wouldn't like. You just might get tons of spam and junk email.

Parents and their kids all tend to visit any number of online blogs, forums, and chat rooms. So, if you or your kids do, choose a made up screen name or email account name—not your real name. Instead of Michael Jones, choose something like "WoolyWombat." Be creative and stay safe with a moniker only your closest friend and family will know. Never give out your Internet password to anyone other than your parents.

What other ways can you, as parents, protect your children?

- First, learn about computers. Take a class or two.

- Talk to your kids about their use of the computer and the dangers on-line. Create some family ground rules for both you and your kids.
- Talk to your child about the danger of telling a stranger their name, address, or phone number. Just don't talk to strangers on or off-line. Don't play video games with a stranger. Don't even agree to phone them, or email them photos of themselves.
- Don't scare your child, but calmly explain the dangers on the internet.
- Keep track of the sites your child visits. Most kids and teens know how to delete their viewing history. Learn how to circumvent this.
- Monitor the time your child spends on the internet. Excessive use could indicate a problem.
- Be involved with your kids in using the computer. This is a great opportunity to spend time with your child.
- Keep the computer in a common area of your home. Virtually every case where children were involved in computer crimes or were victims of abuse via computer, computers were in the children's room.

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