

Understanding Montessori



Letters of Encouragement September 27, 2009

Twenty-five years ago, my husband and I took a video-based parenting course called "Active Parenting" developed by Michael H. Popkin, Ph.D. Impressed with all the valuable information I was able to put to immediate use, I became an Active Parenting instructor for several years.

One of the many "gems" from the course was writing "letters of encouragement." These were short notes written by parents to their children to keep them from becoming discouraged or giving up in a challenging situation. You may ask, "Why write a note to a three to six-year-old child who can't even read?" Honestly, I thought the same thing at one time. It may seem like an unnecessary effort, but I've discovered some things in the past few years about these letters.

A few years ago, my daughter and I cleaned and painted her bedroom in preparation for her graduation from college and moving into her own apartment. As we moved furniture and emptied file cabinets, my daughter showed me a folder of notes that her dad and I had written to her over the years. Many were simple handwritten notes. A few follow:

"I know you'll have those training wheels off before Santa comes."

"Keep trying. You'll break that board in Taekwondo."

"It's never easy when a friend is upset with you. You'll figure out how to do the

right thing."

"It's hard to be away from home."

"Thanks for being such a big help in the kitchen today."

I hadn't realized she had kept them or how important the notes had been to her. Seeing these simple words after so many years, brought to my attention how things had changed. Since leaving home for college and beyond, my daughters now were writing me notes of encouragement.

When I penned my "letters of encouragement" I didn't think of them as anything but a note for a certain incident, a kind word, a little push to get over a bump in the road. What I discovered, while painting the bedroom, was that I had planted seeds for my children to encourage others, myself included. I felt like Jack and the Beanstalk. While I wasn't looking, something so little had grown quite large. What a wonderful discovery!

Why not take a few minutes today and write each of your children a letter of encouragement? For good measure, include your significant other, too. Just one sentence will do. You can even write it on a sticky note. Read them out loud if necessary. Get in the habit of stopping at least once a month and thinking about what words of encouragement you can offer to your family, and write them. You'll be sowing seeds that will grow for a lifetime.

For more information about Active Parenting, visit www.activeparenting.com.

Next week: Help Me Help Myself