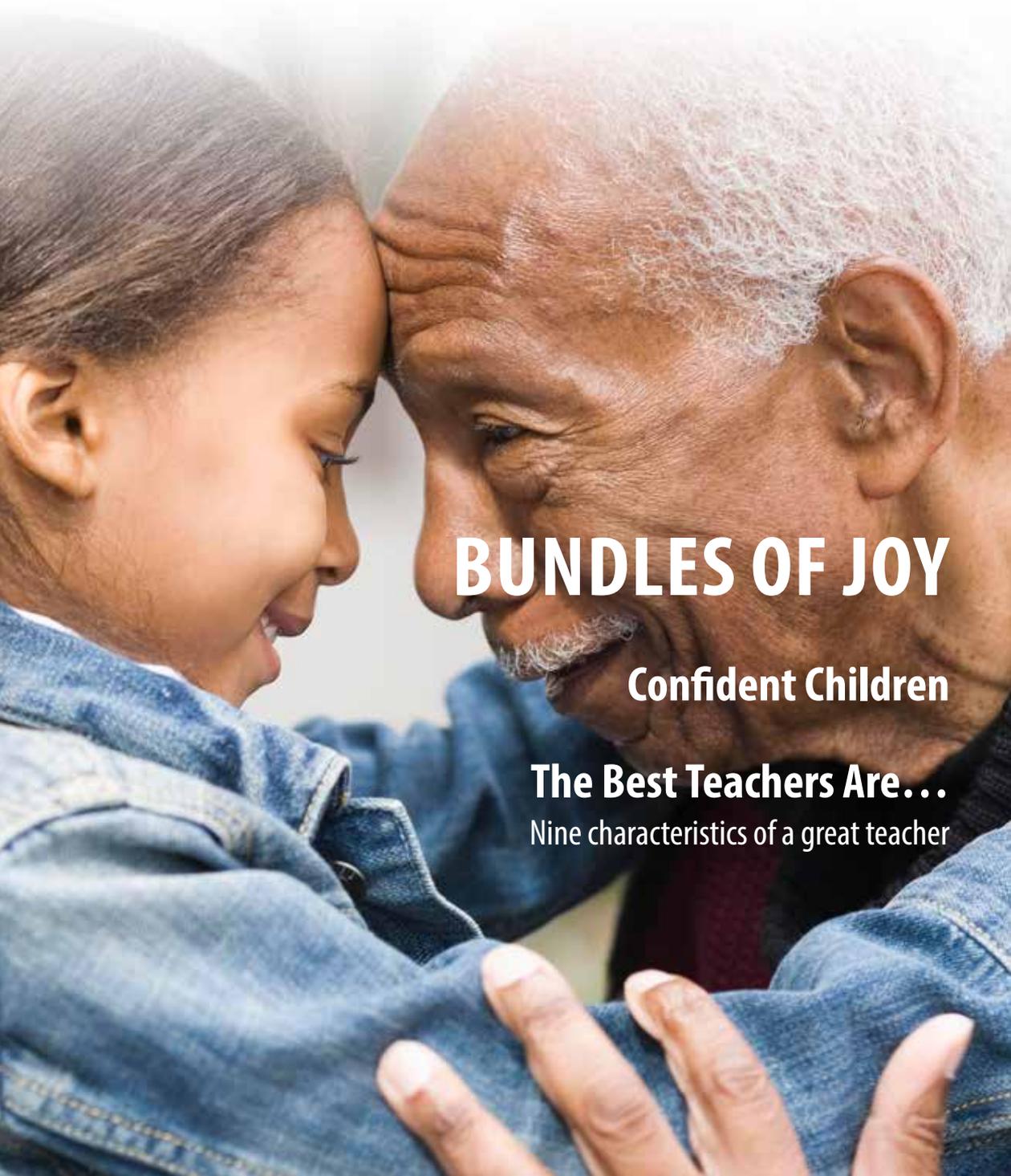


Volume 10, Issue 2

# MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!



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**Issue Editor**

Motivated Vol 10 Issue 2  
Christina Lane

**Design**

awex

**Contact Us:**

**Email**  
**Website**

[motivated@motivatedmagazine.com](mailto:motivated@motivatedmagazine.com)  
[www.motivatedmagazine.com](http://www.motivatedmagazine.com)

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This summer I had the privilege of working with a group of first graders for a few weeks. In the group of around 26 children, the majority of the children listened, followed directions, and responded respectfully to redirection. But there were also some who were non-compliant, disruptive, and did not do well in our group.

Behavior is communication, and while working with them, it became obvious that each of these children craved and needed attention, as well as clear signals of what was expected of them.

It took time and patience, but I am happy to say that with encouragement, praise, and setting appropriate boundaries, these children's behavior improved dramatically, and I developed a special bond with a number of them.

As a mother, grandmother, and teacher, I can truly say that children are the greatest gifts I ever received. They give me such joy, and I simply can't imagine life without them. That said, parenting and teaching children, and being the right influence on them, is one of the biggest responsibilities I've ever had.

The few inspirational and practical articles in this issue of *Motivated* do not even begin to scratch the surface of the importance of parenting and teaching children, and the immense and challenging job it is. However, I hope they will provoke you to take time with the children in your life, and to teach and encourage them to be the best they can be.

Christina Lane  
For *Motivated*

# Bundles of Love



By Elsa Sichrovsky

Our neighbor, Mr. Chen, enthusiastically returned my “Good morning,” adding a heartfelt, “Isn’t the weather great today!” As I watched him walk on with a spring in his step and a beaming smile that eclipsed his graying hair and wrinkles, I couldn’t help but marvel.

Until recently, Mr. Chen had barely acknowledged my greetings, and he rarely smiled or talked to anyone. Chronic health struggles had left their mark in the depressed frown, slumped shoulders, and slow gait that seemed to characterize him. What could have brought about this wonderful change?

When I told my sister about this, she replied that his daughter had recently become a mother. “He’s rejoicing over his new grandson!” she said. I shook my head in awe at how much fulfillment, joy, and purpose a helpless, crying infant had brought to Mr. Chen.

Mr. Chen’s transformation reminded me of what a bundle of joy and inspiration my cousin Katie has been to my grandmother. A year ago, a massive stroke took a severe toll on Grandma’s

memory capacity, communication skills, and mobility. Chronic headaches and discomforts, and the resultant discouragement and frustration, left her silent, sullen, and sedentary. She began spending her waking hours dozing in a chair or watching television, and any efforts to talk to her were met with disinterest.

Then Katie was born. Even when Katie was only a few days old, Grandma spent hours leaning over her crib, rocking her, listening to her coo, and playing with her tiny fingers. When she was a year old, Katie would sit on Grandma’s lap and share her toys with her. Now at two years old, she loves to clasp Grandma’s wrinkled hand in her tiny pudgy one and pull her outside for a walk.

Grandma’s physical condition hasn’t improved, but Katie still makes her smile, talk, and even laugh. There is truly something magical about children’s love and innocence and their ability to melt and cheer hearts in ways that grown-ups can’t, just as Mr. Chen’s grandson touched him, and Katie touched Grandma. ■

# Confident Children

By Alex Peterson, adapted



Parents who are concerned about their children's progress at each stage of their development need to realize what an important role a child's self-image plays toward that end. Children with positive feelings about themselves are far more likely to succeed.

Children make their first judgments about themselves and their abilities in the context of their home. Parents can find opportunities every day to develop their children's self-confidence, which in the end will help them grow into well-adjusted, well-rounded adults.

## Problem solving

Parents are often amazed to discover how capable and resourceful their children are in solving their own problems, sometimes with a little guidance. It takes time and patience to help children learn to solve their own problems, but it is a wise investment that will pay big dividends when children

get older, their problems become more complex, and the stakes are higher.

One tendency of parents is to be too quick to fix the problem or provide the answer. That may meet the immediate need, but it hinders the learning process. It's like the saying: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for life. Teaching problem-solving is more important and more beneficial in the long run than providing solutions. Helping children work through their problems also shows that you have faith in them, which boosts their confidence and self-esteem.

## Insecurity issues

No matter how much parents love their children and try to meet their needs, situations will come up that cause the children to feel insecure, and insecurity is often reflected in behavioral problems.

Bad behavior needs to be corrected, but unless the parent understands

what prompted it, the correction may hinder more than help. Was the misbehavior the result of natural childish experimentation—a bad idea that seemed good or fun at the time? Or was it the result of insecurity—trying to fit in, impress, or win new friends after moving to a new neighborhood or changing schools, for example? Bad behavior is only a symptom, so correction alone is like lopping off the top of a weed; it will soon be back.

Depending on the age and maturity level of the child, try to help the child come to his or her own conclusions by approaching it from the problem-solving angle. That may not be easy in the heat of the moment, but remember, the goal is to correct the problem, not to punish the child. By making a clear distinction between the problem and the child and then involving the child in turning the problem situation into a learning situation, it is possible to build rather than undermine self-esteem, even in what might otherwise seem like an impossibly negative situation.

### **Cultivate mutual respect**

Mutual respect strengthens the bond of love in a parent-child relationship. It also engenders unity, obedience, and appreciation.

Respect within a family is manifested through consideration, understanding, thoughtfulness, a willingness to listen, and loving communication. And it works both ways; if you want your children to show you respect, show them respect.

Ways that you can show your children respect include:

- Treating each child as an individual.
- Being sensitive to their feelings; putting yourself in their position.
- Not belittling them or using sarcasm when they falter.
- Not intentionally embarrassing them.
- Asking and suggesting, rather than giving commands.
- Paying attention when they speak and hearing them out; not being too quick to provide your perspective.
- Treating them as though they were slightly more mature than they actually are.
- Giving their ideas serious consideration; thinking in terms of how you can help their ideas to work.

### **Positive reinforcement**

Praise is a superior motivator. Children thrive on praise. It's more important and more beneficial to praise a child for good behavior than it is to scold for bad behavior.

There are times when admonitions and correction are needed, but by learning to preempt problem situations with praise and other positive reinforcement, you will build self-esteem in your children, and the more you focus on the positive, the more things you will find to praise your child for and the less you will have to deal with bad behavior.

Be consistent, be sincere, and be creative—but be believable. For example, if the child tries to do something new with disastrous results, commend the effort, not the outcome. Or if the ill-fated attempt was meant to be a surprise for you, commend the thoughtfulness. Always accentuate the positive, and make the good memorable. ■

# GROWING TOGETHER



**I**t's not only children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it myself.—**Joyce Maynard**

I don't know what planet I was on when I thought that when I became a parent, all the skills I'd need would simply come to me. It wasn't long before I realized that parenting, for the countless incomparable joys it has brought into my life, is hard work. Being a parent has meant adjusting my aspirations and priorities to match my new reality. Every day is a learning process as I adapt to the evolving needs of my children.—**Katiuscia Giusti**

Children keep us in check. Their laughter prevents our hearts from hardening. Their dreams ensure we never lose our drive to make ours a better world. They are the greatest disciplinarians known to mankind.—**Queen Rania of Jordan, Hello Magazine**

If I had my child to raise all over again:

I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.

I'd finger-paint more, and point the finger less.

I would do less correcting, and more connecting.

I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.

I'd take more hikes, and fly more kites.

I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.

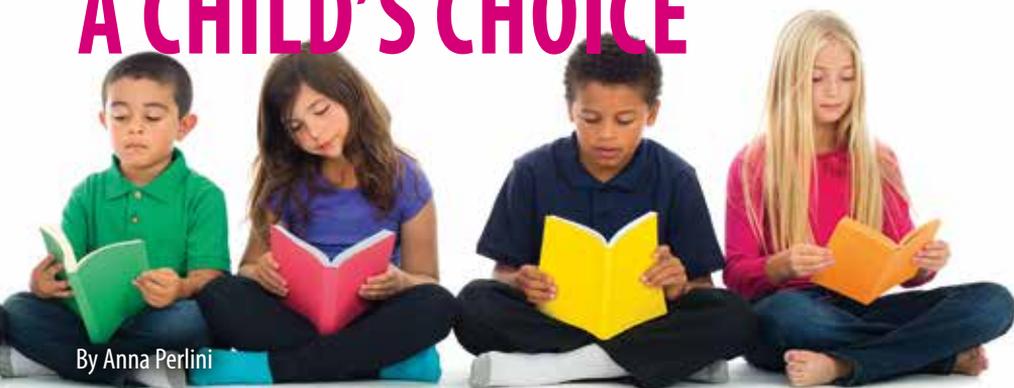
I would run through more fields, and gaze at more stars.

I'd do more hugging, and less tugging.

—**Diane Loomans**

When seen only as presiding over a child's growth, parenting can be frustrating and burdensome. However, when seen as an opportunity for personal growth for adults, parenting is one of the most creative and affirming experiences that life offers. It gives us chances to improve ourselves and broaden our own personal horizons as we model for our children the qualities we would like to see in them. For some of us, our own children give us a chance to become the parents we wish that we had.—**Jack C. Westman, M.D.**

# A CHILD'S CHOICE



By Anna Perlini

**I**t was 1996, and our family had just moved from the safety of Italy to a somewhat still troubled and unstable post-war Croatia, settling in a large apartment on the outskirts of Rijeka.

Our neighbors—a mix of refugees, widows, and elderly relatives caring for children whose parents had died or left to find work—had all gone through traumatic experiences as a result of the tragic conflicts that had only recently ended.

Ivan lived on the floor below ours. He wore a patch over one eye, he couldn't hear well, and he also suffered from extremely strong headaches due to a piece of shrapnel in his brain that the doctors couldn't operate on.

Ivan had a wife and two daughters, but it was easy to see that he was finding it challenging to adjust to family life. He was no longer the strong man beaming in the photos in his living room, but a broken soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), who spent most of his time caring for his kids or looking pensively at the horizon.

My youngest son, Jeff, who was five at the time, was a bit scared of our neighbor—and I wasn't sure what to

think myself. I realized that I never really spoke to Ivan, due to my limited knowledge of Croatian at the time, but also because I didn't know how to face such obvious suffering.

One day, I explained to Jeff about what our poor neighbor was going through and the reason he wore a patch. I taught him to say, "Molim za vas," "I'm praying for you" in Croatian, and suggested that he say that to Ivan the next time we saw him.

I will never forget that moment the next time we met Ivan, when this fierce-looking man bent down to hear what a small five-year-old whispered in his ear. Then he straightened, and I could see tears trickling down his face as he whispered, "Thank you."

From that moment on, Ivan and Jeff became good friends, and we often visited to simply keep him company.

Ivan passed away not long after. He had been struggling with a lot of health problems and discouragement, but in his final years he found support and comfort.

Jeff is now a grown man and a father himself, but I still fondly remember that day my little boy helped to replace fear with love. ■



# Teaching Children to Control Negative Feelings

By Natalia Nazarova

Raising children is no easy task, and there are no shortcuts. The ever-shifting ocean of emotions that children go through at various ages and stages poses one of the greatest challenges to parents.

Here are a few things that I have found helpful in teaching my children to deal with the negative emotions they experience.

- Encouraging positive traits such as kindness, appreciation, gratefulness, integrity, and unselfishness at an early age will help prepare them to deal with negative situations they will encounter later.
- Reading or watching classics that show the rewards of being positive and solution oriented—Pollyanna and Aesop’s Fables, for example—impart important life lessons in an enjoyable, memorable way.
- Being a friend and confidante in good times makes it easier to discuss and find solutions together when problems arise.
- Older children can be shown how to safely express negative emotions. Balance reasoning with lots of encouragement, as well as humor when appropriate.

When I notice negative trends in my children, I first ask myself if they are a reflection of what they see in me. If so, we talk about it from that angle and agree to work on it together. For instance, I’m prone to stress and the negativity it can lead to, but explaining that has helped us avoid problem situations. They understand now that it triggers a negative reaction when they stay up too late or don’t clean their rooms, so they give me more cooperation at those critical times.

My husband and I try to not be too quick to provide our children with solutions to the problems and frustrations that cause them to get negative, but rather to help them define the problem and find their own solutions. Games that teach problem solving are also helpful.

There are upsides to most negative situations. When children are discouraged or become negative over something that has happened, try to talk to them, and provide a platform for them to discuss the issue. Again, if they can reach these conclusions themselves, it’s usually more effective than you providing the answers for them. ■

# One of a Kind

By Elisabeth Sichrovsky



Almost anyone's list of "People Who Have Influenced My Life" includes at least one teacher. What kind of teachers are these?—The kind who use their talents to help develop their students' talents, the kind who strive to shape not just the mind but the heart. For me, it was a teacher we students came to affectionately call Ms. Marina.

At the time, my family was living in Japan, where my parents were involved in administrative work for an international organization. Ms. Marina was my first- and second-grade teacher.

She was level headed and stricter than most of our other teachers and caretakers, firm in her sense of right and wrong, and at first we kids grumbled about that. Before long, however, we learned to trust her because we sensed that she cared about what kind of people we would become. We felt secure with Ms. Marina because she clearly defined our boundaries.

While she set limits and enforced the rules, she demonstrated equal amounts of positiveness and love, and she also had an appropriate sense of fun. School with her wasn't limited to worksheets and textbooks. She took us on excursions and trips to the park, and used her artistic talent in order to get us interested in arts and crafts.

She also had a knack for making each

of us feel special, and one way she did this was by speaking positively about us to others, often even when we were within earshot. I can still recall the pride I felt upon overhearing her tell another teacher how well I was doing in spelling. It was satisfying to know that my efforts had not gone unnoticed.

Ms. Marina's care and love extended beyond the school years. For quite some time after our family moved to Taiwan, she sent me notes and cards. Ten years later, I still have several of them. When I reread one of those notes recently, I marveled at the concern and interest she had shown in corresponding with an eight-year-old: "Yesterday I came across your picture as I was preparing a photo album of 'the children in my life'—those I've cared for and taught over the years—and I was reminded of how much I love you, my dear young friend."

On my ninth birthday she wrote: "A very happy birthday to you. I pray that it will be a wonderful, special day for you, and a great new year of your life, full of good surprises and love-filled experiences. I'm happy to know you!"

On June 9, 2005, after a prolonged struggle with cancer, Ms. Marina passed away. I know I am only one of many who are better for having experienced her love, which she always reminded us was God's love poured through her. ■



# THE BEST TEACHERS ARE...

## Nine characteristics of a great teacher

By Maria Orlando EdD

Years ago, as a young, eager student, I would have told you that a great teacher was someone who provided classroom entertainment and gave very little homework. Needless to say, after many years of K-12 administrative experience and giving hundreds of teacher evaluations, my perspective has changed. My current position as a professor in higher education gives me the opportunity to share what I have learned with current and future school leaders, and allows for some lively discussions among my graduate students in terms of what it means to be a great teacher.

Teaching is hard work and some teachers never grow to be anything better than mediocre. They do the bare minimum required and very little more. The great teachers, however, work tirelessly to create a challenging, nurturing environment for their students. Great teaching seems to have less to do with our knowledge and skills than with our attitude toward our students, our subject, and our work. Although this list is certainly not all-inclusive, I have

narrowed down the many characteristics of a great teacher to those that I have found to be the most essential, regardless of the age of the learner:

### 1. A great teacher respects students.

In a great teacher's classroom, each person's ideas and opinions are valued. Students feel safe to express their feelings and learn to respect and listen to others. This teacher creates a welcoming learning environment for all students.

### 2. A great teacher creates a sense of community and belonging in the classroom.

The mutual respect in this teacher's classroom provides a supportive, collaborative environment. In this small community, there are rules to follow and jobs to be done and each student is aware that he or she is an important, integral part of the group. A great teacher lets students know that they can depend not only on her, but also on the entire class.

### 3. A great teacher is warm, accessible, enthusiastic, and caring.

This person

is approachable, not only to students, but to everyone on campus. This is the teacher to whom students know they can go with any problems or concerns or even to share a funny story. Great teachers possess good listening skills and take time out of their way-too-busy schedules for anyone who needs them. If this teacher is having a bad day, no one ever knows—the teacher leaves personal baggage outside the school doors.

**4. A great teacher sets high expectations for all students.** This teacher realizes that the expectations she has for her students greatly affect their achievement; she knows that students generally give to teachers as much or as little as is expected of them.

**5. A great teacher has his own love of learning and inspires students with his passion for education and for the course material.** He constantly renews himself as a professional on his quest to provide students with the highest quality of education possible. This teacher has no fear of learning new teaching strategies or incorporating new technologies into lessons, and always seems to be the one who is willing to share what he's learned with colleagues.

**6. A great teacher is a skilled leader.** Different from administrative leaders, effective teachers focus on shared decision-making and teamwork, as well as on community building. This great teacher conveys this sense of leadership to students by providing opportunities for each of them to assume leadership roles.

**7. A great teacher can “shift-gears” and is flexible when a lesson isn’t working.** This teacher assesses his teaching throughout the lessons and finds new ways to present material to make sure that every student understands the key concepts.

**8. A great teacher collaborates with colleagues on an ongoing basis.** Rather than thinking of herself as weak because she asks for suggestions or help, this teacher views collaboration as a way to learn from a fellow professional. A great teacher uses constructive criticism and advice as an opportunity to grow as an educator. This teacher also enthusiastically shares ideas of what is working in her classroom with other teachers, thus providing peer learning.

**9. A great teacher maintains professionalism in all areas—from personal appearance to organizational skills and preparedness for each day.** Her communication skills are exemplary, whether she is speaking with an administrator, one of her students, or a colleague. The respect that the great teacher receives because of her professional manner is obvious to those around her.

While teaching is a gift that seems to come quite naturally for some, others have to work overtime to achieve great teacher status. Yet the payoff is enormous—for both you and your students. Imagine students thinking of *you* when they remember that great teacher they had! ■

# Children

NOTABLE  
QUOTES



Children make you want to start life over.—**Muhammad Ali**

A child is an uncut diamond.  
—**Austin O'Malley**

What is a home without children?  
Quiet.—**Henny Youngman**

To every child: I dream of a world where you can laugh, dance, sing, learn, live in peace, and be happy.—**Malala Yousafzai**

Children need models rather than critics.—**Joseph Joubert**

We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.—**Stacia Tauscher**

Seven things every child needs to hear: I love you. I'm proud of you. I'm sorry. I forgive you. I'm listening. This is your responsibility. You have what it takes to succeed.—**Sherrie Campbell, PhD**

One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade.—**Chinese proverb**

Teach your children they're unique. That way, they won't feel pressured to be like everybody else.—**Cindy Cashman**

There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One is roots; the other, wings.—**Hodding Carter**

If you want your children to turn out well, spend twice as much time with them and half as much money.—**Abigail Van Buren**

