

## **Working with Children: Tune-in to Intention -- Yours and Theirs**

Children have a heart and a nose for intention. They can smell when we people are being phony or have intentions that show hypocrisy, authority for the purposeless sake of authority or double standards. When it comes to our own behaviors, they are the great "reminderers" -- the gatekeepers of all that is pure, fair and sacred.

Whether you have a three year old who is constantly testing boundaries and pushing buttons, a child who is demonstrating "behavior problems" at school, or a teenager who has dyed his hair pink, the road traveled with children can yield more "positive" outcomes for all when we consider intention -- your underlying intention and theirs.

It is completely normal, and a part of natural growth, for us all to push beyond our known limits, explore new terrain and think both critically and creatively. Thank goodness, otherwise some very imaginative and determined kids wouldn't have created such things as solar power, the Internet, or chocolate chip cookies for that matter. Well, chocolate chip cookies were actually created on accident, but that's part of the process, and part of the point as well. It is important that children of all ages (even the ones in the adult bodies) have the opportunity to express their will in ways that are healthy and helpful, or at least not harmful. It is paramount that the innate mechanisms that drive children's desires and goals stay functioning and developing throughout their lives.

Let's consider the three year old child that is experimenting with saying no and pushing boundaries. That is exactly what he is doing. He is not intentionally trying to be a tyrant. He is demonstrating certain actions and observing both the cause and effect outcomes and your reactions. He is learning about his environment, his power and will, his relationship with you and life, and more. He is developing his ego self, and with your help will learn that it is a necessary part of the entire mosaic that makes him who he is. It is an expected and sacred event. And you get to play a vital role in the shaping of his formative years by helping him (gently and lovingly when possible, and with loving firmness when appropriate) to self-discover and assimilate such concepts as fairness, peacefulness and getting what you want in a way that is helpful, or at least not harmful for others.

Now let us consider the child who is having "behavior" problems at school. I like to refer to these behaviors as expressed communications. Whether a child talks in class, throws spit wads or hurls a heavy desk across the room, her heart and soul are usually speaking. In my role as assistant principle years ago, I witnessed much of this and "smelled" such intentions and communications as "I am bored and want to express myself in a way that is meaningful to me," "I am funny and want to share my sense of humor," "This class and/or school is not existing in a way that I feel is fair or best for me," or "I am being emotionally or physically abused and want to get my anger out." Parents, teachers, other caregivers and the children themselves all want the same thing when it comes down to it, a meaningful and peaceful experience. When we consider everyone's true intentions, from a place of compassion we can work together to create high outcomes for all involved. This sometimes means that the adults also need to push beyond known limits, explore new terrain and think both critically and creatively. After all, the children are some of our best teachers...and noses!

When it comes to creative expression, we will more than likely see everything from wanting to wear shorts in the dead of winter, clothes on backwards or entirely mix-matched, all forms of jewelry in all forms of places, and God (Goddess) knows what else. I once read in a book a short and sweet piece of advice. If they are not hurting themselves or anyone else, give them the freedom of personal expression, within reason. In most cases it will be a short lived phase. And who knows? It may just be a stepping stone to a very long lived phase of strong self confidence and self awareness much needed later in life.

When it comes to our own intentions as adults, the intention that often initiates our response or many times our reaction to our children is our own desires. We may be thinking, "When will it be my turn?" "What will our friends, family or the neighbors think?" or "I don't want this behavior to continue when you grow up." It is very important that our own needs, as well as the needs of our children be met, that we let go of fears that paralyze us from living and enjoying life with our children, that we empower our children to make choices that are in alignment with their desires in ways that are not harmful to others and that we realize that they are children doing things that children do, for the most part.

*For more information on learning what your child might be communicating by his or her actions, ask your inner teacher or soul to guide you. You can also contact me to make an appointment for Life Coaching with an emphasis on working with or raising children (though I must warn you that it is we that are usually the ones being "raised" up by the children) by emailing me at [info@theresaann.org](mailto:info@theresaann.org). To share ideas or ask questions of Theresa Ann or others in the Mosaic of Self community, visit the Communication Board at <http://www.theresaann.org/messageboard/> and scroll down to find the posting area regarding children. Other appropriate resources may be your holistic health care provider, your spiritual director or your local school's guidance counselor.*

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