

Parenthood

Welcome to Love Life, I'm Alvean Lyons. Well, we have a topic from our audience today, Douglas that really speaks to the one occupation that so many of us share in common worldwide whether you are a man or woman, young or old. It's something that almost all of us have done, or been connected to, in some form or fashion. It is Parenthood, and it's the most underpaid, underappreciated.....

And unskilled, a psychology professor of mine once said,

....occupations that requires a 24 hour a day, seven day a week commitment with no end in sight. Our audience really wanted to talk about how you get this thing, right. Obviously, there's no perfect way to do it. But you know, when it comes to raising resilient children, what we can do to ensure that they become healthy emotionally, spiritually and intellectually, and become secure adults? Are there more effective ways to do it? Do you have to always do the good cop, bad cop thing? Are there ways to ensure that your kids toe that line, but for it to be a little less messy and a lot more effective? So that's what our listeners want to know. So, Douglas, what are your thoughts?

It's been a long time since I've been in that mode. But I do have two reactions. fFrst, that placing yourself in a kind of binary relationship, whether that's with your children, or anybody else is never a terrific idea. Because life isn't like that, it isn't black and white, it isn't good cop, bad cop, it isn't, right, wrong. There are so many shades in between that to elect one pole or the other is unproductive. The other instant reaction I have is..... and frankly, as a younger man, I'm not sure that I would have embraced this, but I have a different perspective today.... and that is to understand that human beings, and children In particular, are far more resilient than we give them credit for being. That's not to say that they're not fragile, and that you can't do harm. You certainly can. But I think that there's a lot of over parenting that goes on, as well as under parenting in the world today, people who are not sufficiently invested in their children, or people who are so over invested in their children that their children never get to be children they get to be adults from birth. And neither of those is a strategy, I think, for raising emotionally whole capable human beings. You're the expert in the room, and you're closer to the parenting experience. I'm now in the grand parenting experience.

I get it, I I would totally agree. And I think that there are ways in which we can do parenting a little bit more effectively. I was sitting down with a mom the other day. And, as I said, when we opened this discussion, that it (parenting) doesn't ever end, you know, like, there's evolutions of what parenting looks like. We go from sort of the supervisor in our kid's lives where we're, right over their shoulder, we're managing everything that they're doing, we're making sure that they know how to do ABC and D kind of thing. And then as our kids get a little bit older, we move to a managerial role where as long as they know what's going on, we're just making sure that we are meeting the appropriate benchmarks; we're checking in. If correction is necessary, we step in to do that. But then when our kids become young adults, and on into adulthood, we become consultants inside of their lives. It is more by invitation only, it is not for us to just step

in and tell them what they should be doing. As tempting as it is, it often creates resentment for adult children to be treated as if they are young children. But it's not to say that they still don't need us, you know, as they're anchoring, but they need us in a different kind of way. And much like the consultant, you know, they call you in, because they recognize that there's something that they want to achieve that they are not achieving right now. And there seems to be a gap between where they are and where they want to be. And they are hoping that you can be the source through which they can navigate that distance in between. So, as I was chatting with this woman about the evolution, (she has an adult daughter), we were discussing the fact that she was trying to figure out how to help her daughter get back on her feet; to get this thing, right. And you know, her daughter is a grownup, she's in her 30s. I thought by now we've kind of, have it I said to her that It's how we talk about the things that aren't working for our kids, that makes a world of a difference, and we're never going to get it perfect. But there's a difference between what I call anchor parenting, and atmospheric or air parenting.

If your parent is an anchor, then what you typically will be doing is pointing out what's happening, and tying your kid to the thing that's happening. Let me use something simple, like, look, you're supposed to take out the trash, you never take out the trash, you know, I can't count on you to do this, that and the other. That's anchor parenting. And It's true, they're not taking out the trash, and you haven't been able to count on them. But then there's atmospheric parenting or air parenting. And that's the conversation that says, I know you are capable of being a responsible, dependable individual. And I know that one day, I will get a chance to experience that. But right now, I can't count on you to take out the trash and to be dependable where that's concerned. I realize that you are operating at less than you are meant to be and who you're meant to be. I look forward to watching you pick up that bag and walking out that front door to drop that trash on the curb, like a responsible individual, because I'm calling you up higher. That parenting, rather than reminding you of all that is wrong with you in the anchoring version works in different ways. Following our discussion, she applied that to her daughter and just came back to me the other day to say what a difference it made in the tone between them. Her daughter saw her as inspirational in her correction, rather than negative or anchoring. So there are a myriad of ways to be able to communicate the tougher things where kids are concerned that will enable them. It's often in our approach, because there's no perfect kids and no perfect methods.

And to state the obvious, none of us went through the course on how to be a parent. You get a license for a car. We didn't need a license in a sense to become parents. Sometimes that's a good thing, but we have no instruction manual.

That's right, they left that out.

We're, caught in a reaction response, you know, so we either become like our parents, or if we think that our parents were not particularly good, then we do the things opposite what our parents did. So we become a response to the way we were parented. And as an aside, we should broaden the definition here for the benefit of our audience. You don't have to be a parent or grandparent to be a parent. What do I mean by that? All of us are potentially and often are, in fact, models for our children. You know, there were many people, men and

women in my life as I grew up, who I looked to, to learn how to be an adult. How they behaved, how they handled situations, how they behaved towards others was the inspiration for how I could become an adult. And I think our kids learn that from a very early age, they don't just pick up language from us, or don't just pick up habits from us, they pick up everything. They're sponges, absorbing everything that's going on around them, and trying to sort out which of those things should I be like, what works, what doesn't work. It can take one person in a situation to have a profound impact, even in the midst of 20 others who are in some way parenting or modeling for a child negatively or positively. In general, the more positive influences that there are around a child, the happier the more secure they are, and the better guided that child's going to be. So, we all have a responsibility. And there is something to this, it takes a village notion. Even if you're a casual person in a child's life, you have a role to play and can play. You don't have to necessarily do anything overt, but how you conduct yourself, understanding that you were being watched, observed and that's being taken in has a profound impact. I want to say to all those who guided me, for better, for or worse, thank you. You know, I didn't realize it at the time, but only in retrospect. And even some of the people who were not friendly, those I might describe as gruff or difficult human beings, taught me a lesson about how to be successful as a human being.

You know, there's a term or phrase that there's more caught than taught. It's so true, because modeling matters. And modeling is not just about the message that you are directly communicating, but also the message that you are indirectly communicating. Even if you are parenting in spite of versus because of you are a factor. So, we have to be mindful of the fact that we always have an audience when there are young people around us. Quite frankly, it's true even when there are adults around, we just might be shaping them in the same kind of way. There's always an audience and to be mindful of what it is that we are putting out to our audience makes a big difference. I used to say when I would do parenting sessions, what is it that your kids get when they drink of you? What are you pouring out that they're taking in? We have to be responsible for the dirty water that each of us can sometimes carry in order to ensure that we are not making our kids toxic as a byproduct of what we haven't resolved in ourselves. When we parent out of fear, when we parent out of worry, when we parent out of anger, we parent out of frustration, It's like pouring dirty water into our kids' cup. And they're drinking from that on a daily basis.

I was talking to a younger man the other day-- by younger meaning mid 30s-- and he'd had a really difficult early childhood, literally living on the streets. It was really, really difficult. He is a very fine, upstanding, wonderful man today. And I asked him, how did you get that way? There were a lot of people who helped him along the way, not least of which was his mother, but there was something in him that gravitated to certain people in his life. And those people were people who stood for a certain way of living. Whether that was in sports, he was very athletic, whether that was in learning to work with his hands. It was a variety of endeavors and people who were both related and unrelated to him. But they gave him a compass. And that stabilized him in a way that allowed him to see a path for himself to be able to consult that compass internally to know when he was going in the right direction.

I think those kinds of stories are so valuable, because it's not as we allude to a lot in our podcasts, it's not in the perfection, You know that the best things often happen in the imperfection, because of the intention around it, and the intentionality inside of it. We are responsible for ourselves, the impact and the footprint that we leave behind. So as parents, while there's no perfect way to make it all happen, the greatest gift that we can give to our children is a healed version of ourselves. We do them the best service when we are pouring out the best version of us into each of them. Because it matters.

You always know the right thing to bring these conversations to an absolutely perfect end point. This is so much fun to be with you and we also want to thank Kamaria and Todd and you, our audience, for spending this time with us. We'll be back next week. But if you'd like to write to us and give us your thoughts about this or another episode, you can reach us at alvean@lovelife.digital or doug@lovelife.digital

And we'll be back next week with another interesting topic.

Yes, and we hope you'll be back too.

Thank you. Bye.