



## Are You A Hands-On Parent?

To often today, many parents shy away from taking any sort of pro-active authoritative role in the social and moral development of their children. Much of this has to do with a pronounced fear of being an overbearing parent. There is also a current cultural philosophy that encourages parents to respect their child's individuality by letting them discover their own path and develop their own moral compass. As a result, many parents take a very limited hands-on approach when it comes to the social and moral development of their children. It is not uncommon today to hear parents communicate an effort to be their child's friend. However, there is a significant difference between being a friend and being friendly. Friendliness is an important component of effective parenting but not the sole defining role. Children need parents. And hence parents must be parents.

Children need involved parents who establish clear guidelines about right and wrong. They need parents who possess the courage to do the uncomfortable when rules are broken. Too many parents place the highest priority on having a peaceful relationship with their children. The end result is forfeiture of a long-term well-disciplined child for the sake of a temporary appeasement of their own and their child's personal emotions.

Parent-child conflict is not always bad. Oftentimes this conflict serves as the vehicle for helping your child to truly understand respect for authority and respect for others. When a parent continually gives into their child's every desire, the child begins to develop a mindset that lacks concern for the well-being of others and the law. Your true goal in the parenting process is to produce a child with a conscience which respects others and the law. It is said that there two ways to feeling peaceful. One way is to have a clear conscience and the other is to have no conscience at all. We clearly want our kids to be in the former category and hence must put in the work during the parenting process.

Today Children need hands-on parents. Children need parents who strongly communicate social and moral values about right and wrong. Children need parents who establish limits and provide discipline. Children need parents who they not only like but respect.

Research and reality clearly reveal distinction between parenting strategies of very limited involved parents and extremely involved parents. And the end result is children—specifically teenagers—with very involved parents are more likely to avoid most negative social ills such as drugs, alcohol and teen pregnancy.

According to the National Center on Addictions and Substance, here are a few tips for parents:

- **Monitor what your kids watch on television and use of the internet.**

- **Put restrictions on the CDs they buy**
- **Know where your kids are after school and during weekends**
- **Be told the truth about teenager's whereabouts**
- **Be aware of academics performance**
- **Impose curfews**
- **Make it clear that you would be extremely upset if your teen used drugs**
- **Eat meals with your kids six or seven times during the week**
- **Turn the television off during dinner**
- **Assign regular chores**
- **Have an adult present when they arrive home from school**

Moreover, the National Center on Addictions and Substance Abuse reports that teens who think their parents would not be too upset if they smoked marijuana are more than 3 times at risk than those who think their parents would be extremely upset. Clearly, it is important for parents to make known their moral expectations. It really makes a difference.

If you apply the above tips you significantly contribute to the healthy social and moral development of your child. Your child is more likely to be a productive member of society. So parents don't be afraid to take a hands-on approach. This can make the difference between visiting them at Penn State or the State Penn. You have the power to make a world of difference.

*Ron J. Clark is a national conference speaker, consultant, writer on manhood and fatherhood issues. He is cited in numerous fatherhood and family services articles and research reports. For more information, please forward your emails to [ronjclark@aol.com](mailto:ronjclark@aol.com) or call (757) 344-5685. You may also visit his website at [www.responsiblefatherhood.org](http://www.responsiblefatherhood.org)*