

Nothing better than...

By Renee Lockhart

A long time ago I realized that there could not be a job more significant than that of being a parent. Nothing has been, is or ever will be comparable to the blessing of parenting my four amazing individuals. For this reason, I recognize that parenting is not a game. The towel cannot just simply be thrown in when there are moments when I feel down for the count. I cannot pick and choose when I want to be available; hence, my presence is inevitable.

Being a parent consists of working literally from dawn until dusk. There are days when I am tired, exhausted to be quite frank. I have been kissed, hugged, vomited on, defied and at times dismissed. Nonetheless, I would not trade my role for any other in existence. Every day my children Leonard, Xarea, Xavier and Brielle (ages 20, 19, 13 and 7 respectively) can have a powerful effect on the life of another person, originating from the influence of my parenting.

When my daughter Brielle plays at recess, will she decide to include or exclude someone from the game? When my son Xavier walks through the hallways of middle school, will he stand up for someone he sees being intimidated or mistreated? When my daughter Xarea, is away at school in New York will she

assist and advise the friend who is committing acts against their own best interest? When my oldest Leonard walks across campus at UNH, will he encourage his peers to be accepting of the differing perspectives and beliefs of others?

I love my children, more than I ever imagined I could love another human being. Nevertheless, parenting goes beyond the feel good moments of hugs, kisses and cuddles. Guidance and support is what I am depended on to provide as they move toward all they were called and destined to be. While the learning continues, here are some helpful tips that have been imparted to me on this journey of being a mom.

1. Take the time during the first several years to build a foundation. Lay the bricks of love and discipline.
2. It is perfectly fine to say no.
3. Every decision does not need a reason nor does it need to be explained to your child.
4. You and your child are not friends. This is your time to parent. Friendship will come when your child is old enough to handle the terms of that kind of relationship.

5. It is important to prepare your child for the world and not the world for your child.
6. Read, Read, Read.
7. Relax, proceed with caution and remember most of the time it is just a phase. If this is an issue that you will not be dealing with in five years, take it all in stride.
8. Sing, dance and rock out with your child.

Lastly, and most importantly remember childhood happens in the blink of an eye. Enjoy the good and challenging times. Look at their tears and smiles. Listen to their laughter. Feel their hand inside yours. There is no greater gift that a parent can give to their child than being mindful to be present and in the moment.