

A Parent's Love

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.

—Lao Tzu, ancient Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism

A parent's love is profound and pure; it infiltrates every cell of our bodies. It is magnificent, yet terrifying, to love so deeply. It is good that we do because there are many moments when our love is tested: when our sleep-deprived body hears the 3:00 a.m. cry of our infant, as we grit our teeth through our toddler's fourth tantrum of the day, as we anxiously await our teenager's arrival home past curfew, or when we grant acceptance to our adult child who does not make decisions we agree with. During those times—and many others—we will draw from this well of love.

This love has an intensity to it that can bring us to our knees and it changes our lives forever. We never look at the world again in the same way after we have children. Love for my children has pushed me to grow in ways that were sometimes painful, but which ultimately make me a better parent and a better person. I have often found myself in a place of raw vulnerability, a place that makes me more authentic and helps me realize what really matters.

Awareness stemming from this honest place helps me make choices that are better, not only for my children, but also for me. Because of this awareness, I have pushed myself to look authentically at my choices and my actions, my beliefs

and my expectations, to see if they really serve me as a parent. Within this process, we may find things we don't like about ourselves. Those times are difficult, but looking at them honestly and objectively will only help us to evolve and grow.

Author Elizabeth Stone said, "Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body." We become this vulnerable in order to experience the gifts that loving a child holds, but in order to do so, we have to let down our defenses and enter a place where we are real. It is a vulnerable place to reside, but it is the true essence of parenting.

Parenting, similar to aging, is not for the faint of heart. It is a sacred journey, filled with learning experiences for both parties, not all of which are easy. This journey requires that we are brave, honest, noble, and resilient. It contains challenges, but it is worth all of the difficulties we encounter. Love for our children carries us through this journey and encourages us to feel more, give more, and be more than we ever thought we were capable of. When you want to experience life and love on another level, you have a child.

This week, take a few moments to write down the gifts you have received by becoming a parent. How have you grown? What does being a parent really mean to you?