

The Good Parent

做个好家长

When asked about the greatest challenge he faces today, the principal of a private school in the United States related to me this complaint:

当问及如今面临最大的挑战时，美国一家私立学校的校长向我抱怨道：

Parents spend thousands of dollars a year in tuition to send their children to our school where, along with calculus and chemistry, we are expected to teach some semblance of ethics. Then, on Sunday, the parents take their child to an amusement park and lie about his age in order to save five dollars on the admission fee. To save five bucks they destroy a \$15,000 education.

家长们每年花几千美元的学费把孩子送到我们学校，我们除了教他们微积分和化学外，还要教类似伦理道德那样的课。周日，家长们带着孩子去游乐场玩，他们就虚报小孩的年龄以节省5美元的门票费。为了节省这5元钱他们破坏了耗费1.5万元的教育。

Our best day school and high school principals have included separate ethics courses in their school curricula. A handful of these educational experts have gone even further, weaving an ethics perspective into every aspect of their schools' educational program. All of these curricular and extra-curricular programs constitute heroic attempts to provide our children with the highest quality education. It is hard to imagine what more the brave pioneers of these programs can do to improve our children's character.

我们这最好的走读学校和中学校长把单独的道德课纳入了学校的课程中。少部分教育专家更有远见，他们将伦理观念渗透到学校教育计划的各个方面。所有这些课程和附加课程计划都是英雄式的创举，目的是给孩子们提供高质量的教育。很难想象这些课程计划的勇敢的开拓者们还能做些什么来改善孩子们的个性。

There is another step we could take, and that step might do more to improve our children's ethics than any of the commendable efforts described above. We parents and teachers could also engage in the sort of structured and guided work on character development we are so proud to see our children do. We could create ongoing character-development workshops for interested parents and teachers. Participants in these programs would actively work on their character so as to be more thoroughly refined models for their students.

我们还可以采取另一种措施，在提高孩子的道德水平方面这种措施可能会比先前描述的所有尝试更为有效。我们作为家长和老师也可以做一些有组织有指导的工作来发展孩子的个性，看到孩子们的个性得到改善，我们都感到自豪。我们也可以为有兴趣的家长 and 教师开展持续性的个性改善研讨班。活动参与者都应该积极地改善自身的品性，从而能为学生树立好榜样。

Parents and teachers can be powerful role models. Psychologists also remind us that the model we parents present influences even our youngest children.

家长和老师是孩子们学习的好榜样。心理学家们也提醒我们家长的形象甚至还会对年幼的孩子产生影响。

Consider this report from the *Journal of the American Medical Association*:

思考一下来自美国医学会杂志的这篇报道：

Neonates are born with an instinctive capacity and desire to imitate adult human behavior. That infants can, and do, imitate an array of adult facial expressions has been demonstrated in neonates as young as a few hours old, i.e., before they are even old enough to know cognitively that they themselves have facial features that correspond with those they are observing. It is a most useful instinct, for the developing child must learn and master a vast repertoire of behavior in short order. 初生的婴儿生来就有一种模仿成人行为的本能。婴儿能模仿大量成人的面部表情，这已经只初生几个小时的婴儿身上得到了证明，也就是说他们不够大，无法意识到他们的表情和他们所模仿的大人的表情是一致的。这是一种最有用的本能，因为处于成长过程中的孩子必须在短期内学习和掌握大量的行为。

The JAMA report also warns about the downside of pediatric modeling: Whereas infants have an instinctive desire to imitate observed human behavior, they do not possess an instinct for gauging a priori whether a behavior ought to be imitated. They will imitate almost anything, including behaviors that most adults would regard as destructive and antisocial.

美国医学会杂志的这篇报道也对婴儿模仿的消极面提出了警告：婴儿虽然有天生的模仿成人行为的本能，但是却没有判断成人的行为是否值得模仿的能力。他们几乎会模仿任何行为，包括大部分成人视为破坏性的和反社会的行为。

U.S. studies indicate that the probability of a child's smoking doubles if one parent smokes and quadruples if both parents smoke. Data from the Norwegian National Health Survey demonstrate that the probability of a young adult's having a diet low in fat is five times higher if one of his parents had a low fat intake. Similar associations exist for alcohol consumption, wearing seatbelts and doing exercise,^V and we have no reason to believe parental example does not powerfully influence all behaviors.

美国研究表明，如果父母中有一个吸烟，孩子吸烟的几率会翻倍，若父母两人都吸烟，则孩子吸烟的几率会翻四倍。来自挪威国民健康调查的数据显示，如果父母中有一个摄入少量脂肪，那么他们的孩子形成低脂肪饮食结构的可能性是普通孩子的五倍。喝酒、系安全带和做运动方面也存在类似的联系。我们没有理由相信父母对孩子的一切行为不会产生重大影响。

If we respond to disobedience harshly, our children and students will likely do the same. If we are dishonest or steal, the odds are that our children will internalize these behaviors too. Whether or not we intend to do so, through example we plant our own behavior in our children. Unless they make heroic efforts to uproot these seeds later in life, our children will grow up to be very much like us.

如果我们对他人的不服从反应很粗暴，那么我们的孩子和学生也可能会学我们。如果我们不诚实或去偷东西，孩子很可能也会模仿我们的这些行为。不管我们是否有意，通过我们自身的榜样这些行为将会植入孩子的大脑中。除非在不久后我们能勇敢地将种下的这些不良种子连根拔起，否则他们长大后将和我们一样。

Of course, we parents can also be the most powerful *positive* role models in our children's lives. A mother told me this story:

当然，在孩子的生命中我们家长也可能起着最有力的积极模范作用。有一位母亲给我讲了这样一个故事：

She went to the market with her children. When she was checking out, the clerk failed to properly credit her for a promotional item. After unsuccessfully trying to rectify the matter with the checkout clerk, the woman approached the store manager and explained the mistake. The manager was busy, not terribly interested in the woman's complaint, and initially uncooperative. However, eventually the manager reached into his cash drawer and handed her two dollars compensation. On their way home, the woman realized that the manager had given her too much money. She was already late, however, and could not return to the market.

她带着孩子们去市场购物。当她准备结账时，营业员没有将一款促销产品正确地记到她的账单上。努力和收银员更正无果后，她找到了部门经理并解释了刚发生的错误。经理很忙，对这个女人的抱怨不大关心，起初还不怎么配合。但是，最终经理还是走到了钱柜旁，给了她两美元作为补偿。在回家的路上，她发现经理给多了钱给她。可这时已将晚了，她没法再回去市场。

That night, however, the woman could not sleep. She kept thinking about the money in her wallet that did not belong to her. In the morning, she rushed the children to get ready for school early, left with them ahead of schedule, and drove straight to the market. There, in front of her children, she explained to the manager the mistake he had made the previous day. The manager was not interested in the story but took the overpayment and returned it to the register drawer.

那天晚上，她睡不着。她一直在想这口袋里的钱不属于她。第二天早上，她早早地催孩子们准备上学，和孩子们同时离开家，但比平时要提早。然后她驾车径直往市场方向开。当着孩子们的面，她向经理解释了前一天他多给了她钱。经理对她的故事并不感兴趣，他拿着这多给的钱放回到收银处的钱柜里。

Months later, the woman's son took a difficult test at school. Most students did poorly on the test, but her child received a mark of "A+". Indeed, in front of the class the teacher praised the boy for his perfect performance. Then, because so many students had received low grades, the teacher decided to review the correct answers aloud with the class. During the review, the boy realized that he had actually made a mistake on the exam but the teacher had failed to see it. Throughout the review the boy struggled with his desire for the "A+". Ultimately his conscience triumphed. After class he approached the teacher and pointed out the grading error.

几个月后，她儿子参加了学校一次较难的考试。大部分学生都考得不好，但她儿子却拿到了“A+”。在全班人面前老师的确表扬了儿子的出色表现。接着，因为许多学生考的分数都很低，老师就决定一起核对一下答案。在核对答案的过程中，她儿子发现试卷上有个地方他做错了，但老师并没有注意到。于是在老师对答案的整个过程中，他内心进行着一场激烈的思想斗争，不告诉老师的话，他还能保持“A+”。最终还是良心战胜了虚荣。下课后他走向老师，指出了这个评分错误。

At home later that day, the boy told his mother the story. She praised him for his willingness to sacrifice his "A+" on the altar of honesty. Her son explained that a battle had raged inside of him while he listened to the review. But then he remembered his distraught mother trying to give some cash back to a market

manager. The boy told his mother that in that moment his internal battle ended and he realized what he was going to do. (As a pleasant postscript to the story: The teacher was so impressed with the boy's honesty, she rewarded him by giving him the "A+" despite the mistake.)

那天回到家后，儿子把这件事告诉了他妈妈。她表扬了他，因为他愿意为了做个诚实的人而放弃了“A+”的荣誉。儿子解释说，他在听老师核对答案时，心里经历了一场激烈的斗争。但是他记得那次妈妈也是心烦意乱，努力想把多得的钱还给市场经理。他还告诉妈妈在最后哪一刻他内心的斗争停止了，他知道接下来该如何做了。（给这个故事的附上美好的结局：老师被男孩的诚实感动了，尽管他做错了，但老师给了他一个“A+”）

We all know of children who have been scarred by parents and teachers who respond with anger, use vicious language, or display selfishness, dishonesty, or other less-than-refined traits. Sometimes they drop their religiosity. Sometimes they just mirror the harshness they experienced at home or in the classroom. I meet such children every week. They are living testimony to the necessity of a formal framework for adult character development.

我们都知道如果孩子被家长和老师深深地伤害过，他们也会回以愤怒并恶语相击，或者表现出自私、欺骗或其他不良品质。有时还会放弃他们的宗教信仰。有时也会表现出他们在家里或教师所经历的那么粗鲁。我每个星期都会遇到这样的孩子。成熟的性格发展需要合理的标准参照，他们就是活生生的证据

Most parents and teachers realize that values and perspectives must be planted by personal example. However, in practice we sometimes try to build into our children and students behavioral routines that we personally have not yet mastered. We insist that our children get proper sleep, even though we scrape by on far less than we need. We insist that they eat properly, even though we survive on coffee and donuts. We insist that they control their anger, even though we sometimes show rage. In short, we find it easier to work on our children than on ourselves, and so that is sometimes what we do.

大部分家长和老师意识到价值观念和看法必须在个人的实际行为中形成。但是，实际上我们有时会努力想把我们的孩子或学生培养成具有固定的行为模式，而我们自己却还没有达到这样的模式。我们坚持要求孩子要有适当的睡眠，即使当我们的睡眠时间远没有需要的那么多，我们也能勉强应付。我们坚持要求他们要合理饮食，尽管我们自己每天都靠着咖啡和炸面圈而活着。我们还坚持要求他们生气时要会控制情绪，尽管我们偶尔也会有发怒的时候。简而言之，我们发现管孩子比管自己更容易，并且我们有时就是这样做的。

This hypocrisy has disastrous results: Too many children legitimately view their parents and/or teachers as insincere. Disrespect burgeons slowly until, around ages 12-15, it shreds the parent-child or teacher-student relationship. Then children reject the moral authority of the adults in their lives. They isolate themselves emotionally from parents and teachers, and begin making their own (often self-destructive) decisions.

虚伪有着灾难性的结果：相当多的孩子真正见到了父母或老师不真诚的一面。无礼慢慢发展，到大约 12-15 岁，亲子关系或师生关系便破裂。那时孩子不接受生活中成人

的道德权威。他们从情感上与家长和老师隔离，开始自己做决定（经常是害自己的决定）

Or sometimes these children thoroughly accept the lessons of their childhood. They might behave beautifully and do well in school, but they also absorb their mentors' inconsistency. By their late teens or early twenties, these children have mastered the art of hypocrisy, and much of their behavior has absolutely nothing to do with their stated values. These are the university-age students who claim they want a better world and yet purchase term papers off the Internet. Even if we never cheated in school, if we acted with hypocrisy in other areas of our lives, our children will absorb that lesson and practice it wholesale.

有时这些孩子也会完全吸取儿童时期的教训。他们可能会举止得体，在学校的表现也很好，但是他们也会接受导师的言行不一致。到十多岁或二十几岁，这些孩子掌握了虚伪的艺术，他们的许多行为与人们所要求的价值观没有任何关联。这些都是大学生，他们声称需要一个更完美的世界，然而自己却在网上购买学期论文。即使我们在学校从来没有舞弊过，但如果我们在生活的其他方面表现得很虚伪，我们的孩子便会马上吸取这一经验，并且会广泛地进行实践。

Eventually, the real values and perspectives we parents and teachers planted through our own behavior (for better or worse) show themselves. If we want to raise children who will grow into good adults, we must plant the seeds of goodness with our own sterling conduct.

最终，我们家长和老师通过自身的行为（不论好坏）形成的真实的价值观念和看法便会自然展现出来。如果我们想把孩子培养成为一个品格好的人，我们必须通过自己的行为表率为孩子们播下善良的种子。

Being a model is not easy. Our children see us at all hours of the day under all circumstances, making it impossible to maintain a facade of ethical refinement. If we have a temper or other negative traits, they will see these. Moreover, as we struggle to behave appropriately at all times, we discover that good intentions alone do not produce good behavior. Sometimes, even when we do not want to get angry, we find ourselves slipping out of control. We have no choice but to work on ourselves. We must set aside time to develop our character, especially our patience. This will be the spiritual fortune we will pass to the next generation.

做榜样不是件容易的事。孩子们一天二十四小时在任何情况下都看着我们，所以我们一直要保持完美品德的一面是不可能的。如果我们发脾气或有其他的不良的品质，他们都会看到。而且，我们努力想随时都保持行为得体，但我们发现好的意愿并不产生好的行为。有时，我们甚至不想生气，可发现还是难以控制自己。我们没办法只好任由自己发展。我们必须留出时间来培养我们的品格，尤其要培养耐心。这是我们传给下一代的精神财富。

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[Teachers](#), was recently ranked the 48th best-selling book in the United States. Posted 07/06/03 on kidsgrowth.com

