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(Editors)

CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF VALUES



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Authentic vs. Pseudo Values

PAULA-ANDREEA ONOFREI*

Abstract: *The purpose of the present article is to shed light on the appropriate techniques parents should use to raise children to come of age. Probably the most challenging thing to do is to educate your children. We started our research from the book Femeia și sfintele ei rosturi [The Woman and Her Holy Purposes], afterwards, we continued with Urania Cremene's methodology encapsulated in the program "All about Parenting" and we tried to sum up by stating some guiding principles for educating children according to the international bestseller *ScreamFree Parenting* by Hal Edward Runkel. Furthermore, the *Collection Sfinții Părinți pe înțelesul tuturor [The Holy Fathers Understood by Everyone]* (vol. About Education, vol. About Freedom and vol. About Discernment) come to complement the topic of values which should be transmitted to a child.*

Keywords: *Parenting; Christian-Orthodox values; Authenticity; Raising children; Personal development; Offering children your example; Self-determination theory; Educating new generations; Christianity; Peer pressure; Educating children without being harsh, but with tenderness (with love, gentleness, dedication, and patience).*

Introduction

Given the fact that being the educator of one's children can be a real challenge nowadays, the purpose of the present paper is to underline the major steps that we consider essential in the process of raising children and preparing them for life. In this respect, the starting point of this article is represented by five publications:

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1. The book *Femeia și sfințele ei rosturi*¹, which offers a Christian-Orthodox approach to the topic of giving birth, raising children and educating them to transmit true values;
2. The material created by Urania Cremene, the application for mobiles called “Parents” as part of the program “All about Parenting”;
3. The international bestseller by Hal Edward Runkel, *ScreamFree Parenting*²;
4. The volume *Parental Intelligence*³ by Daniel J. Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson;
5. The book translated from Russian *Ce ar trebui să știe fiecare mamă* [What every mother should know].
6. The three volumes from the collection *Sfinții Părinți pe înțelesul tuturor* [The Holy Fathers Understood by Everyone], to be more specific: vol. 1 “About Discernment”, vol. 2 “About Education”, and vol. 3 “About Freedom”.

To begin with, we consider that a child's existence is not only marked by the genetic inheritance that one receives from both parents, but also by one's values, attitudes, feelings, thoughts, and behaviour in different contexts. To be more specific, it is an enormous responsibility to raise a child to become a true HUMAN being.

First of all, in the volume *Femeia și sfințele ei rosturi*, it is launched the following idea:

“Ca părinți, e important să luăm aminte la faptul că nicicum, prin măsuri educative, nu vom avea garanția vreodată că fiii noștri vor crește mai frumoși și vor deveni mai inteligenți, după cum ne-am dori, că ei vor fi fericiți și vor avea realizări în viață. Noi ne străduim să așezăm în sufletele copiilor creștini semințele înțelegerii simțirii, gândurilor, dispozițiilor... Ne străduim să cultivăm aceste semințe. Dacă copiii noștri dezvoltă sau nu

¹ *Femeia și sfințele ei rosturi. Despre relațiile din familie. Despre purtarea în biserică. Despre femeile cele cu viață sfântă*, traducere din limba rusă de Gheorghiu Ciocoi, Editura de Suflet, București, 2019.

² Runkel, Hal Edward, *Fără țipete. Cum să crești adulți echilibrați fără să-ți pierzi calmul*, Prefață de Atena Boca, Editura Bookzone, București, 2023.

³ Siegel, Daniel J. & Tina Payne Bryson, *Inteligența parentală. Disciplină dincolo de drame și haos emoțional*, Bestseller New York Times, Traducere din engleză de Sanda Watt, Editura Pagina de Psihologie, București, 2010.

întru ei aceste sentimente și cugete, una ca aceasta nu o putem ști. Fiecare om trăiește și-și croiește calea sa”⁴. [As parents, it is important to be aware of the fact that we will never have the guarantee that our children will grow to become more beautiful and more intelligent through educational measures, as we want them to, that they will become happy and have multiple results as part of their achievement in life. We strive to plant in our children’s souls the seeds of understanding feeling, thoughts, moods...We strive to grow these seeds. If our children develop these feelings and ideas inside them, this is something we can’t possibly know. Each human being lives and finds one’s own path.] (Author’s translation)

In this respect, we believe that it is our duty as parents to create a solid foundation, that is to make the child the friend of God according to the Christian-Orthodox beliefs and the Ten Commandments, which should become the guiding light of the child’s existence and later on, of the adult of all ages. In the Bible, it is also written: “Căutați mai întâi împărăția lui Dumnezeu și dreptatea Lui și toate acestea vi se vor adăuga vouă.” (Evanghelia după Matei, Cap. 6: 33)⁵ [But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well]⁶.

Secondly, according to the self-determination theory (SDT) launched in the 1980s by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, there are three important factors, “the 3 C”s that every human being is born with connection, competence, control. It is the biggest research worldwide, still taking place nowadays which is also promoted by the program “All about Parenting” created by Urania Cremene, which states that every human being is born with these three basic psychological needs which need to be satisfied for children to be balanced: 1. connection (relatedness); 2. competence; 3. control (autonomy). How we satisfy our needs is different. The moment when we do manage to satisfy these needs, we reach a state of wellness, a state of optimum inner motivation, we feel balanced, and motivated to move on to the next level.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

⁵ *Noul Testament cu Psalmii*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2015, p. 15.

⁶ *The Bible, King James Version*,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%206%3A25-34&version=NIV>. [January, 17, 2024].

1. Relatedness (connection)

The most important need of a human being is that of connecting (relating), which involves the need of being loved and be loved (unconditionally), the need to belong, to offer and to receive, to contribute. Your child wants attention, wants you to see her/him, to show you what one has learned, to talk to you about what has intrigued him/her. If the child does not receive attention when one needs it, the child will ask for attention through negative behaviour, and not listening to the parent.

2. Competence

The need for capability – children should be encouraged to do things, they need to learn, to be capable of doing things to gain self-confidence and increase their inner motivation, which is considered to be the engine of one's actions, having better results than in the case of external motivation. Signs for feeding a child's competence: the child asks "Why?" or the child says "I can't do this"). Let the child do things, and encourage one not to give up easily.

3. Control (autonomy)

The essence is that the child wants to make decisions from an early age, the child wants to learn how to be able to stand on one's feet and discover the world. This autonomy should be encouraged, because it paves the way towards independence, and the self-esteem grows depending on the obtained results. The need for autonomy needs to be satisfied all the time. If this does not happen, the child refuses to listen to the adult's pieces of advice, refuses to discuss when one becomes an adolescent and closes the door of one's room.

Furthermore, educating children can be compared to the process of eating an elephant. The first thing that we need to do is "to cut the elephant in small pieces" which can be "eaten". What is in our power as parents is to teach our children from an early age to be responsible for one's toys. It takes 3-4 years to teach responsibility regarding one's objects; step by step, we instil the habit of carrying one's toys, dressing up, brushing one's hair, brushing one's teeth, and later on doing one's homework and thus, we make small, but important steps towards independence.

Consequently, to foster healthy habits in our children and to have a balanced life, we need to focus on:

The 3 pillars of being successful in life

a. **Responsibility** – step by step, it can be taught for one's toys, personal objects, body, health, choices, decisions, consequences, and financial education.

To raise responsible children, we should repeat these convictions and, in time, they will become one's second nature. Therefore, what do we want as parents? A responsible child who knows:

“The toys are yours. They are your responsibility.”

“Take care of your body. In this body, you will live for a lifetime.”

“School and homework are your job.”

“The more you grow, the more autonomy you have, but the more responsibilities you also have.”

“The house where you are living is also yours. Everything that surrounds you is also yours, therefore take care of the things around you” (the house, the park, the tree etc.).

b. **Motivation** is of two kinds: internal and external. What is motivation, after all? The totality of reasons determines one to do a specific action or to be oriented towards specific things. The bigger the effort to achieve something, the higher the motivation, consequently we strongly believe that children should be encouraged to invest their efforts in activities which are connected to their passions, their gifts and abilities (dancing, playing chess, reading, playing an instrument, doing martial arts etc.).

A very important aspect is the fact that we obtain better results when our main motivation is internal. We are born with a lot of internal motivation: children want to learn to use their legs, pull things, and discover the world. The first scream of a child is connected to the survival instinct and takes place to connect to one's mother. The perpetual exploration of children is connected to satisfying the need for competence. Each age brings extra competence.

All we can do as parents is direct and motivate children to invest their energy. We have often heard about parents who bribe their children to do specific chores in the house or to learn or to do their homework. In this respect, we have searched for answers to what we should avoid.

- avoid rewarding your children and offering empty praise, they are like some small candies.

- avoid criticism and threats. When children are little, they may function up to a specific age. Later on, they no longer should be used, given the fact that.

- avoid pressure and comparisons.

In pre-adolescence, we need to have responsible, inner-motivated children because this is the moment when we see how we have raised our children, it is the moment of summing up. The value of the behaviour that I want my child to develop (e.g. to see that one can manage on one's own) is bigger than the bribery offered, which should not exist in the first place.

c. **Self-discipline** is the ability to do what you have planned to do, what is healthy, what is valuable for you, despite what you "feel" like doing, despite the circumstances, the adversities, the temptations and the entourage. Self-discipline is the main ingredient of success (to be healthy, to be your best version, to do your job with passion, to choose wisely, to be emotionally balanced, to be financially independent, to be able to enjoy small things of life, to keep away from having problems with the law, with substances, with alcohol.). The marshmallow test means having the internal motivation to resist the temptation of eating the marshmallow for 10 min. If they succeeded in not eating it during those 10 min, they received another one.

Self-discipline is also about thinking in advance about the results of our work. If you want performance in all fields, you need self-discipline. If you want to raise a child, it is highly important to avoid immediate gratification (e.g. "Mummy, I need water!" "Ok, I see that you're thirsty. I need to finish this e-mail first and I'll give you water in a minute." Do not make things easier for your child! We believe children should be taught, step by step, what patience is.

Moreover, we all have a parent-specific tendency to do things for our children. Do not feel the need to do for your child the things that the child CAN do for himself. Comfort is the biggest enemy of self-discipline.

Avoid video games with immediate gratification. The longer these intervals are to get to the next level, the better! Let your child learn how to tie one's shoes. Do not make their path smooth. Frustration is good for

children, it is normal because the need for competence is not satisfied. This frustration is some sort of kerosene, of energy, to give an impulse to the child to try again.

There are specific tricks that make our brain leave the comfort zone. Consequently, apply these pieces of advice with your children:

- take the stairs, not the elevator;
- leave your car further away from kindergarten, force the child to make an effort to reach it;
- don't carry the schoolbag for the child, let one do it! Don't save your child's energy!
- let the child walk, do not take a taxi.

We, as parents, should establish rules and respect them with gentleness and firmness. When it is YES, it's yes. When it's NO, it's NO. Let your child see that you are disciplined and that you go to the gym to lose weight. Make your thinking visible to the child:

E.g. I was invited by my friends to go out and eat pizza. Wow, it sounds good, but I plan to go to the gym and lose weight. So, I am going to go to the gym now.

What strategies should we, as parents, use to avoid negative behaviour?

Every child comes to this world having two types of needs: physiological and psychological. Negative behaviour (refusals, screaming, hitting other children, tantrums etc.) is a sign, a symptom from the child that one's needs (the 3 Cs from above) are not covered. Permissive parents say "I am going to give you chocolate if you stop screaming". There are emotional punishments (not talking to the child, calling the child names, and the child being sent to one's room by the authoritarian parent.

On the one hand, a child who is educated based on the punishment-reward method (also known in Romanian as "băț și bomboană" ("stick and candy")) is mediocre. This type of child has an external motivation which will never push one forward. This type of child will always wait for screaming, physical punishment etc. Performance in the long run means that there is internal motivation. Another effect of the punishment-reward strategy is lying (cheating at tests, cheating on one's wife, not respecting rules). Another effect of the punishment-reward strategy is the diminishing

of self-esteem when the parent does not respect the body of the child (because the parent hits the child, pulling one's ears).

How should we, as parents, solve conflicts between children? We will offer 5 perspectives:

5 Reasons why we, as parents, WILL NEVER SUCCEED to grow lifetime friends:

1. Do not ask "Who has started the conflict?", because we, as parents, unintentionally, have put gas on the fire. Do not ask this question, because it encourages conflict between children. Each of them will explain their reasons.

2. "Go to your room!" – is not an efficient method, because you suddenly interrupt the conflict. In this case, will the child know what to do next time? If the child is nervous, will the child be able to calm down in one's room?

In many cases, we address our children with very harsh words, which we would be ashamed to use with adults. When they become adolescents, these children will learn that when they have a difficult moment, they don't have a safe place in their room (because they can't calm down on their own).

3. One for all and all for one...

Do not punish both children as a "team" to increase the feeling of being in the same pot. It is not fair and it leads to bad feelings and resentment between them as children and towards you as a parent because you have punished them both and that is not fair.

4. Because I said so!

Not an efficient technique to educate one's child. Every time the solution comes from outside (from you, the parent), you become the judge of their dispute, and you feed conflict.

5. Leave him/her, because he/she is younger...

Resentment between brothers and towards parents simply adds up. The youngest child always wins because of the age. The elder brother is always put in the position of loser.

The models developed in childhood are preserved for a lifetime. This program "All about Parenting" (Science with love for parents and children) is to be used for a lifetime. Small steps every day. With perseverance, determination, with the desire to change something for the better, we will be successful as parents. We should change ourselves, and our patterns that have been perpetuated from generation to generation which lead to a lot of failure, resentment, and guilt. Our children are the result of our actions and our education.

How can we help our children?

1. **Offer time to each of the brothers** and feed their own needs (connecting, What you transmit is the fact that you are unique in your way!)
2. **Don't compare brothers. Never!** "I am glad that you are becoming more and more independent and you no longer need my help!" At the beginning of life, we feel the need to belong, and to connect, which means we will adopt the behaviour and rules of the group (the "ugly duck" style).
3. **How to "divide" love between/among brothers and sisters?**

Love is always multiplied, it never ends. If you want to have the perspective of a 6 year-old boy who suddenly discovers that there is a new member of the family, simply watch the cartoon "The Boss Baby" (2017). To children's minds, love is like a sack from which you, as a mother, offer love to the other child of yours and the childish belief is that the first child receives less love because one has to divide it between/among children. This is the reason why children up to the age of five often say: "This is my mother!", "Oh, no, it's all mine!" and the quarrel starts. They feel exactly as if they are sharing a bar of chocolate. In this respect, we can use the metaphor of the small candle: light up a big candle which is grandma. Ignite another one from it, saying it is Mom. From the candle representing mom, light up two/three/more candles, depending on the number of children that you have. Tell the children that light represents love which multiplies, it does not diminish if divided between/among children.

We and our parents and grandparents have been educated according to B. F. Skinner's theory which says that the only two types of behaviour that have always functioned are "candy and stick" (meaning reward and punishment). This does not lead to a harmoniously balanced adult and a strong, powerful, loving relationship between parents and

children. If you want a very good connection with your offspring, do not do these:

- do not scream.
- do not offer rewards/punishments (they do not work in the long run). You do not obtain a valuable behaviour. The child will not understand what is behind the reward/punishment.
- do not give in when the child has tantrums, expresses refusal, or starts rolling on the floor.
- do not use threats because they can cause trauma (e.g. "If you don't put your toys in the box, I will throw them away.")

We should treat the symptoms of negative behaviour. Instead, try to obtain their cooperation and this is a topic we are going to develop next.

The 3 techniques that should be used to obtain children's cooperation, and support your collaboration with the children:

1. Plan in advance

The result of this technique is that it leads to connection. Our children live in the present. The moment when you tell your child not to get dressed, the parents believe they are being sabotaged. Their memory is mostly effective. If they have been punished, their trauma stays there. Children are very absorbed by the present and they forget about the fact that they have to gather the toys, they do not intend to upset their parents, but their brains are not sufficiently developed at an early age (up to 7 years old).

Therefore, plan activities in advance and tell your children what is going to happen: "We will leave the park in 10 minutes", "We shut down the TV in 5 minutes". By using the "Planning" technique, you respect the rules, you gain the child's trust because you do what you have announced the child to do.

Furthermore, plan and tell your child what is going to happen: "If you don't wash your teeth, it is possible to have caries"). Also tell the child when one is going to have a painful injection. Be honest about what is going to happen. By using the technique "plan in advance", you feed the 3 basic needs (connection, competence, control). We should also plan the budget. Tell your children how much you can afford to spend this month on toys etc.

A recent psychological study shows that our happiness is deeply connected to the quality of the relationships that we develop with the people around us. Therefore, pay attention to the closest five persons that you have in your life. They will also influence your children.

2. Empathy with your child – it is the honey of relationships

“My child, I understand that you don’t want to sleep, you’re like a bunny”.
And add a smile, a warm embrace.

“I understand that you want to stay longer in the park, I know it, my dear”.

“I truly know that you don’t feel like doing your homework”.

This technique is a way of connecting with the child and the child will temper one’s fury so that one’s reaction won’t lead to conflict. This reaction is trained, do not expect (it develops stress tolerance).

Use empathy with all children, of all ages “I know that you are upset that you got a low grade/ you have separated from your girlfriend/boyfriend”.

3. Establish the rule and offer your children options

Do not address your children using only imperatives: “Go to bed now, at 9”. “Wash your teeth!” Mention the rule and give the child two possibilities. End with “You choose”.

“My dear child, the rule is that, before you go to bed, you should have your toys put in their place. Are you going to do this before you wash your teeth or after? You choose”.

Our children appear in this world, but we do not also receive a user guide. We should use gentleness, warmth, and firmness. To have a balanced child, just pay attention to the way you talk to your child (during one’s own life, that child will search for the same type of behaviour, the same emotions transmitted by their parents, by the people who raise them). Nowadays, a lot of people speak about EQ⁷, the emotional quotient which measures one’s

⁷ EQ comes from *emotional quotient* which was coined by Dr. Reuvan Bar-On in 1985. It was five years later when the term “Emotional Intelligence” was introduced in several scientific articles by Dr. Salovey and Dr. Mayer, the ones that expanded the research from 1985.

emotional intelligence. It is about the ability to be empathetic and to speak the same language as the one in front of you, it is also connected to the superior skill of preventing conflicts and managing emotions, it is also related to preventing and managing negative behaviour. Another important aspect is peace inside ourselves and our home. And harmony. How should we, as parents, harmoniously involve all the members of the family? How should we manage different opinions, the influences of the group, and peer pressure? How should we guide our children to do what is useful and right for them, especially when they are in their pre-adolescence and pre-adulthood? What measures should we take to have a child that cherishes peace, has values, and verticality, does not seek conflict, is balanced and has all one's 3 Cs of needs covered (connect, control and competence)? Home is the place where we as a family should all feel good and work as a team. But this is the focus of a future article...

Furthermore, our opinion is that each person takes action according to one's own discerning abilities, according to one's consciousness which is considered "the voice of God". In the book *Sfinții Părinți pe înțelesul tuturor [The Holy Fathers Understood by Everyone]*, vol. 1 "About Discernment", it is stated that "Toate trebuie făcute cu dreapta socoteală. Iar dreapta socoteală stă în a lucra cineva după măsura sa"⁸. [Everything should be done thinking righteously. And thinking righteously implies that one should work according to one's capabilities] (our translation). According to the Holy Fathers, every single decision that we make is the result of the discerning abilities specific to each person. In this respect, it is mentioned: "Creșterea cuviincioasă a unui copil, soluționarea eficientă a problemelor la locul de muncă, dezvoltarea armonioasă a vieții duhovnicești au la bază un numitor comun: alegerea înțeleaptă a soluțiilor"⁹. [Raising a child properly (to be understood decorously), efficiently solving problems at one's workplace, the harmonious development of one's spiritual life have a common denominator: the wise choice of solutions"]. (our translation)

In a nutshell, we believe that never-ending education offers the highest satisfaction and spectacular results in time. Furthermore, investing

⁸ Sf. Varsanufie și Ioan, *Scrisori duhovnicești*, 621 (Filocalia, 11), traducere Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, București, Editura Humanitas, 2009, p. 527.

⁹ *Sfinții Părinți pe înțelesul tuturor [The Holy Fathers Understood by Everyone]*, vol. 1 "About Discernment", *op. cit.*, p. 9.

time and resources in educating one's children is going to be, in time of course, the most intelligent thing a parent can do. We, as human beings, are like puzzle games, composed of all our various learning experiences. To quote Steve Jobs in his Stanford University discourse from 2005, all we need to do is "to connect the dots"¹⁰, that is our acquired learned pieces of information, to develop our skills and to make the world benefit from our expertise, our passion, our best personal version of development. Only by offering our children all the necessary "pieces" of education, infinite love, guidance, understanding and patience do we create the necessary context to grow balanced, intelligent, independent, resilient, responsible, determined, fiercely internally motivated successful adults.

To conclude, love, wisdom and wise choices are essential to transmit from parents to offsprings. In his book called *Iubirea nemărginită a lui Dumnezeu pentru noi*¹¹, Priest Professor Liviu Petcu makes reference to the main reasons why a human being loves the other, quoting Saint Maximus the Confessor: "Oamenii se iubesc unii pe alții fie în chip vrednic de laudă, fie în chip vrednic de ocară, pentru aceste cinci pricini: sau pentru Dumnezeu, cum iubește cel virtuos pe toți, atât pe cel virtuos, cât și pe cel ce încă nu este virtuos, sau pentru fire, cum iubesc părinții pe copiii și invers; sau pentru slava deșartă, cum iubește cel slăvit pe cel ce-l slăvește; sau pentru iubirea de argint, cum iubește cineva pe cel bogat pentru a primi bani; sau pentru plăcere, ca cel ce-și slujește stomacul și cele de sub stomac. Dragostea cea dintâi este vrednică de laudă; a doua e mijlocie; celelalte sunt pătimășe". It is extremely important to grow in one's child these three essential pillars of one's life: the Christian-Orthodox faith, hope and love. But above all, the highest of these three is love.

¹⁰ Steve Jobs, *Stanford University Commencement discourse*, 2005, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF8uR6Z6KLc>, last accessed on February, 24, 2024.

¹¹ Priest Prof. Liviu Petcu, *Iubirea nemărginită a lui Dumnezeu pentru noi*, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2018, p. 315.

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