

# Bringing the Lessons Home



## We are the drivers...

On my way to work one morning, I was struck by a billboard that read “what kind of driver are you raising?” The picture was a parent or caregiver in the driver’s seat of a vehicle distracted by their cell phone while young children in the back seat watched attentively. During those last few minutes of my commute into work, many thoughts came to mind, but the most significant was that as parents or caregivers we have the most control over our own actions. We are often presented with opportunities to model the behavior we want to see in our children. We are the drivers, so to speak!

Life presents us with “everyday scenarios” to be our best selves as parents. Our children pay close attention to the way that we handle these moments. Being kind, displaying good manners, showing empathy to others, handling stressful situations, problem solving, and practicing patience are just a handful. Children learn these skills by watching the adults in their lives and build their own ways of responding when similar situations come their way.

A few years ago during a meeting with parents of a child that participated in Primary Project, the parents shared “parenting is the hardest job any one of us will have! There is no instruction manual that comes along with a child – we do our best and we will likely make mistakes along the way!” Making mistakes is inevitable, but what is most important is the acknowledgement of making a mistake. Saying to children, “I am sorry” or “I didn’t get it right” teaches that we are human and we will have another chance at it!

Parenting is hard work and when we do hard work we need to take care of ourselves. On airplanes we are told that if in the event of an emergency and there is a loss in cabin pressure, to secure our own oxygen masks before helping small children or others around us. The same holds true for parenting. When we feel winded, we have to inflate ourselves so that we can be present. Take the time to do the things that you enjoy, so that you can recharge and continue to demonstrate to your children what you hope they will see in themselves in the future.

*-Lynn Smith, LMSW, Co-Director of Primary Project*



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