

Spring Cleaning!
Refine and Renew Your Relationships
With Your Children

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Spring is in the air! Warmer temperatures are here. According to our clocks the sun hangs high longer in the sky during the day. People have emerged from their homes, no longer kept in the isolation that cold temperatures can sometimes bring. And the time for spring cleaning has arrived!

Spring cleaning brings about a newness, a rebirth, a deep cleansing and clearing out of clutter and dust inside our homes. When we spring clean outside our lawns can breathe again and the life inside the bulbs that have begun to push up through the earth will now have the space to grow into all it was created for.

Spring is the perfect time to “clean up” our relationships as well. Habits can sometimes form within our relationships with others, especially with our children. Habits and routines, even the ways we communicate can become old and dry, almost desolate... kind of like nature as it appears in late winter as it eagerly awaits the coming of spring. If we were to “spring clean” our relationships with our children - and did so in the same way we went about “spring cleaning” our backyards – it might look something like this:

Step 1) Gather all of the sticks and fallen branches.

The “sticks” and “branches” in your relationship with your children might be the big and obvious things you would see if you stepped back and looked at the big picture. Saying their name over and over again to get their attention can be as big as branches blocking the way for effective communication. If you hear yourself repeating their name and it’s not working in getting their attention it’s time to stop and try something different – they’re not hearing you. To use words like, “I want to show you something important” or “I’m so glad you’re here! Did you know...” could be much more effective and heard by your children without the other “sticks” no longer scattered on the ground. Or how many times do you hear yourself saying “*Don’t* do this...*don’t* do that”? Replacing a *don’t* with a *do* would really clear out the clutter in your communication with your child. Often times children may feel that if they’re not allowed to do so many things what’s left that they *are* allowed to do? By providing rules in a positive light, gone would be your voice saying “How many times do I have to tell you...” because you would only have to tell them once – your focus would then switch to all you *can* do, together.

Step 2) Rake and thatch.

When we rake and thatch our yards we rid the yard of any excess dried and dead leaves and grass that no longer serve our own private earth. There is no way for the new grass to grow in spring if so much useless life is on top of it, suffocating it. The same is true in our family relationships. What excess can you rid your family of? Pull it up and weed it out! Is there too much running around resulting in wasted time and stress? Could the new season of spring result in a new family schedule of less running around to this or that and allow for more time of unstructured play outside? Would

planning meals for the week make room for more time to sit down together to eat and talk rather than stressfully figuring out “what’s for dinner?” Perhaps creating new (positive!) family rules that minimize time with all our technological devices would provide more time for star gazing, field walking, playground playing, fort making, art creating, or beautiful baking ...together. Again, pull it up! Weed it out! Create space for a new beginning in your family.

Step 3) Put down new soil and plant seeds.

With the yard cleared, raked and thatched and the soil in your garden turned over and mixed with new, fresh soil...the planting of seeds can begin! What seeds can you plant in the garden of your family? How about the seeds of love? Joy? Time? By choosing to plant these seeds, the growth and strength in what will bloom could be life changing. Imagine, also, if you “spring cleaned” other relationships in your life? Step back and look at the whole “yard” and “garden” of certain relationships – how you communicate, perceptions you have, ideas of another that you have yet to consider – what could begin to grow if you clear away the sticks and the branches, rake away the old habits and beliefs, turn over the soil and plant new seeds.....can you imagine what that new, beautiful, colorful, glorious garden would look like?