

CHILDREN NEED VALUES

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If today's kids are tomorrow's players, what are we in store for?

First, who are today's players? We constantly hear that they are "me" oriented, not very teachable and not as dedicated as earlier generations. Gone forever are the good old days when coaches told a player to jump and the player asked "How high?" (This is probably a good thing because my players never seem to jump quite as high as I would like.)

I love coach Bob Knight's reply to this question. He contends that kids haven't changed... it's the parents and the world that have changed.

I believe Knight is right on the money. Young children have a wonderful innocence about them. Boys and girls still believe in Santa and the Tooth Fairy. But what happens to them between the ages of 8 and 18 when the increasingly bump into the world and its values?

Here are three areas affecting our young people's development:

- 1) **Too much too soon.** I am all for youth activities, but forgive me, folks, we treat little Junior like an Olympian.

Joe my 6-year-old son, is involved for the first time in soccer. Recently, I took Joe for his team picture. Literally hundreds of boys and girls were decked out in their color-coordinated uniforms and cleats for their photo. I was told that my son could also have an individual photo taken and mounted on playing cards (12 for \$15), refrigerator magnets and a mock Sports Illustrated cover.

Now, some of this is innocent, but can you see where this is headed? Youth league teams are better equipped than many high schools! We worry about looking good and having the right gear and signing up for every league in town, but does it make better players? What message do we do send our children?

Some kids are ready for competitive sports at an early age, but I truly believe they are minority. Can't our kids

grow up a little later and with little less pressure? Shouldn't they be leaning to just enjoy the game without all the bells and whistles? Are we spending an equal amount of time with them, as parents, developing relationships and teaching values?

- 2) **Deteriorating values.** A college professor recently made the statement "Everything is relative. This is no math." The reply from his young student who refused to be duped into this lie was, "Is that statement true? Indeed, if the professor is correct in his thinking, then nothing he says is necessarily true. It is just an opinion.

We must first agree that there are some fundamental, external truths that hold us accountable and govern our activities.

What values should we teach our children? There are many, such as honesty, hard work, trustworthiness, loyalty, morality, and kindness.

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If we want our children to develop these characteristics, we need a plan of action, a mission statement. We must first identify those values we hold most dear and find creative ways to communicate these important standards to live by.

- 3) **A lack of role models.** Little by little, the look of the country changes because of the men we admire.” Who are our kids’ heroes today? Why does Dennis Rodman’s name come up at my dinner table? Advertisers bombard us with images, but where is the substance?

The family is under attack like never before. Divorce is depriving too many children of one or both parents. Our kids constantly look for role models, but I believe most adults have given up on the concept.

Just as we want our children to choose positive friends who are good influences (we tell our campers, “Show us your friends, we’ll show you

your future”), so should we as adults. And we need role models in several key areas. Find someone who in your profession who has achieved success with our sacrificing principles and family.

As it says in the Book of Proverbs, “Raise up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Today’s kids are tomorrow’s players, but more importantly, they are our future. Our children need to be taught about virtue and values, not lauded like conquering heroes.

If the old saying “A picture is worth a thousand words” is true, then the children in your circle of influence will be closely watching your life. Make each day a Rembrandt for them!