

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Navigating Island Parenting: Rising Above Any Situation

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I have found that it is quite an easy task for us to whip out our soap boxes and dictate to others what is indeed right. We are often not at a loss for words when we take the decision to spout what the ideals are or ought to be. We do this with no empathy for the journeys that many of our fellowmen or in this case fellow parents have traveled and are traveling. We do this with no concern of how our words or our actions may impact those parents or families who for whatever reason or circumstance have “failed” to live up to what “society” may consider “the ideal.”

As someone who has spent most of her life working with and advocating for the rights of children, it is my view that the best environment for a child is one where there is an

abundance of love and acceptance of for that child and his or her development. This is my view. I am aware of the statistics. And whenever they are quoted, I can't help but ask questions such as the following. "Are you telling me, that a child who isn't raised in the 'ideal familial structure' cannot succeed, if he or she is raised in an environment which fosters the same attributes as the "ideal familial structure? Are you telling me that this child does not have a chance? Is this the message you are trying to communicate?"

The message parents need to hear from society is, "Sue or Ann girl, go for it. You have got this! You have got this! Try your best! You have got this!" They don't need a diatribe of what they should have or should not have done. Don't you think that they know their lives or their journeys? Don't you think that many have spent time in reflection? Don't you think that they are trying their absolute best? As my aunt used to say, "Who make you God, parson, priest, judge, principal, executioner or king?"

We live in a region where many families do not fit the ideal. Let me state that by no stretch of the rod am I or will I ever advocate that the West Indian should not strive for the "ideal familial structure." Let me state that by no stretch of the rod will I ever advocate for fatherless children. However what I am advocating is that as a people we realize where we are and that we deal with the reality and stop harping on the "ideal." I say strive for the "ideal" but in the process let us work together. Let us build each other up. Let us offer support and encouragement instead of casting judgment or chastising each other.

The journey of parenting is not an easy one, by no stretch of the mile. It is not. Many parents require support and I am not talking about financial support but even a listening ear. As a parent, I take issue with people who constantly dictate what is right. I don't want to hear what is right, share with me, and provide advice on how my journey as a parent, regardless of my circumstance or familial structure, can be made much easier and a whole lot brighter. This is what parents require, not just West Indian parents but all parents.

There are so many parents, so many single parents who are doing their absolute best to raise their children and I mean their absolute best. They are aware of the statistics. They are aware of their familial structure or makeup. They are very much aware. However we have to realize that they are doing their best. They don't need constant negative reminders. What they need is encouragement and support. This is what they need.

To each and every parent who is doing his or her best, drown out the noise and negativity. Brace yourself, and go for it. Give it your best. You have got this. At this point, it doesn't matter where or how you have started your parenting journey, or that your family may not fit what some may consider the "ideal societal familial model." You are a family. You are a parent that is signed and sealed. It is a done deal. You have a job to do, so equip yourself. Don't be dissuaded by the statistics. Have the confidence that you can do this, because you can. Your child is no less than anyone else's child and your family is no less than anyone else's family. Do your best. Give it your all. Love your children because love conquers all. It was Nelson Mandela who said, "Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do." Be passionate about parenting. You will rise above it all.

"Within you is the power to rise above any situation or struggle and transform into the brightest, strongest version of you ever." Unknown

## **Words of Wisdom for Your Child**

“If you don’t want anyone to find out, don’t do it.” Chinese Proverb “Knowing what’s right does not mean much unless you are doing what’s right.” Franklin Roosevelt “What’s right is not always popular and what’s popular is not always right.” Albert Einstein

## **Inspirational Parenting Quotes from Robert Brault**

Yes to be a good parent you have to sacrifice, but this is not a requirement of parenting, it is a requirement of being good at something.

Do not ask your kids to live up to your expectations. Let your kids be who they are, and your expectations will be in breathless pursuits.

You will find that if you really try to be a father, your child will meet you halfway.

A child seldom needs a good talking to as much as a good listening to.

There is an instinct in a woman to love her child, and an instinct to make any child who needs her love, her own.

## **Recommended Reading for Children**

March On! The Day My Brother Martin Changed the World by Christine King Farris  
illustrated by London Ladd

Peace One Day. The Making of World Peace Day by Jeremy Gilley and Karen Blessen

John Henry by Julius Lester pictures by Jerry Pinkney