

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Navigating Island Parenting: The Return On The Investment Will Be Worth It!

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I am often in awe at how much time we spend improving ourselves, investing in our careers, and investing in our various relationships. Don't get me wrong, improvement, growth, development, progression, whatever you want to call it; it is good. We strive to be the best. We strive to be the best partner. We strive to be the best daughter, sister or friend. But where does striving to be the best parent fall on that continuum? Is parenting something we just wing or rather is it a deliberate effort? Is it an area that we feel could use some improvement? In the past 24 hours, in the past week or month what steps have you taken the time to work on this area of your life? How many hours do you spend awake at night wondering about your performance as a parent? Do you ask others whom you trust or even your children how they think you are doing as a parent?

I ask these questions as, in every other area of our lives we know by heart the self-help books, motivational speakers or gurus that we ought to turn to in order to get the desired results. We also seek out life-coaches, mentors and counselors to improve the other areas or relationships in our lives but what about the relationships with our children? Who do we seek out for guidance or assistance with these relationships? I have a friend who doesn't hesitate to ask a couple who has celebrated twenty-five years of marriage or more what their secret is, as she wants to someday reach that milestone, but when it comes to parenting, she would tell you that she needs no help or advice. This is an area that she has all figured out. Her mindset, "is just children, they have to do what I tell them to do and that's it. What's so hard in that? It's me who bring them here so it's my way or the highway!"

Many of us look forward to our monthly issue of the Oprah magazine, a breath of fresh air and an escape is what my friend Sue calls it. We eagerly look forward to a newsletter/bulletin from a professional organization hoping to learn about the latest innovation in our respective fields. We hope to learn something that may be the game changer in our professional lives. We hope to learn something that may propel us to the next career level. I ask however, who or what do we turn to for that game changer in parenting? Do we have a subscription to Parents or Parenting magazine? Have we done any research in child development? Even if this isn't our professional field, do we know who the leaders in child development are? Do we stay abreast of these things? Do we even consider any of this important?

We listen to TD Jakes or Joel Osteen when we want that extra spiritual sustenance. Steven Covey and John Maxwell are favourites amongst those who want to succeed in business. Toastmasters International seems to be the answer for those who want to improve upon their communication skills, but I ask again; who or what do we turn to for assistance in becoming a better parent? Do we invest such time or try to amalgamate such resources in order to improve our relationships with our children?

Networking is the buzzword in many circles. We are told to build our networks or attend networking socials. We are told to stay connected, as networking is our ticket to opportunity and eventually success. We therefore keep a vigilant eye on our professional networks, as we do not want to miss any opportunity. We even reconnect with those whom we have lost touch. Does networking apply to improving our parenting skills? Do we consider this to be an important resource?

I ask all of these questions, because parenting should be considered and treated as an area that needs constant improvement. We are in the business of nurturing and cultivating the next generation. Aren't we? I saw a quote recently that made me smile. It read, "We talk so much about leaving a better planet for our kids, yet we forget about leaving better kids for the planet." Isn't that the truth?

It is true that there is no manual or formula. It is not an exact science. Do you honestly believe that you know or that you have learned everything that you need to know about parenting a child? Do you, like many believe that parenting is an area that doesn't need to be worked on? What are your views? Don't you think that this area of our lives require as much or maybe even more effort than all of the other areas of our lives? Again, don't get me wrong, parenting should not consume your life, though at times it seems as if it does, I am just saying that it requires a concerted or deliberate effort. In order to get

better at it we should seek to educate, enlighten and equip ourselves, as the return on this investment would be well worth it.

Anonymous Words of Wisdom for Your Children

“You don’t have to strive to be better than everyone else. You should strive to be better than you ever thought you could be.”

“Whatever you believe about yourself on the inside, you will manifest on the outside.”

Timeless Parenting Quotes

“I see myself as a Mom first. I am so lucky to have that role in my life. The world can like me, hate me or fall apart around me and at least I wake up with my kids and I’m happy.”
Angelina Jolie

“Mothers and their children are in a category all of their own. There is no bond so strong in the entire world. No love so instantaneous and forgiving.” Gail Tsykiyama, *Dreaming Water*

“In the end, I am the only One who can give my children a happy mother who loves life.”
Janeene Wolsey Baadsgaard

“Too much love never spoils children. Children become spoiled when we substitute presents for presence.” Anthony Witham

Recommended Books for Children

The Everything Kids’ Science Experiment Book-Boil ice, measure gravity-challenge the world around you! By Tom Robinson

A Child’s Introduction to the Night Sky-The Story of the Stars, Planets and Constellations-and how you can find them in the Sky by Michael Driscoll Illustrated by Meredith Hamilton

The Kingfisher Science Encyclopedia by Charles Taylor (Kingfisher Encyclopedias)