

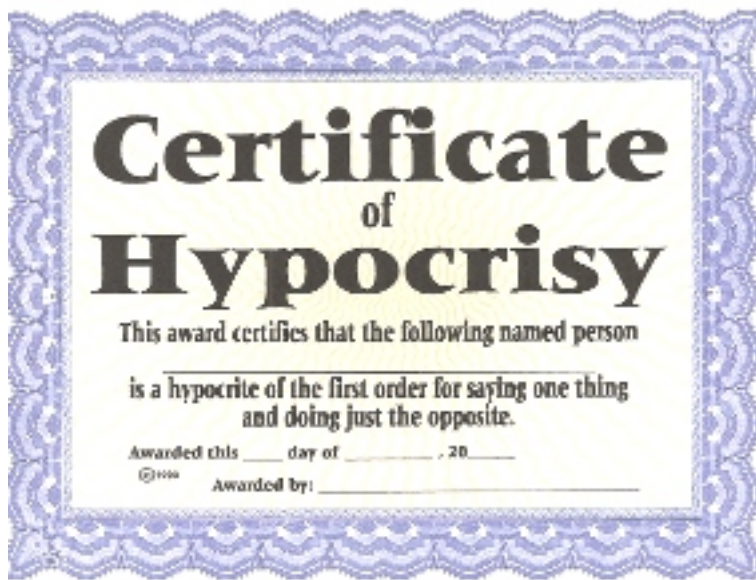
# Overcoming Your Hypocrisy With Your Children

Written by admin

Tuesday, 10 April 2012 12:56 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 13:18

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*By Greg Baker*



At some point, your children will begin to recognize the hypocrisy in your life. And the truth is we all are hypocrites to some degree or another. Most people will admit that they believe in their hearts that something is wrong, yet haven't found the character or desire to stop doing it themselves. How many parents smoke while telling their children never to do it? How many parents drink while telling their children never to do it? How many parents condemn their children's lies while telling lies of their own? How many parents are asked by their children, "Did you do it when you were my age?"

The 'do as I say not as I do' philosophy will not always work. At some point, your children will call you on the carpet. They will use your hypocrisy to discredit your authority and spoil your influence.

I want to write very frankly about this subject and try to help parents prepare to help their children through the moment when they realize their parents aren't perfect. And it will happen.

There is a difference between a 'hypocritical lifestyle' and a 'hypocritical moment'. A big difference, actually. A lifestyle that is constantly contradictory to what you tell your children will undermine your influence and authority over them. This is the most dangerous type of

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hypocrisy.

I'm reminded of the Biblical story in Genesis where Abraham's nephew Lot had chosen a lifestyle that undermined his influence with his family. They laughed at him. Lot's lost his entire family in one way or another. It's difficult trying to tell your children not to yell when you are yelling it at them. It's difficult to get your children to understand that what you are doing-and aren't willing to change-is not good for them.

Parents aren't perfect, but if you don't live what you tell your children to live, your children will disregard what you say and instead listen to what you do. Even knowing this, the parent makes critical errors in judgment in trying to justify or excuse their lifestyle to their own children. Don't think that your children will be convinced by your words when your actions tell a different tale.

### COMMON MISTAKES THAT PARENTS MAKE:

1. Parents assume that children will learn the right lesson from their bad example. This is rarely true. How many parents abuse their children because they were abused? How many people get a divorce even after knowing the pain that their parents' divorced caused them? Occasionally, someone will vow not to be like their parents and in trying to fulfill that promise, they go to the opposite extreme. This is just as bad. A child who was under an uncaring authoritarian will often never discipline or correct her own children who then grow up being spoiled and a disappointment. We rarely learn the right lesson from the wrong example. Lessons are best learned from the right example.

2. Parents hope that they can convince their children with words not to follow in their footsteps. This is a mistake too. Children and teenagers are like water. They tend to follow the path of least resistance. An observed lifestyle often gives them that path. The path is more real and meaningful and understood when it is seen. If you are a smoker and you desperately don't want your children to pick up the habit, you may say many things to convince them of the dangers, but your words will sound hollow. They will sound empty. Because if you were really serious, you won't do it either. That is the way a child will think.

3. Parents hope they can hide it from their children. This will rise up and stab you in the heart one day. I do believe the Scriptural truth: Your sins will find you out. You'll be caught one day and you'll be caught by your own children. It'll come out somehow, someday, and in some manner. I knew a boy who went to watch a movie from his father's video collection. The movie title was that of a Disney movie he wanted to watch. It wasn't. His father had dubbed over it with a porn video. He had scores of them, all with seemingly innocent titles on the covers. As a boy, he watched every one of them and it ruined his life. Another boy I know was scrounging around the garage and discovered a box hidden away filled with porn magazines that his father had stashed there. It warped that boy. He started experimenting at an age where he ought still to think that girls had coodies. Before long, social services became involved, and that family fell apart. Don't think that you can hide it from your children. They will find out.

But what about past indiscretions that children love to throw into the face of a parent. Oh yes, this happens. You'll tell a child not to do something and they'll ask, "Did you ever do it?" Every

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parent fears this. We all have things in our past that if our children knew about, they will use to justify their own actions and try to undermine your right to tell them not to.

But there are some things that you can do about it. Here are some ideas:

1. Discuss frankly the consequences of your error. I would begin something like this, "I did something years ago that hurt me deeply. I don't ever want to see you hurt like that. I never want you to do what I did." And so forth. You can use words that express your ignorance, stupidity, recklessness, and so on. Be open and honest. Tell them that they have an opportunity that you never had. Explain that there is a difference between when you were their age and the age they are now. That difference being that they know better and you did not.

2. Use the sins of your past to teach about the curse of sin. Explain how you learned the hard way but they don't have to. Explain that what you are today isn't what you were at their age. Tell them about how that sin has haunted you. Get them to understand that doing the things you did has left its mark, left scares, left wounds that may never completely heal. You need them to realize that using you as justification to do it themselves is a mistake. You need to claim the moral high ground by using your error as the basis for it. Don't try and hide it. That'll just give them fuel to use it against you when they do discover it.

The parent can use his or her past indiscretions to help their own children avoid those same mistakes. A wise parent will use them as tools to demonstrate the problems of these mistakes instead of allowing their children to use them to undermine the parents' authority.

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