



Wise & Wonderful

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Four Things That Matter Most in Parenting by Kathy Slattengren

What four things matter the most in parenting? Could they be the same as the four things that matter most in life? It is likely they could be the same since our relationships with our children are some of the most significant ones we have in our lives.

The Four Things That Matter Most

In his book, The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living, Ira Byock proclaims these are the four most important things to say to those you love:

- Please forgive me.
- I forgive you.
- Thank you.
- I love you.

Byock explains "Comprising just eleven words, these four short sentences carry the core wisdom of what people who are dying have taught me about what matters most in life." The book contains many moving stories of people who have healed relationships when they've been able to say these things to each other.

Forgiveness - The Hardest Thing To Do

One story in the book is about Avi who had been rejected by his father when he was a boy. He harbored a deep resentment against his father for

his cruel behavior. When he found out his father was dying, he realized how much his hatred of his father was still controlling his own life. It was even interfering with the relationships he had with his own young sons. Avi did not feel his father deserved forgiveness. Byock explains "It is wrong to think that people need to *feel* forgiveness in order to *give* forgiveness.

Forgiveness is actually about emotional economics. It's about a one-time cost that you pay to clear up years of compounded emotional forgiveness, Avi *did*. His father was going to die. Avi was the one who would carry the animosity and resentment in the years to come. He had carried them long enough." After Avi forgave his father, he also found that he was more forgiving towards his wife and children. "Without knowing it, Avi had been perpetuating many of the traits - such as being quick to judge, overly critical and rigid in his ways - that he despised in Simon." It's so easy to repeat our parents' behavior with our own children, even when we've sworn we'd never treat our children that way. Byock points out "Righteous indignation can be seductive, and even addictive, but unresolved anger is toxic to your happiness and your relationships." Anything toxic to both our happiness and our relationships is worth the effort to remove! (continued on page 4)

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Tricycle Rage by Child Care Exchange

In his article, "Power Struggles: Early Experiences Matter," James Garbarino explains why it is so important that we help children with aggressive behavior in the early years:

"Research by psychologist Leonard Eron ["A Reason to Hope: A Psychosocial Perspective on Youth and Violence] documents that by age eight, patterns of aggressive behavior and belief are crystallizing, so much so that, without intervention, they tend to continue into adulthood. When they began their studies in the 1960s, Eron and his colleagues asked eight-year-olds to identify the aggressive children in their classrooms. 'Who are the children in our class who hit people, who start fights, who kick people?' they asked.

"When they followed up on these children three decades later, they found that by and large, the children identified as aggressive at age eight became the adults who, at age 38, hit people in their families, got into fights in the community, and drove their cars aggressively. By the way, this gives a developmental spin to the problem of road rage; it probably started as 'tricycle rage.'"

Bilingualism and the Brain: A Recent Study

Speaking multiple languages may be an advantage in more ways than one: a new study suggests that bilinguals are speedier task-switchers than monolinguals.

Task-switching and its real-world applications

Task-switching—the ability to mentally “switch gears” and refocus on new goals—is a valuable skill that has numerous practical uses. You use it to shift attention from the wheel to the road while driving, or to switch gears between offense and defense in a team sport. Bilingualism has already been associated with a number of cognitive advantages, and now a 2010 study from *Language and Cognition* has investigated how bilingualism might enhance crucial task-switching skills in young adults.

This Carnegie Mellon University study recruited 88 college students, half of whom were monolingual and half of whom were bilingual. Both groups had about equal SAT scores, suggesting no inherent difference in cognitive ability.

Each participant sat in front of a screen with two different kinds of tasks assigned to each of their two hands. As cues appeared onscreen, one hand was responsible for identifying the color of the cue. The other hand was responsible for identifying the shape of the cue.



There were two aspects to this task-switching experiment: single-task trials and mixed-task trials. In single-task trials, participants identified *either* color or shape but never switched between the two tasks. In mixed-trial tasks, participants frequently switched between color and shape identification tasks—a more difficult procedure.

Researchers compared single-task and mixed-task reaction times to determine how reaction time and accuracy differed between groups and trial types.

Bilinguals were much faster than monolinguals on trials that required task-switching—their reactions were 6 milliseconds quicker on average. Both groups, however, were equally quick to respond on single-task trials, which did not involve switching.

Task-switching and executive control

This 2010 study contributes to a growing body of evidence suggesting that bilinguals enjoy enhanced

executive control compared to monolinguals. Executive control refers to a combination of cognitive abilities—including task-switching—that help you make decisions, control impulses, and plan thoughtfully. It's long been thought that constant management and monitoring of two languages improves executive control—a belief that this Carnegie Mellon study supports.



August 19th—
August 30th

Babies Raise Their Parents

"Children influence their parents as much as parents influence their children," writes Alison Gopnik in **The Philosophical Baby**. "Individual differences in the ways that children act lead to differences in the ways that parents act."

"The very same parent may treat two siblings very differently. You can see this in extreme cases, such as cases of abuse. Very often, one child in a family ends up being abused. Sickly or irritable children seem especially vulnerable. But it seems to happen in more ordinary cases, too.

Parents respond to different children in different ways and two siblings may, literally, grow up with very different parents....

"It's not just that it's impossible to interact with very different children in the same way. In fact, even if you did exactly the same thing with each of your children, your actions would mean something different. Put the wiggly, active, thrill-seeking sister in a bouncy swing and she is overjoyed. Put the timid, shy, stay-close-to-home sister in the swing and she is terrified."

The Politics of Pre-K by Connie Mathiessen

Here's a no-brainer: would you rather give more kids the chance to succeed in school, or give smokers access to cheaper cigarettes?

That's what is at stake with the White House's plan for early education for all Americans. The proposal, which would make quality preschool available to all four-year olds from low- and moderate-income families (that is, families with an income of about \$46,000 a year for a family of four), would be funded by a boost in taxes on cigarettes.

U.S. behind on early learning

There are countless reasons that all kids should have access to preschool; here are just a few:

- Only 3 in 10 children in the U.S. have access to quality preschool.
- Children who spend a year in quality preschool do better in reading and math and have higher executive function skills than kids who do not, research shows.
- Quality preschool is cost effective: research shows a \$4 to \$11 return for every \$1 invested in early childhood programs for children from low-income families. The investment pays off with gains in lifelong earnings, and reduction in special education costs, crime, and welfare dependency.
- The U.S. ranks an embarrassing 25th among nations in spending on

early learning. Most major industrial countries provide more far support for preschool — including nations that routinely beat the U.S. on international proficiency tests.

Political stalemate

So why would anyone oppose preschool for all — except, perhaps, the tobacco industry? In fact, the preschool plan could easily become the latest casualty in Washington's tedious, ongoing brawl-athon: whatever one party proposes, the other side blocks. To date, not a single Republican lawmaker is supporting the plan. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell explained his opposition by saying he opposes tax hikes, but it's important to note that the plan won't increase the average American's tax bill; it will boost fees on a product that causes 443,000 deaths a year in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control. (Moreover, taxes on cigarettes have been shown to reduce smoking, particularly among young people.)

But Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is optimistic: he told education reporters recently that he's in conversation with a number of Republicans, and is hopeful that some will ultimately back the plan. "This is a bipartisan issue," Duncan insists. "Other nations aren't stuck



with political gridlock and dysfunction; they are investing heavily in early childhood education. I want our kids to have the same opportunities."

Conservative support for preschool

In fact, a number of conservatives reject the notion that increasing access to preschool is a partisan issue. Ed Source reported recently that military leaders, prominent business groups, and faith organizations, swayed by research demonstrating the value of early education, have thrown their support behind the plan.

Writing in the *New York Times*, Gail Collins pointed out that, even though preschool for all is a popular idea, its supporters are no match for lobbyists funded by the tobacco industry and other special interests. So — it's up to us. Are we going to protect smokers — or give more kids a better shot at a brighter future?

Four Things That Matter Most in Parenting (continued from front page)

Your Relationship with Your Parents and Your Children

The relationship we have with our parents influences the relationship we have with our children. Even if our parents have died, they continue to strongly influence our lives. Mike & The Mechanics' song "In the Living Years" captures it well:

"I know that I'm a prisoner to all my father held so dear. I know that I'm a hostage to all his hopes and fears. I just wish I could have told him in the living years."

You do not have to wait until someone is dying to say the four things. Expressing love, gratitude and forgiveness can be woven into your daily life. Saying these four things to those who are most precious to you will strengthen your relationships with them. Try doing it today!



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HOLIDAY** 

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COMPUTERS (\$1000 OR LESS PER ITEM)
SCHOOL SUPPLIES (\$20 OR LESS PER ITEM)

**FIRST DAY OF
SCHOOL IS...**



**MONDAY,
August 5th**