

## Chapter 9

# You and Your Parents

*It seemed like everything I did was wrong. Jim, pick up your socks. Jim, don't wear your dirty shoes in here. Jim, you're late again! Jim, I need your help, so come home early. Jim, why do you give me such a hard time? Jim, get off the phone. My mom was nagging me all the time. I would come in late. I would barely eat what she cooked. I would talk on the phone for hours. We were both really unhappy at home. I was always in trouble with her. Then my older brother Steve came home from college for the summer. Steve got along with her. She seemed to love him so much more and it made me really mad. I was the bad one and he was the good guy. When I told him how much it bugged me, he just laughed at me and said that he was just like me. He said that after going away to college he realized that mom was just a regular person and she worked really hard to give him things that she never had—like college. He asked me if I ever did anything nice for her. Did I ever ask her how she was, or if I could do something around the house to help out. Steve said that doing some little things here and there, and not always fighting with her, would change things. I tried it. Mom is actually kind of cool. We even rented a movie together the other night and ordered pizza. Things have changed a lot since I started to look at her differently. She even told me about some of the problems she has at work. I still slip sometimes and act the way I used to. Things aren't ideal. But they are much better. I just never thought of her as anything but my mom before.*



*Jim, 14*

Parents are normal people. You are not like your friends just because you are the same age, and parents don't all think and act the same way just because they are parents. One parent may be quiet about showing how he cares. Another parent may be openly affectionate. Some parents show that they love you by being strict. Other parents show that they love you by discussing problems honestly. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, some kids are closest to family friends or live with relatives—that's okay. You can think of those people as your parents as you go through this section.

One thing that most parents have in common is that they want the best for you. They want you to be happy, because they love you. So let's take a look at parents' love.

## What Do They Do?

- ☉ *My mother helps me with my math homework every night even though I know she is tired from work and would rather rest.*
- ☉ *My dad makes breakfast on Sunday mornings and sometimes takes my brother and me to help out with the houses he builds.*
- ☉ *My mom tells me that I am the prettiest girl in the whole world, and I think that she actually believes it!*
- ☉ *When I have something important on my mind, my mom always finds time to listen to me, and I know she understands.*



## Your Parents

How do your parents show that they love you? With some parents it may not be obvious at first that they are acting with your best interests in mind. Your parents may have a hard time telling you how they feel—so they show it instead.

Some parents may make a big deal over a birthday by buying you a present, a card, giving you money or throwing a party for you. Other parents may be more quiet about their love. They are simply there for you when you need them, and you know that you can count on them. Even if you have to be a bit of a detective, look carefully at your parents' actions and we are convinced you

will see how much they love you.

Dan, a single parent of three boys from California, feels that the most important way that a parent can show love for his children is through his day-to-day actions.

*I have three boys—Walt, 16, James, 12, and Terry, 10. They are all very different. They have different interests and personalities. I think that the most important way to show my sons that I care about them is to spend time with them. I don't forget their birthdays, but I don't make as big a deal about them as some parents. I am with my kids every day, when they need me. Sometimes we argue and they don't like it that I am strict. But I can't let them do whatever they want until they are more responsible. We do homework together, play soccer and sometimes go to movies. I think that a lot of parents today are confused about what their kids need. They don't need piles of new clothes and expensive toys. They need to be with their parents, and to learn how to behave in the home. My parents were old-fashioned. To me everything begins in the home.*

Every parent will show his love differently than the next. After all, no two relationships are exactly alike. One parent's way is not necessarily better than the other. It is good to keep in mind that even when people love you, they sometimes make mistakes and may say or do things that hurt and upset you. No one is perfect, even parents.

Like Jim, you might find that you get along better with your parents when you are able to understand them. Ask yourself, *How does my mom or dad feel? Why did mom or dad do that? Is he or she having a hard time at work?* If you had a friend who was upset, you would probably want to ask her some of those questions.

## Parents Around the World

By talking to a few people who grew up in other countries, we got an idea how different parents are and how different parents act. Some countries have strong traditions which most people follow. Other countries don't. Here is what we discovered.

### Zambia, Africa

*In Africa the parents show their love for their children in a different way than in America. In my family my father did not show me love directly, but through my mom. My dad was there. He was the bread-winner, but mostly he communicated with me through my mom. My parents were especially proud when my brothers, sisters and I*



*did well in school. My mom did everything to help me learn about being a woman. She taught me how to cook, manage a house and take care of a future family. If I could not do these things well now it would be shameful to my mother. My father wanted my brothers to be educated and carry on his name. My father taught my brothers how to be men. They went hunting and played games that only men played. Although life in my country is also changing we still have many traditions. In Africa when a woman gets married her family receives a dowry from her husband's family. In my tribe the family usually gives cows. It is a symbol of being grateful for a man's new wife, a sign of respect to her parents, and an offering to them since she will take his name and join his family.*

Monje Nyondo

### Korea

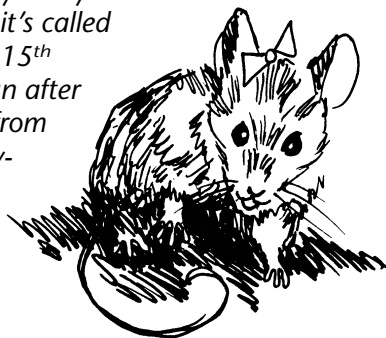
*I was the oldest son in my family. In Korea the oldest son inherits everything from the parents and is expected to take care of them. It is an honor, but at the same time a huge responsibility. I always remembered that my parents were depending on me. In Korea you are like a part of your parents. If you do something stupid they will feel embarrassed, as if it was them. The worst thing you can do is to ruin your parents' good name. If something bad happens in your family you keep it a secret and don't show your emotions on your face. In the West people are more independent. In Korea you won't see old people in nursing homes. Old people are really respected. If an old woman steps into the middle of heavy traffic in Seoul every car will come to a halt and wait until she gets all the way to the other side.*

Jin Ho Pak

### Cuba

*When I turned 15 years old my parents had a huge party for me. We didn't have much money so we had to plan everything ahead of time and save. My mother made me a pink gown, and dyed my shoes to match. This is an important tradition in Cuba, it's called Quince Ano, and it is the celebration of a girl's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. They think of you as more of a woman after that, instead of a little girl. I felt so much love from my parents at that time because they did everything for me and wanted me to be happy and feel beautiful.*

Estrella Martinez



## From the Parent's View

Do you think that you and your parents look at your relationship the same way? Do you ever wonder what your parents think? We talked to several parents about their families. Some parents were content, and some were frustrated. Some weren't sure what to think. Here is what some parents told us.

### Russia

*My children are the most important thing in the world to me. I want them to be happy and to feel that they are always loved. Sometimes helping them to become more mature means not always being nice. Being strict with them is hard, but I think it is one way that I can show them that I really love them and that I am thinking about their future.*

*Sergey, a father of three*

### Ukraine

*I love my daughter, although I don't always tell her that in words. When she is sad and lonely, I feel sad and lonely too and I want to comfort her; when she is happy I can't help but to feel happy also. I would do anything for her, and I think that most other mothers feel the same way about their children.*

*From Lara, mother of one*

### U.S.A.

*I want my son and my daughter to know that I have confidence in them. I told them that when they are in a crunch they should listen to their inner voice and they will make the right choices. I know I can't always be there to help them and tell them what to do. That's scary for a parent because you want to make life easier for them, but the best you can do is to help them grow to be strong and sure about what they believe in.*

*Margie, mother of two*

### Mexico

*I especially worry about my daughters. I want them to have everything, but I can't give them everything because money doesn't grow in the yard. I can help them to go to college, and that is something I could never afford. I love my children, and more than anything I want them to be happy people.*

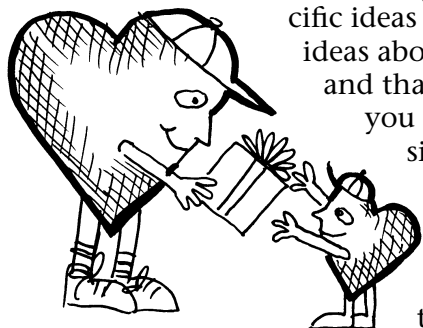
*Juan Carlos, father of five*

## Your Future

Chances are excellent that your parents have been thinking about your future for a long time, maybe since before you were even born. No matter what your parents think, whether they want you to go to college or join the military or learn a particular trade, they want you to be happy and successful when you are an adult.

You may not agree with some of your parents' specific ideas for your future. You may have your own ideas about what you want to do when you are older, and that is okay. Try to remember your parents want you to have the things they did not have, or they simply want you to have the things you need that will make you happy. No parent ever wishes that their child will grow up to be poor, not have an education or be in an unhappy marriage. They may worry when they see you going through phases and think that it will be permanent. You may want to

keep this in mind the next time they get mad at you for not doing your homework or not going to bed on time. But try to see the reasons behind your parents' actions. This will improve your relationship with them. Remember, they are not trying to ruin your life, they're just helping you to make the best of it.



## Journal

What do you like about your family traditions? Is there anything you would like to change? If so, what would the new traditions be?

## To Do

1. Some children do not have parents who are close to them, but they have aunts and uncles or other family members who are like their parents. Can you think of some of the things that a close aunt, uncle or grandparent may do to show their love? What would you like them to do?
2. Imagine that you have a pen pal who lives in another country. You want to know more about the land he lives in and especially if his family is like yours. Choose a country where you would like to have such a pen pal. Go to the



library and look at books about his country. What did you discover? How do you think his family is different from yours? How do you think it is the same? What questions would you like to ask him? If you wrote him a letter to tell him about your family, what would you tell him?

3. Write a story about one of the best times you ever had with your parents. What did you do? Was it a special day or just an ordinary day? How old were you? When you are finished, show your story to a partner and talk about your stories together.

## Key Points

- ☉ Parents want their children to be happy and to have the best possible future.
- ☉ Most parents want their children to have more than they had and be of better character than they are.



**You get the best out of others  
when you give the best of yourself.**

**Harvey Firestone**

