

Love, authority and coherence

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Key words: love, authority, coherente, violence, limits, punishment, rules

Living your children is regarded as something logical and natural but combining love with responsibility about their protection and education becomes a task which can sometimes be impossible for parents (they have no formation or support in these moments)

Educating includes three essential components: love, authority and coherente. These three elements also mean a relational and personal learning that is going to transform parents as people and that will ensure the optimum development of children.

Affection is like a mirror in which everybody look at themselves and the starting point to build your personality and trust in the world. Your own image and also others' image can change to a great extent depending on the messages sent by the mirror. Educative messages always come through affective ties. If parents want their educative messages to reach their children, make children think about them and get assumed, they must first learn to love them and to build an affective tie with them.

However, gaining a position of authority over children is a task that takes even more time. Learning to say "no", deciding which are the rules to be educated in children, the implied limits of these rules and the ability to adapt rules to the natural evolution of children and achieving that children assume rules as their own and obey them are part of this task. Educating is a gradual process in which rules are part of the relationship, they are gradually and jointly built with children, they adapt to personal and situational features and, once an agreement is reached and they are defined, must be obeyed. Rules and limits cannot be negotiated because they are one of the children's right, not their parents. They mean the right to grow up with the conditions that allow their full development.

A third element is needed to gain that authority: coherente. Education is not a matter of words but a matter of facts and feelings. The values which are the life guidelines for parents and for the social, affective and relational environment created for children and families

are transmitted to children. Civic education is not just an educative subject but also an everyday pattern offered to children. Coherence between words and actions, between the contents transmitted by adults to children and between timely messages makes consisten those values and makes them real and touchable.

The elimination of any form of violence when bringing your children up is extremely important for affection, authority and coherence. Physical and psychological punishment are violent ways which have always been part of the upbringing process and that are regarded as necessary for child education. There must be a change in social attitudes. This implies that people understand physical or psychological punishment not as a parental right or as an educative duty, but as a mistake led by being stressful, tired or unable to solve a conflict and that mistake cannot be justified. If this is followed, parents will make and effort to avoid these punishments.

Nowadays, physical and psychological punishment to children in families are the only ways of socially accepted violence because they are not regarded as violence. If an adult slaps someone, even if the person is unknown, it is not a violent action because there is a sense of property and of privacy among families that leads to the justification of these violent actions. Moreover, questioning physical and psychological punishment means that parents question their own behaviour as parents and also their own parents' behaviour and that can sometimes be painful. Admitting a mistake of someone you love is even more difficult that to admit your own mistakes.

Furthermore, slaps, shouts, and insults transmit children three negative message: it shows them that the people who love them and must protect them has the right to attack them, that people with authority over them can abuse this authority and attack them and that violence is a real way to solve problems. When we hit our children because they have hit another child, when we tell them off for using swearwords which are learnt because of

parents or when we humiliate children in the eyes of their siblings, we are not just hurting their identity and development but also abusing of the power given by their love and care.

Slaps must not be considered as a method to set limits, limits must be set before to avoid slaps and we must also assume that respect towards people's integrity and dignity begins in the respect of our own children.

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