

DEVELOPING MATURE KIDS

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I am sure that we could all describe the difference between a mature and immature person. You can spot an immature adult a mile away. They are often funny, noisy, gregarious types who are begging for attention. They respond with their feelings rather than their minds. They do not read the signs from those around them when their behavior or conversation is inappropriate to the occasion.

Immature adults have trouble making wise decisions because they are thinking in the 'now' rather than longer term. They feel the need to have their immediate needs met rather than anything else. They often draw attention away from themselves when they have done something wrong, refusing to take responsibility for their own actions. They may act on the assumption that it is OK to break the law or lie, as long as they are not found out. In general, immature people want to remain in their 'play' childlike state rather than give serious thought to who they are, why they are here and what their long-term purpose or goals might be. They tend to wear their heart on their sleeve and get hurt easily.

Mature people do not need to draw attention from others for the simple reason that they already feel secure within. They don't rely on the affirmation of others to gauge their own worth. For the same reason they are not thin skinned. Negative words will bounce off more easily when they feel positive about themselves and their own ability. Mature people tend to forgive more readily because they don't allow stuff to fester inside. They have learned how to let it go and move on. They don't spend time putting others down (gossiping) to make themselves look better. They look forward to each new day and see mountains are there to be conquered.

How can we teach our kids maturity? All of the points above can be instilled into our children through training and role modeling. Start by not babying your child or indulging their every move. Teach them values such as respect for others (rather than gossiping or putting others down). Teach and model forgiveness instead of bearing grudges. How wonderful to experience the freedom of letting things go rather than holding on. Integrity teaches us that we need to do the right thing whether anyone is looking at us or not.

All of these and more important values can be instigated from the time a child can understand. Our children watch, listen and learn. They need to hear our encouragement when they get it right. It gives them the confidence they need to feel good about themselves and not need to rely solely on the acceptance of others. We also need to teach them how to manage success, how to accept praise, but not to reach a point of showing off. This can be difficult for young children.

Most importantly we must allow our kids to be 'kids'. They are not mini adults. They will become over-exuberant at times, but that feeling of excitement in a young person is natural. Rather than frown on their actions, sometimes we just need to let them have their moment and then quietly tell them to calm themselves. Share their successes and walk them through their disappointments and they will become that mature successful adult you wished for and a blessing on the community around them.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org and check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blogsite at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com