

IT IS ALL ABOUT PERCEPTION

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

The other day on Face Book I noticed that my daughter-in-law had posted a funny conversation our grand kids had just had on their way home in the car. Apparently, they were sitting in the back seat singing a welcome song they had learned at church. It was a very loud and boisterous rendition. When they had finished 4 year-old Sam turned to 6 year-old Tommy and gushed, "Tommy, you rock my face off!" Right back came Tommy's reply. "Sam, I don't know why you keep calling me a rocker. I am actually an artist."

It really is strange isn't it how two people can look at the very same thing and place a completely different spin or value on it. It is like one person seeing the glass half full while the other sees it half empty. Two prisoners looked out through prison bars. One saw the mud and the other the stars. One style of music really gets some people going while the same music drives others mad. Some subjects are like hot potatoes to us and others leave merely a ripple in our equilibrium.

Why is it that we each have such differing perceptions on so many things in life? Politics is a great example. We could all argue till the cows come home why this or that should or should not be a law. Some think giving illegal immigrants two-year visas is a great idea while others are incensed by it.

So where do our perceptions come from? They are often formed by the values we have been taught from childhood. Sometimes, as in the case of Sam and Tommy, one's passion is drums and loud guitars, while the other sees himself in a different light – his music being an art form. These perceptions stem from their personalities and musical tastes.

So, our perceptions are influenced by our values that then initiate our opinions. I can't think of anyone I know who does not have an opinion about something. Expressing our views on issues is a fundamental part of life, but it is also important to accept and appreciate others' opinions as valid also. It is a good thing to involve our children in healthy discussions about topics of the day and to tell them you value their ideas and thoughts. Because the opinions and decisions we make throughout our lives are governed by our core values, it is imperative that we, as parents, instill healthy values in our children. By doing this they will develop a positive and hopeful view on life and base their decisions accordingly.

There are some very unhealthy perceptions that often go unnoticed when parents do not encourage everyday conversation with their kids. We need to be a barometer within our own homes to ensure our children's minds stay positive. Their brains are like blotting paper. They watch our every move and sometimes,

without realizing it, we are influencing their attitudes in an unhealthy way. Are we quick to criticize? Do we throw our weight around at home? Do we think our opinion is the only right one? Are we always truthful or do we work on the principle that it is OK if we don't get caught? Do we show mercy to those in need, value all people as equal and see failure as an opportunity to improve?

Our perceptions can vary from one thing to another, from one day to the next and can be as different from others as chalk is from cheese. It all adds to the colorful tapestry of life. So, a big thumbs up to Sam the Rocker and Tommy the artist. May they never be discouraged from seeing themselves as they really are stars in their own minds!

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.