

PREPARING YOUR TEENS FOR A GREAT MARRIAGE

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It is all very well teaching our teens about how to find the perfect mate. It is quite another dynamic to be that perfect mate to someone else. There are always two sides to everything. It reminds me of President Kennedy's famous line, "It is not what can my country do for me, but what can I do for my country?" It is not, "Who can I find that will make me happy, but how can I be the best possible partner and friend in this life-long relationship?" It is a two-way thing. Each person needs to bring equal value to the relationship.

Perhaps we should start with beliefs and values. It is vital that our kids have clear, unshakable spiritual beliefs and strong values. How do we, as parents, implant these qualities in our kids? First, we have to model them. Then we have to teach our children what we believe and why. With love and guidance, effective role modeling and clearly stated expectations, they will more easily adopt our beliefs and values. As young adults considering a life partner, they are more likely to automatically gravitate towards those who think similarly to them.

Consider respect. If we want others to respect our kids, then this also must start in our own home. We need to show respect for one another, parent to parent, parent to child, child to parent, and child to child. Respect reaches beyond the home. We need to respect authority figures, leaders and friends. When our kids see us model respectfulness, and we expect the same of them, they will become wonderful employees, friends and partners.

We want our kids to find a partner who is totally trustworthy and has an excellent work ethic. That special someone is looking for those same qualities in our kids. Trust is learned when our kids observe us being totally honest and keeping our word. By giving them responsibility and praise for doing a great job our kids become not only trustworthy, but also confident in their ability to work things out for themselves. When parents work hard they show their kids that productivity brings rewards. We can also show them that reward is not merely self-serving, but that if they engage in acts of kindness this benefits others also.

We want our children to find partners who can communicate on a similar level, share similar interests and extend their potential. When we show interest in their aspirations, go with them to their games, their music recitals and get involved in their hobbies, they will know what this kind of support feels like. When we help them discover their special skills and abilities they will hopefully bring that level of support and encouragement to their own relationship.

By parents modeling and teaching their children these things they are building a legacy that has far-reaching generational effects. Parents have a

tremendous responsibility to ensure that they give their children the best help and advice they can.

We have learned from our parents and from our own experience. We have been guided through life by our own beliefs and values. We have found what sustains friendships and what makes a good marriage. Let's create the best possible Mr. or Ms. Right for someone else.

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.