

YOU'RE THE VOICE

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A great song came out in the late 80's called, 'You're the Voice', sung by John Farnham (formerly of the Little River Band). The message in the song says that we shouldn't sit in silence and fear. We should stand up, and by using our voice make our beliefs and concerns clearly known.

Although this was a protest song, I consider it imperative that, for the sake of our own stability and sense of purpose, we all need to be clear about what we stand for AND have the courage to say so. We need to stand up and be counted. If we don't know who we are and what we believe we will constantly be influenced by any and every other influential 'voice' that comes along. We will float with the tide like jellyfish. We will always be living in the moment and be dictated to by our feelings rather than making rational, purposeful decisions.

How confused children must become when there are so many voices trying to sway every aspect of their lives; pushing them every which way on anything from fashion to interpretation of honesty and morality, ethics, gender identity, spiritual beliefs and much, much more. These voices come from all directions – parents, friends, relations, caregivers, TV, video games, the Internet, movies and so on.

Have you, as a parent, made your voice heard in your family home? How great an influence your voice has is determined by how clearly and consistently you have stated your values and expectations, how successfully you model them and how well you train your children to follow.

As a 'stay at home' parent, your very young child will hear your voice predominantly and will not be as likely to be influenced by mixed messages – unless you are inconsistent in your expectations. As a child mixes with others outside the home, they will be required to obey other voices. Those clear lines that you have drawn at home are then challenged by other's expectations and before you realize it, confusion and frustration arises. This is a perfect time to talk to your children about why you have chosen particular values. They need to see the 'value' in the values you have chosen, rather than just be told the consequences of not following them.

The most stabilizing factor in any home is a strong set of family values. It is important, therefore, to endorse your values and beliefs regularly through word and more particularly by action. You can guard your children from being influenced by 'other voices' by preparing them ahead of time. Talk about the way others think and live. Rehearse scenarios so that when your child is away from your influence, they will make wise decisions from the foundation of knowing what is good and right. Praise them for well made choices and coach them through the inappropriate decisions so they will be better prepared next time.

Expect to be challenged by your teens about what you believe. If they don't see what they consider a good enough reason they may well choose to live by different principles that make more sense to them. In this case you should discuss the differences in opinion between you, and make a reasonable adjustment. If their newly adopted principles conflict with yours and are detrimental to the smooth running of your home, and they are over 18, you may need to advise your child to move out of the home. If you regularly discuss potential or actual issues you will most likely avoid unwanted confrontation with your teens and arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

It is important that our children feel loved and secure. This can be achieved when they know who they are and what their family stands for. They are much less likely to be influenced by current negative trends and societal compromise when they have been guided by a clear voice at the head of the family. They will then be suitably prepared to be an influential voice wherever they are in the future.

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.