



# Formative Parenting

*Cultivating Character in Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## **Parent as Mentor, Part 1** **MENTOR THE NEED TO FOCUS ON THE PRESENT**

Who would argue with the song lyric **“A fool can lose tomorrow reaching back to yesterday?”** And yet, how often do we fritter life away by ruminating over the past that cannot be changed or the future that may not evolve? Sure, we want to cultivate memories that refresh us and give us life. And we want to be enthusiastic and exuberant about our dreams and desires for the days ahead. But when considering past, present, and future, teach children to put their energy into the present. Jesus said it this way, **“Do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”** (Mt. 6:34).

Isn't that true? Worrying drains you of energy, and fear paralyzes. You end up missing the grace of the moment. Too often today is wasted, opportunities are missed, and hope is dimmed—all because you spent your day rehashing something from the past or used time to imagine the worst about tomorrow. Parent mentors give their children an invaluable gift by teaching them to embrace the gift of today. What life example can you recall, that you can share with your children, to illustrate the wisdom of this Gospel mantra?

Usually the term *mantra* refers to a sacred word, a chant, or a sound that a person repeats during meditation, or an expression that spectators repeat during a competition activity. This newsletter is using the term *mantra* as a synonym for *a quotation that is repeated often enough that it shapes attitudes and actions*.

- Long ago I heard it said: **“Today is the tomorrow that you worried about yesterday.”** What wisdom is packed into this sound bite! All the worrying in the world cannot hold back time. A new day will occur in 24 hours; and when it does, life will proceed and you will live to tell the tale and maybe even grow because of it! Certainly God's grace will be there to greet you and transform sorrow into new life. Place this mantra before children and let them pull it apart, explain it, and illustrate it with examples. Post it as a visual reminder: on the refrigerator, on the bathroom mirror, above the entryway to a room, on the family prayer table, on top of the TV, or anywhere that it may easily catch your eye.

- A slogan attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt proclaims: **“Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is a gift. Perhaps that is why it is called the present.”** Today is most certainly a gift. The way that we use today will determine our future and define our past. We no longer have any control over yesterday. We certainly have no power over tomorrow. But we can choose how we will live and love today, what foundation we lay for tomorrow, and what to learn from yesterday.

- From the ancient writings of a Sanskrit poem we read: **“For yesterday is but a memory, and tomorrow a vision. But today well-lived, makes every yesterday a memory of happiness, and every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this day.”** Engage your family in naming examples of living well the gift of today. For example, when we choose to share, cooperate, do random acts of kindness, surprise others in pleasant ways, meet our responsibilities without coaxing, sustain a balanced diet, participate in physical exercise, get sufficient sleep, speak the truth in love, forgive others, repair a break in a relationship, admit mistakes, ask for help, take turns, practice self-control, and so on, then today is a happy day and we sleep peacefully at night. And, when the morning comes, we are proud of the way that we lived yesterday and energized to begin a new day. At the same time, the life-giving practices of today lay the foundation for a positive future.

**Be an Isaiah parent! Speak to your children a word that will rouse them! (Is. 50:4)**

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