

Friday Folder

Eureka Middle
School

What Does Your Family Value?

It's a catch phrase that gains momentum during an election year and then gets pummeled every time a politician falls from grace. Values can be controversial, emotion-charged and completely different from one family to the next. Any episode of Wife Swap will remind us that what is fundamental to one family, is often foreign to the next.

But despite the controversy and extremes that exist, certain values are a critical and research-based foundation for child development.

Search Institute has identified "Positive Values" as one of the 40 Developmental Asset categories, which means research shows they are characteristics of healthy, caring, resilient kids. The more assets youth have, the more likely they'll resist risky behaviors in the future. Positive values assets include caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, re-

sponsibility and restraint.

There are endless values we might claim as important in our lives. My family values time, education, efficiency, and travel. But here I'll focus on the research-based positive values identified to help raise asset-rich kids.

Honesty.

Honest isn't something we became overnight. It's just the way my husband and I were each raised, and something we expect as a fundamental truth in our own home. It's taught sometimes by doing, but usually in very small ways every day, or every hour.

Caring. Parents teach this in the way we treat our family members, talk about our friends and reach out to needy strangers.

Equality and Social Justice. We communicate our values about fairness by the way we react to poverty and hunger in our communities, when

we drop coins in the Salvation Army bucket or contribute to the food pantry.

Integrity.

Adults pass on our integrity when we help a friend stand up to a bully, and when we speak out about our beliefs even when they're unpopular.

Responsibility. We raise responsible kids when we expect them to contribute to the family, right a wrong, and fix what they broke.

Restraint.

And parents communicate values about drug and alcohol use by how we imbibe, and in the candid talks we have with our kids.

My tagline is, "The better ME I can be, the better PARENT I can be." We're all works in progress, but sometimes our job as parents is less about what we do, and far more about who we are. What does your family value? How do you pass it to your children?

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