



Parenthood is a calling—a way to find meaning in your own life. Spirituality is about transcending any limitations on your vision. In raising a child, you are contributing to society and to the future.

Sacred Time with Children

by Thomas Moore

Recently, my 15-year-old daughter was diagnosed with an autoimmune illness, and because she was not able to continue her normal high school studies, I decided to homeschool her. Every morning, we meet at a table in our living room and learn physics, biology, English, music and American history. I used to think I had no time for my writing, lecturing and correspondence. Now I have only minutes. But the deep pleasure and satisfaction I get from being so close to my daughter more than makes up for loss of time. Our time together is not just precious; it is sacred. Teaching her has become part of my spiritual life.

People often ask me how to get more soul into their lives. I think it is best to do this concretely and focused

outwardly. I usually say, “Get some children in your life.

Take care of them, teach them, play with them. You will be giving them a priceless model of how to be thoughtful, giving adults, and they will give you soul.”

You don’t have to be an actual parent. You can be a temporary parent: spending time with neighborhood children, the offspring of friends and relatives or the children of the world, who badly need you. You can parent by taking a momentary, active interest in any child you encounter.

Many people seem to think of spirituality as ethereal, remote and abstract. They think it has to do with meditating, depriving yourself and becoming as virtuous as possible. But traditional teachings around the world suggest that spirituality is directly connected with the most ordinary human activities. When you’re a parent, you don’t have to go in search of ways of depriving yourself, and if by chance you should ever feel virtuous about your self-deprivations, your children will take that feeling away from you, too.

You have to be a guide for your child in the things that matter most: safety, health, learning, growing up, having a life vision and living ethically. Who else has such a profound and far-reaching job?

Parenthood is a calling—a way to find meaning in your own life. Spirituality is about transcending any limitations on your vision. In raising a child, you are contributing to society and to the future. You are going beyond yourself, not just in your thoughts and ideals, but in a real and tangible way. You may not be certain that you are always doing the right thing, and you may never see the full fruits of your effort. So you live by faith—and isn’t that the essence

of the spiritual life?

All the details of being a parent—cleaning, teaching, picking up, driving, paying for school and lessons, guiding, counseling, feeding, clothing and entertaining—take on a spiritual dimension. You are doing them in order to transform a child into a thoughtful, engaged adult. You are ministering. You are priest and priestess. You are unfolding the work you began when, in the holy act of sexual union, you brought forth a person with a soul and a spirit.

Like many things, parenthood can become an unconscious habit. To engage the soul and spirit, you have to contemplate your role and activities and envision them in spiritual terms. It might help to have some images, like sacred art, to remind you of the sanctity of your role. I have a statue of the Buddha with little monks, like children, crawling all over him. I always keep in mind Jesus’ instruction to his adult followers: “Let the children come to me.”

When you understand parenthood as a spiritual calling, you will be able to do the work better and with deeper satisfaction. Spiritual vision gives valuable emotional distance and disentangles your own past experiences and complex emotions from the present, so that you don’t pile them up on your child. In this way, spirit and soul work together to make for good parenting.

Many people around the world pray to God the Father, some to a Divine Mother. Native Americans pray to their grandparents. Such veneration is a sign that being a parent is a spiritual office. If you think of it in that way, you might find the task easier, realizing that when you are giving so much, you are becoming a vaster, more enlightened being.

Thomas Moore is the author of several inspirational books, including the best-selling Care of the Soul (at CareOfTheSoul.net). His 2008 release is A Life at Work: The Joy of Discovering What You were Born to Do.