

Progress, Not Perfection

Yesterday I noticed a bumper sticker in my dentist's parking lot which read, "Progress, not perfection."

Hundreds of examples of how to apply that motto to childrearing rushed through my head as I made my way past that shiny sedan. Although most of those ideas flew right out of my brain by the time I got to the keyboard, I'm happy to be able to share what I can recall:

Have you ever heard that if Christopher Columbus had invested one cent into a fund that yielded compound interest in 1492, that account would now be worth over \$95 billion?

The moral, in this case, is obviously that 'baby steps' work.

Just because you can't change the world (or yourself, or your spouse, or your child) does not mean that you ought not make the incremental changes that can accomplish a tremendous amount.

Let's take a simple example of a positive family change:

"I will stop raising my voice in my communication with my children."



What a wonderful, commendable resolution that is.

Realistically, it may last for two days, two weeks, or perhaps two months if we are particularly soft-tempered! The general pattern of events is that certain levels of frustration result in shouting, which, in turn, will result in giving up on the above-mentioned resolution.

A roughly translated quote from an ancient sage reads, "He who grabs all is left with none."

How aptly that describes our typical involvement in effecting positive changes.

As humans, we tend to reach for the stars. Thus, our failure to achieve those fantastic expectations results in discouragement.

Let's try a new strategy, a strategy of progress.

How differently would the atmosphere my household radiate if I cut down on the number of times I raise my voice- without altogether pledging to eliminate any and all shouting?

Like Columbus's proverbial penny, little changes add up to great transformations. A small, positive shift in our behavior is likely to create a pleasant ripple of change through our family life.

Find two or three minutes of solitude, and ask yourself this: What can I do to make my child's life a better one? Additional quality time, more patience during mealtime, taking up a joint hobby, reading a book together- are just a few of the ideas that suddenly come to mind.

Figure out the concept that will work best for you and your child, and commit yourself to create progress- not perfection!

Happy parenting- the job where perfection is always elusive!