



Overprotection vs. “underprotection”

By Fanny Pedraza

I consider being a mother and a grandmother the noblest roles I play in life. It is a privilege to share with God his creative power and to be a steward of his blessings, especially of his children. These roles are also the most challenging ones I play, because I do not want to make any mistakes.

In my effort to care for my children when they were babies, I controlled the food they ate, the images they saw, what they listened to, what they could touch. I was the sole provider of such stimuli. This changed as they grew older, and by the time they approached their pre-teen years, they seemed to be in a hurry to become more independent. The natural growth process and our society’s overemphasis on freedom were taking away my role. Deep in my heart, I felt this was not right.

When talking about child rearing, *overprotection* is a negative word for some. But is this really bad? If parents could protect their children with a vaccine to keep them from becoming physically, emotionally and spiritually contaminated, I believe they would gladly give it to them. Is there such a vaccine?

One toxic component of our modern environment is the inappropriate depiction in images or words of sex and erotic behavior. It is everywhere; it comes from every direction — sometimes subtly and at other times, openly, and it impacts us all almost inadvertently. Our children are exposed to it in and away from home, with friends, at school, at bookstores, or as they gain access to computers, television and movies. Billboards, commercials, modern dance movements, music and language bear the seal of it.

How could I offer my children a healthy air to breathe,? How could I safeguard our home to prevent them from becoming contaminated by so much toxicity?

As I grew up in my role as mother I realized that I had to teach them — at a very early age — the standards they would later need to regulate their lives in all settings. We needed to create quality time-sharing opportunities to discuss the stimuli that offered them positive influences; they needed to learn that their parents were consistently the main influence in their lives, not the media or any friend or group; that forming a moral conscience is extremely important and that this formation requires listening to the right voices, reading constructive materials and imitating the right behaviors.

In my family’s case this has been the vaccine that helped our children grow healthy in body, mind and spirit. Now I see them protecting their own children, safeguarding their environment to help them grow healthy, serving as their conscience while they learn to form their own, playing the role I played in their life. *Overprotecting* them?

For individual reflection:

Read and meditate on Ephesians 6:4 and Proverbs 22:6. How have God and you kept this promise?

Take time to share with your family

- ▶ Discuss the type of criteria you will use to choose audio and visual materials at home.
- ▶ Create opportunities to allow the Spirit to enter your home, by listening to good music, watching a good preselected movie, viewing a collection of works of art. Exchange impressions, critiques, questions and answers.
- ▶ Discuss what I Corinthians 6:19-20 and Romans 6:13 say about our body.

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