

A Lesson on Love: My First Year as a Parent

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Being a parent is the most lovely, lonely, tiresome and awesome experience I have ever encountered. There is so much happiness and so many tears. It's something some have even called the "world's toughest job" yet still consider the greatest joy. What is it about parenting that has people describing it so differently? Is it all it's chalked up to be?

The Sacred Responsibility of Parenting

There are few things in life that I've found to require as much dedication as being a parent. This strange little creature will be shaped and grow according to the actions I take each day. And, as though that weren't responsibility enough, there are the physical, mental and emotional demands of being a parent.

At first, the lack of sleep and freedom to spend even a little bit of time for myself was overwhelming—both were so much harder to come by than I could have ever imagined. But as time has gone by, I've expanded my own ability to care for others beyond myself, and it's all come together to form my family.

Each action I take influences my child. She imitates everything I do! When I clean, she cleans. When I eat, she wants to eat whatever I'm eating. If I speak using a gruff voice (very useful for storytelling), she starts to speak gruffly, too. My daughter is so acutely aware of everything I do. That means that I need to be just as aware—if not more so—because she is learning about the world and how people act in it through me.

What I've found as a parent is that I've had to completely give myself over to it. And, maybe, that's part of the reason parenting is seen as sacred. Just like any monk or guru, I've made my life about my practice. My practice just happens to be being a parent.

My Greatest Teacher Is My Child

As a parent, I have experienced a love like no other. This love, by the way, isn't the love that I have for my child. The most amazing love that I have experienced is the love that my child has for me. For, in this small, dynamic, little person, I have found a being that loves my entire existence—my flaws, my mistakes, my simple presence in her life. It's through my daughter that I have realized that someone can totally love me unconditionally, truly and beyond reason.

The love my daughter has for me is the reason I don't ever want to let her down. All the time, tears and work have required my complete dedication. After years of devotion, when my child grows up and it finally comes time to let her go, I know that she will have become such an integral part of my being that I'll be left with a hole in my heart. There will be a longing there that never ceases, but that's okay. I will have done my best to guide her through life, and letting her go is part of that process. The reward in the end—experiencing true love—makes it totally worth it.

A Reflection of Our Heavenly Parent

The Divine Principle teaches that God is our parent who created us for joy. Being a new parent myself, I'm given the chance to learn more about God's parental heart—witnessing the miracle of life, putting in the effort of guiding my child on a path of goodness, and then letting her go to exercise her own free will hoping that with my investment, she has developed a strong parent-child bond of love with me.

I know I've inherited God's heart for His and Her children—that same kind of heart that yearns to see ones child flourish and live in happiness. And now, when I see everyone else, they are no longer just friends, acquaintances or strangers, but I see them as God's children and I see what God desires for them.

When I became a parent, I struggled unlike ever before. At the center of all the dedication, however, is a child who loves me completely. Through her example, I've learned to love myself and others more deeply. I've also come to finally understand our Heavenly Parent's heart. Although part of me wants my daughter to stay this small forever, I look forward to everything else she has to teach me as she grows. Is parenting all it's chalked up to be? Well, I think so.