

Conscious Parenting

Rani Anggraeni Dewi

Accredited LVE Trainer, Couple Relationship Therapist, Mindful Living Therapist

For the past seven years, I have been actively involved in a program called “Training Living Values”, which provides training for educators working in public schools such as Madrasah and Pesantren. The program specifically focuses on training teachers about Values-based Education in public schools or boarding schools all over Indonesia. Parent-teacher partnership plays a significant role in a child’s education even though parents remain the primary educator. However, in live there was never a formal school to specifically teach prospective parents, is there?

This leads me to believe that if parents are not equipped with the same knowledge and skills of teachers at school, it will be difficult for them to educate and nurture the children together. At the same time, teachers and parents are expected to cooperate in the process of developing the pupil’s personality, whether is by cognitive learning or affective learning. So that, at the very least, they share the same perspective during the educational process takes place.

Through social media, we are often seeing or hearing multiple cases of physical or non-physical violence, such as verbal violence (violent communication), case in point: bullying. A variety of deviant behavior in both adults and children are rapidly escalates. In fact, there are plenty of parents who abuse their children for various reasons. This of course leads to violence among children, in the form of bullying. Even more painful is the fact that practice of violence in the name of religion is increasing at an alarming rate. This seems like an endless chain of violence. It is more than possible that our own children bear witness to these awful tragedies. Do we wish to pass these attitudes to the younger generation? The answer is absolutely not.

What we want is to pass on noble values, as well as noble manners, to our children. We teach religious education at home in the hope that it will increase faith of all family members. According to the book “Politik Pendidikan Agama” (2014) by Suhadi, religious study is partly responsible for developing a child’s social character, reinforcing their social awareness, and their honesty. As a country with a diverse religious and ethnic society, studies on faith is expected to foster inter-religious tolerance in Indonesia. Tolerance is one of universal values that should be a first in the family. Thee

fore, parents urgently need help raising their children to build a supportive atmosphere using an advanced method, one with a belief that it is considered a noble mission to learn about wise-minded parenting.

After that training lasted several meetings, I compiled a book of **“Nine Tactics To be A Wise Parent”** to serve as an input for Muslim parents because only wise-minded parenting makes wise children. If parents cannot set an example of a devout man, then we cannot expect our children to grow up a devout Muslim. We may feel like we are the ones educating our children, but simultaneously we also learn from them. However, deep down, we often dismissed their personal opinion only because we feel patronized, right?

As parents with deep understanding of **“Learning by doing”** theory, we need to have all the tools and skills to educate our children. However it needs to come from us. Meaning, children are taking examples on how we set ourselves and taking care of ourselves. With all those tools and skills, parents would know what to expect during parenting process. Especially when we have multiple children, each with their own nature and character. According to the author, parenting is a lot like art, besides requiring love and patience; it is also the art of playing with distinctive ways and skills.

Author believes that most parents are relying on religious studies to determine their parenting ways. In particular, children were given religious education. Of course this is because parents are under the impression that children will grow up to be virtuous by studying religion from the early age. That is why, it is crucial to not treat religious education as a collection of dogma that must be memorized by children, it must also relate to character building. Throughout this training, the participants – consisting of parents and parents-to-be – will be introduced to harmonious and introspective communication skills; to give children opportunities to internalize values exemplified by **their parents. Especially in terms of accepting other people’s differences, and helping those in need in the name of love for humanity.** Children should be introduced from the early age that each individual is unique, with their own advantages as well as disadvantages that could be improved. It is important for children to exemplify ways to be polite and **respecting people’s views that are different from theirs.** Family is the best platform for children to learn how to live harmoniously with others.

Conscious Parenting

Parenting experience creates mixed memories. With each glimpse of happiness, comes negative thoughts that can trigger and pain. One of the parents comes to me with an admission; **“ We have come to realize that we have not been good parents to our children”.** Others are wondering, **:How come it is difficult to talk to my children? They always seem to talk back to me...”** Others experiencing different struggles: **“What is wrong with me? I have adult children who are still overly dependent on me”** but it especially breaks my heart when I hear parents saying **：“ My child has to frequently**

changing schools because he feels like he never fits in with teachers and other students,” or “I always get angry whenever children refuse to do what I want them to do”. Most of these children are holding a reputation as the school’s troublemaker. However, these complaints were only half the story.

We are born with love, and to love we returned. Indeed, our soul is filled with love and, naturally, as a human being love is the foundation of how we act and behave **towards ourselves and to other God’s creations. Thus, it is reasonable to define love as the** basis of parenting from early age and throughout adulthood. Children are believed to be carrying noble values when they are still only fetus. Therefore, it is our responsibility as parents to set an example, to create and develop supportive atmosphere that provides children with comfort; so they are able to actualize the potential of the noble values that have been brought with them into the world.

In Values-based education, there are five circles of human emotions that must be fulfilled: the need to feel secured, to feel understood, to feel loved, to feel appreciated and to feel valued. Once these emotional needs have been reasonably satisfied, anyone will gain a motivation to act positively, to have a desire to achieve as well lead a happy life, take responsibility for their own actions and always prefer honesty above all else. They are capable of working together, demonstrate a tolerance attitude towards others, dare to speak the truth, and not afraid to look different and be unique.

However, practicing Values-based parenting is not about parenting is not without difficulties. In general, prospective father and mothers tend to skip the discussion about parenting system for their children, and leave everything flows without a plan. Except perhaps, choosing beautiful names hoping that in the future, the children will grow to live up to the names given to them. Parents usually experiment based on many different parenting books, theories and seminars. They also tend to follow the old parenting ways, which have been passed from generations to generations, without **considering their effectiveness for today’s generations**, who live in an entirely different time from them.

We should not only pay concern about children’s physical needs. It is very unwise to rely only upon our sight. Obviously because parents are much older that do not mean children are only small humans with no knowledge. They also deserve the right to have an opinion, to be heard, and to feel secured. Some training participants find that most parents giving children commands or they acted as if they are doing transactions with them. How lovely it would be if we accompany with soft touches; to establish a direct connection between parents and children. And yet, we never learn how to be a parent, let alone how to befriend them.

These days we hear a lot of news regarding child marriage; marriages performed at a very young age, with children deemed underage under the laws of our government. Couples at that age are not physically, mentally, and emotionally ready to raise children. This is because said couple has an unfinished journey, meaning they have not yet

fulfilled their own physiologically needs. This situation is followed by a question: How do they become good parents when they still have issues with themselves? Academic intelligence is not enough to gain wisdom. In addition to the increase of early marriages, trend of interfaith marriages trend is also inevitable. We need to accept this reality. Even though all is well during early stage of marriage, if the couple in question fail to maintain good communications within the family then personal conflict is inevitable.

According to certain communities, it is tradition for parents to be responsible for the welfare of children. Parents make sure children inherit their property and knowledge. However, ask yourself this: have we, as parents, contemplating about raising and education children who can contribute and add value to society, children who value themselves and others? If parents never set an example of a noble character, then we cannot expect our children to have one. This view is reflected by the principle of Value-based education; that parents should set example of values by their own behavior because it cannot be taught only by verbal communications. (value is not taught, but caught) (Tillman, 2000). Parents are mirrors for children but it is the other way around.

Every family has its own set of problems. From communication gap between members to money problems, we have all been there. A friend of mine is under the impression that every family has one child who is deemed more successful than the other. I beg to disagree with this view, as I believe each child is special. Each of them has their own individual path. Children who share the same parents and were raised together under one roof do not automatically develop the same character nor will they share the same destiny. Strategies that work well for one child may not be effective for another. However, even the most advanced theory of parenting will not be useful without love and compassionate attitude as its core.

To have sensible and well-balanced family system, parents must always act based on love. I believe that unconditional love is a value quality that we inherit since born. It comes from universe, Allah, or whichever you prefer to call the higher power, from TAO, which stands for the road that we take in the path to parenting. You are not under obligation to study it nor are you required to share it. For this quality comes from within, it forms a connection to your Divine Self: the Spirit of God.

In a philosophy theory, becoming parents is not an obligation, but rather a purpose in life. It is the same with parenting duty serve as noble devotion. So according to this philosophy, family is the place where we embark on a mission for noble purposes. This is our dedication to life, one where our children exist. Practicing conscious parenting (Value-conscious) makes it worthwhile.

Conscious parenting will bring noble values for parents as an individual as well as **for the children's character development process**. However, my own experience shows that parenting is the most important part of human growth. The times I spent taking care of my children are the time when I felt complete as a human being. We fill the parts

of ourselves that not yet alive, but ready to reach full potential by doing our job as parents. I feel as though children are being sent to parents as a realization that we are spiritual beings walking on earth as human. This is what I called Conscious Parenting.

Before we practice Conscious Parenting, there are 5 questions that we need to answer:

1. Will I allow myself to be guided by nature while experiencing transformation process through personal relationships with my kids?
2. How do I raise my children with an awareness that parents are responsible for their needs, not vice versa. That way I can be a good parent to my children.
3. How do I conquer my fear of changes during transformation process in order to fulfill my children emotional needs?
4. Can I address every aspect of my parenting as a call to reach higher evolution of consciousness?
5. Will I be able to treat personal relationship between my children and me as sacred bond?

Starting from here, next we need to find a way and set our path. How can we develop our techniques and skills to build a home where all members of the family, especially children, can enjoy a secured, peaceful, and loving atmosphere. Recognizing the importance of the objective of Conscious Parenting, I compiled a practical handbook complete with examples for parents. Inside this book you can find nine skills adapted from the book "Living Values Parent is a manifestation of unconditional love. It's worth noting that any method applied in parenting will not be effective if the parents do not have strong understanding of values.

Value-conscious parents have the ability to control themselves and constantly push themselves to develop good relationship with their children. Throughout the process of parenting, parents and children can learn from each other as they go through life together. *Conscious parenting is learned through the actual experience of relating to our children, not through reading books that offer quick fixes or taking classes that specialize in techniques. The conscious approach embodies values that emanate from the relationship.* This shared journey would then create unforgettable and beautiful moments for children, meanwhile the experience itself becomes very valuable lesson. Children can keep their memories as references for when they become parents themselves. Hopefully they become even better parents than we were. So, that is my thought on the evolution of human personality development.

The Following Are Nine Tactics Of Values-Based Parenting (Tillman, 2014):

1. **Prioritize Playing and "Time For Us"**
2. Complimenting Children and Building Positive Attitude
3. Balance, Discipline, and Love
4. Be An Active Listener And Listen With Your Heart
5. Family Ritual During Times of Change

6. Think Before You Say “No”
7. Communication And Emotional Stability, Strengthen Love
8. Time To Rest, Time To Think
9. A Time To Just Be

At last, I must insist that parenting is more than nurturing small humans. Parenting is a spiritual journey (*men are spiritual being seeking experience as human being*). Therefore, mindful parents are the only ones who can build “Home” for the children. The house is a place for parents and children to live harmoniously and develop deep personal bond as well as pursuing noble values. In turn, children will carry love, peace, and noble values with them everywhere they go. In the future these children will lead with integrity and help build a better, and more prosperous, Indonesia. Similarly, parents will earn an authentic happiness. Amen.

Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. Education begins in the home (Tillman, 2014).

*Presented during the event of “20th Anniversary of Living Values Education” on November 21st to 23rd, 2016, at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.