



## **Families That Make a Difference**

What does the expression 'make a difference' mean?

I think it's how we treat people. How much good we do. How much positive change we cause in other people's lives, in our communities/cities.

How can our lives empower our kids to live a life that 'makes a difference' in their lives and the lives of others?

I think it's hard for kids to live a life that is different from the cultural messages of 'us only'. It's difficult for kids to not focus on beauty or lack thereof? It's difficult for kids to not be obsessed with their social media presence or how many 'likes' or followers they have. Youth are desperate for honesty and authenticity, which is very absent in today's culture.

What is a healthier focus to have?

How about what kind of person we/they are? How about an old-fashioned word - character?

What are we talking about when we say - have good character?

I think it's being these traits; honest, trustworthy, reliable, consistent, dependable, caring, loving, helpful, integrity, accountable, responsible.

All these are obtainable. I'm not suggesting we are trying to be perfect. We must accept we will never achieve perfection in this lifetime. So if our kids fall short, it's ok, don't freak out on them.. you aren't perfect either. And your role is not to be the 'character police.'

Good character develops from living with someone who exhibits good character, and thus we learn it from the experience of a shared lifestyle. Thus, we as parents must seek to become what we want our kids to become. They learn most from our actions and not our words.

These previously mentioned good character traits need to be talked about, defined and highlighted as worthy goal for our kids to aim for. When they fall short, it needs to be a beneficial learning moment, not a shameful conclusion. Grace, kindness and compassion needs to accompany the review of the 'lack of character' moment.

Our kids character is more important than their academic achievement. In fact, if they aim for good character, they naturally are more likely to do well in school.. Research has shown

that families that strive for achievement as #1, grow kids that aren't really concerned about others and have a lack of compassion. This leads them to a lack of true friends, loneliness and emptiness and seeking unhealthy ways to cope such as risky behaviors and substance usage.

For all of us, living a life of personal honesty and concern for others will lead to true satisfaction that results from the positive difference we've made in our lifetime. I know I'm preaching to the choir, so consider this just a thoughtful reminder and keep up the good work!

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