

Children First

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By

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“Working with education leaders to keep children first.”

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Conversations With Your Child

A Word About Freedom and Our Flag

Citizens of this great nation have an enormous amount of personal freedom. We can live anywhere we can afford to pay for the property. We can get in our car and drive to any city we desire with no restrictions. With few limitations, we can express our ideas on TV, radio, over the internet, and in the print media.

But I'm becoming increasingly concerned with the sharply diminishing respect for our flag and for the lives given in defense of our country's symbol. Too many children today don't swell with pride when they see the flag or understand the sacrifices made to keep our flag flying. They are emotionless and indifferent.

Let me encourage each of you to discuss the meaning and the price of freedom with your children. Relate the sacrifices made by millions of soldiers and citizens over the past two hundred plus years to keep freedom alive. Help them understand that freedom is not free. Doing so might rekindle the spark of love for this country that is lacking in so many. Set the example and your efforts will bridge past sacrifices with future obligations to keep freedom free. Few parental responsibilities are greater.

The Privilege of Voting

A record number of voters went to the polls and voted yesterday. Voting is the privilege our forefathers fought to establish. It is our opportunity to express our opinion—a right missing in so many other countries around the world. Talk to your children about voting. Remind them of the importance of becoming intelligently informed on issues and candidates. Take time around the dinner table to engage in lively exchanges of opinions. Don't persuade—educate and let them formulate their positions.

Encourage your children to seek election to a class or organizational leadership position at their school. Success in this area of my school life is what started me thinking about holding elective office. Those small successes provided a foundation of self-confidence and perseverance that ultimately lead me to win election to public office. Serving in public office is something I wish every citizen would be able to do.

Talk about the right to vote and what it means. Let your children see you vote because action speaks louder than words alone. Have them register at 18 and encourage them to vote in every election. Help them understand that one vote can make a difference. (I won my first office by just twelve votes). In this historic presidential election, there were only about 17% of eligible voters between the ages of 18-22 who

voted. Don't let your child become one of the no-shows at election time. Apathy is not a characteristic of the strong. Apathy is not a characteristic to teach your child.

Become A Student of History

We Americans are not always on top of historical facts. Understanding our heritage and the events that shaped the course of our nation's history is important. Becoming aware of past struggles helps us appreciate what those struggles have enabled us to enjoy today. If you have a student studying American History, why not participate in conversation with them on this important part of our past. This would make a great dinner conversation (assuming everyone gathers at a table to eat at least one meal a day—but that's a subject for another newsletter).

Help them understand world events and the relationships between nations. We are in the midst of great turmoil around the globe. Staying abreast of world events will separate you and your child from the pack. Most people don't study or take the time to learn about events that are shaping their destiny. Involving your children in this past time is a great educational opportunity for everyone. And who knows, perhaps you'll instill enough enthusiasm and confidence that one day your child will be on the ballot for President of this great nation. (Don't laugh. Anything is possible.)

Our Next Four Years

Now that the election results are in, President Bush gets to serve another four years. Why not spend time discussing what that means to you personally and to your family. If you are leaning towards the Democratic Party, these are somber times. But true winners seek out those who have a different opinion and look for ways to begin to work together. This idea is important in your career development as well as in your political persuasion.

If you have Republican leanings, these are happy times. But, be a good sport about it and don't get into a "king of the hill" mentality. Humility in winning is gracious and both candidates demonstrated this quite well in their post-elections news conferences.

What a great time in history. Spend time discussing *love of country, an appreciation for our freedom, the privilege of the vote, building knowledge of history and current events*. And, along the way, please offer your prayers and support for the President as he undertakes the daunting task of leading this nation.

Closing Thoughts

I don't wish to get political but I felt it important to share my thoughts about our great nation and the events surrounding this historic presidential election. The vote is over and citizens have spoken. We now have the choice to make the future great or continue the divisive attitudes that have so sharply divided our political parties. Helping your child understand our political system will make them a more involved citizen. And, more involvement prevents apathy and ultimately better representations for citizens.

No matter our optimism, we can never lose sight of the fact that there are people who want to destroy what our ancestors sacrificed to achieve. One of the ways to stop

this threat to our freedom is to become involved. Self-serving politicians thrive on apathy just like the terrorist. Don't let either threaten our future.

My wish is that each of you experiences the joys of family and the satisfaction that comes from loving your children and watching them grow into responsible adults deeply involved in keeping America free. At this point in history, we can ill afford to make any other decision.

God Bless!

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