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Ask Dr. Harold: Spiritual Development

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our kids hold on to and develop.

Value-sensing is your child's delight and despairs over an event, an activity, or the day. Grandparents can be much better than us parents in just listening and experiencing the delight a child gets when showing an accomplishment over and over. As kids play with their sense of goodness and security they reflect upon meaning and can experiencing a sense of oneness with the universe. Isn't that the feeling of a good grandparent anyway?

What can we do?

Notice what your kids find wonderful. What about the view make them want to take a picture? What is so cool about the graphics in the video game? How does their prayer time make them feel? Have them notice and learn more whole stories. Hay and Nye describe this as "seed to apple tree." Growing a garden and having chickens are examples of ways to help kids increase their awareness of their wonder about the world and the divine in the world.

Help kids hold their minds open to seeing the perspectives of others. Taking another perspective helps us to see the divine they see and better experience the wonderful in our own lives.

Share your awareness, mystery, and values with your child. Rather than make it a lesson, share it through your relationship. Be aware of those times when you experience the mystery and wonder of life and the divine in your life. Talk with your kids and others about your inspirations and experiences of the good and bad in life. Like it or not, they are watching us and if they see we have extinguished these spiritual dynamics they may learn from our example.

My pre-holiday column last year focused on the activities that you could do with your child and I received several notes requesting that I talk more about the meaning that our winter celebrations hold. So this year I will take a psychological look at the spiritual development of children. A psychological researcher need not go much further than the local kindergarten soccer game to find the spiritual dynamics of children, but I will cover one popular model below.

What is spirituality from psychological standpoint?

Just as we have physical, intellectual, and emotional development, the natural development of children includes spiritual development. In their book, *The Spirit of the Child*, Hay and Nye suggest we refer to spiritual development in children with the term "relational consciousness."

Relational Consciousness

Relational consciousness as a model focuses on three dynamics: awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing, and value-sensing, to describe children's spiritual capabilities.

Awareness-sensing is your child's ability to attend to and get lost in following the ball down the soccer field, or lost in the flowers growing down at the end of the field. We adults call this prayer, meditation, or mindfulness. Kids come pre-loaded with multiple attention abilities and we see it in their questions.

Mystery-sensing is the wonder and awe that children can express when they see something they like or don't like. Maria Montessori's described it well: "Only those who look with the eyes of children can lose themselves in the object of their wonder." This "built in" wonder is what we can help

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