

Fostering a Positive Environment in Your Home

Adapted from a talk by Rev. Philip B. Schnarr

Remnants are...all the good and all the truth with a person which lie stored away in his two memories and in his life.

(Arcana Coelestia 2284)

But what are remnants? Not only the goods and truths which one has learned from the Word of the Lord from early childhood onwards and so had imprinted in his memory, but also all resulting states, such as states of innocence from early childhood; states of love towards parents, brothers and sisters, teachers, and friends; states of charity towards the neighbor, and also of compassion on the poor and needy; in short, all states involving good and truth.... which the Lord preserves with a person and stores away in his internal man, though the person himself is not at all directly conscious of this.

(Arcana Coelestia 561)

These childhood remains are the ones that are called into play in our times of deepest temptation.

Parents can promote an environment that nurtures innocence by being protective and affectionate. They can provide a climate of safety and trust.

Talk to your babies and little ones often. Tell them “Mom loves you. Dad loves you. Grandma and Grandpa love you. The Lord loves you.” Or you can simply narrate your actions to them.

Be selective about what impressions they receive from TV. There are positive messages kids can get from TV shows that they would not get so easily elsewhere as well as negative influences.

Provide an orderly environment that has rules and expectations. Set reasonable limits that are consistently enforced. Introduce them to the Ten Commandments.

The Lord finds every possible chance to instill remains. The Lord gives these stored memories of good and truth to all people, regardless of how difficult their childhood seems to be.

“A feeling of strong assuredness involves feeling comfortable and safe; knowing what is expected; being able to depend on individuals and situations; and comprehending rules and limits” (Dr. Michelle Borba: *Self Esteem: A Resource Handbook*).

Parents can create an enriched learning environment.

Introduce your children to nature and the Lord’s creation.

Allow little ones plenty of unstructured time—especially outdoors. Exploring nature, going on nature walks, talking about the Lord’s creation, giving simple answers to some of their questions and asking them what they think and feel, prepares children for a greater understanding of science, physics, animals, people, this world and the spiritual world.

Read your children stories from the Word and also fairy tales and folk tales.

Parents can give children a sense of purpose and help to cultivate good habits

Help children feel useful by having them assist with as many family chores as they are able, such as clearing the table, making their bed, and picking up their toys. Even very little ones can help with chores. A toddler can help in small ways by fetching things and carrying things.

Impress your children with ritual and order. Parents may struggle with the fact that their children will feel angry with them and may say angry words when they are not allowed to do as they please. It’s okay for your children to be angry. It’s also okay and orderly for the parent to continue to not allow them to do as they please.

Parents can increase skills in friendship making and compassion. They can set healthy boundaries.

Parents often start the responsibility of raising their first child with many fears. One fear that can be tricky is worrying about their children’s self esteem/self worth. Often new parents will not want to correct or stop their children because they hate to see them sad. But shielding them from such sadness can make them ill-equipped to deal with life’s difficulties later. Parents should not expect little children to be able to listen to reason, and agree. Set boundaries and then enforce them by picking up the child and moving them. Or distraction works well with some children.

Most children are social beings by nature, therefore children’s ideas of themselves are developed partly through social interactions. Teach your children about the limitations of their own bodies, their environment’s limitations, and mom and dad’s limitations.

Teach your children about giving and sharing, (but expect them to learn this slowly!)

Becoming unselfish takes a lifetime of practice. Remember that little children are trying to find the line between what is theirs and what is not. Children will have a few special items that they should not be forced to share, i.e. a blankie, stuffed animal or other lovie that is off limits to others.

It is also important to remember that some children have an easier time sharing and being friendly because of their inherited inclinations, and not necessarily because of better parenting. Try hard not to make comparisons with other children. And know that there just *will* be quarrels. The Lord gives our children plenty of opportunities to learn!

Tell your children that despite individual differences, all people share so many similarities.

Book recommendations:

Ages 0-4 *Two Eyes, a Nose and a Mouth* by Roberta Intrater

Ages 2-5 *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox

Ages 4-5 *People* by Peter Spier

Parents can provide opportunities to increase a child's awareness of their own competency.

Teach children to make appropriate choices by giving them opportunities where the consequences are minimal. This can foster confidence and security and can help them to make good decisions as they gain a greater state of freedom:

“Do you want to walk to the park or the pond?”

“Do you want to wear the yellow shirt or the red shirt?”

Set up a healthy, safe environment that your children can explore in ways they can handle.

Remember that sometimes even a small choice may be too overwhelming for them, and other times they may display a desire to make *all* of the choices. Try to find a balance for your children. Having fewer choices can help them feel secure.

Telling your child repeatedly to “Be careful” does not help them much, but can help a parent feel as if they have some control of slightly dangerous situations.

More important than the parent's feelings are the child's feeling of competency. They need to take risks, climb trees, swing high, jump down the steps etc. and they are not well served by their parent telling them to take care. It can give the message that the parent does not trust the child. (Even though it is often gravity that we DO trust!)

If you have access to the Writings for the New Church by Emanuel Swedenborg, you may wish to refer to the following numbers regarding this subject: *Arcana Coelestia*, 561, 892, 1964, 2280, 1900, 3183, 5342, 9296:2, *Divine Providence* 98, and *Divine Love and Wisdom* 404.

