

A MEMO FROM OUR CHILDREN

*From the book of P. Ribes, s.j. "Foundry Workers or Gardeners"
Published by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.*

Theme:

Expressed and unexpressed expectations children and youngsters have about their Parents.

THE MEMO

Once a Teacher asked her pupils to write some notes to their Parents and Elders telling them how they could help them to become responsible and mature grown-ups.

What they wrote could truly be called a "Memo to the elders",

Collecting the most important points the youngsters wrote, the teacher worded the following "memo"

Dear Parents,

- Don't be afraid to **be firm** with us. We prefer it. At least, it will help us to know where we stand.
- **Don't use force** with us. It teaches us that power is all that counts. We will respond more readily if you just kindly lead us.
- **Don't be inconsistent.** That confuses us and encourages us to get away with everything we can.
- **Don't do things for us that we can do ourselves.** It makes us feel like babies, we may continue to put you in our service.
- **Rather than pointing at our mistakes, show us the way of doing things right.**
- **We learn more by seeing things done than by telling us how to do them.**
- Please, don't **compare us with other kids.** We want to be ourselves
- **Trust our good intentions.** We are weak, we know some times we fail.
- **Don't keep on preaching to us.** You'd be surprise how well we know what's right and wrong.
- **Don't make us feel that our mistakes are sins.** We have to learn by doing mistakes without feeling that we are bad.

- **Don't nag.** If you do, we shall have to protect ourselves by pretending to be deaf.
- **Don't demand explanations for our wrong behavior.** We really do not know why we do it.
- **Don't be overprotective and save us from the consequences of our mistakes.** We need to know from experience
- **Don't put us off when we ask honest questions.** If you do, you will find that we will stop asking you and start seeking information elsewhere.
- **Don't ever feel that it is below your dignity to apologize to us.** An honest apology makes us feel surprisingly warm towards you.
- Don't worry too much about the amount of time we spend together. **It is how well we spend it that counts.**
- Keep always in mind that we **can't thrive without lots of understanding and encouragement.**

In case all we wrote above seems a tall order, just remember these three sentences:

**We learn more from a model than from a critic.
We children learn what we live
Finally we become what we experience.**

Your loving children

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO LEARN FROM OUR YOUNGSTERS' MEMO

You may use the Children's Memo in any of the following manners:

1st Personal Reflection and Action

Read the points of the memo, line by line, and ask yourself :

1. Does this line make any sense to me? What's the lesson I can draw for myself?
2. Do I feel approved or condemned by it in the way I deal withy my children, my students or those entrusted to me?
3. What can I do in future to correct my way of dealing with them?
4. What concrete steps could I take for immediate action? *Write them down.*
5. **Periodically, say once in a fortnight; check yourself on how you keep your resolutions.**

2nd Discussion and Sharing in groups of like-minded Parents, Teachers and Others Involved in Education.

One of the the group members will read, line by line, the points mentioned in the memo. After a short silence for personal reflection, he will propose to the group the questions written below.

1. Do you agree or disagree with the point brought up by the youngsters in their memo? Why?
2. How could we deal with our children in a more suitable way? Give suggestions. Compile a list of the suggestions brought up by the group members.
3. Choose from that list two or three points for immediate action.
4. **It will be extremely fruitful if the members of the group meet again after some time, say within one two months, to share the results of the implementations of their resolutions.**

3rd Open and direct discussion of the points of memo with those under you.

Within the family with your children, or in the classroom with your pupils, or elsewhere with those under your care, **dare to share and discuss face to face the points raised up in the Memo.**

This direct, face-to-face, open sharing, ‘not confrontation’– will prove very useful. Your honest acceptance of your past mistakes – not of your bad will - and the expression of your willingness to improve relationships with those under you **will help all concerned.**

Parents, Teachers and Children will grow in mutual understanding, love, trust and in cooperation, hereby making the task of education easier, rewarding and loveable.

Note; In case you choose the third option of an open face to face discussion with those under you, follow this procedure:

1. Read one by one the points mentioned in the Memo.
2. After a point is read, ask those present to express their reactions, feelings and suggestions.
3. If you feel that in the past, in the point under consideration, you erred, humbly accept your mistakes. .
4. If the children or pupils have erred, encouraged them to own up their past mistakes.
5. If we have to help each other to grow and become mature, independent and responsible people, we have to freely and openly dialogue on the means and ways of improving our relationships..

6. Together with them compile a list of the things to be improved and of the means required to accomplish them..
7. Request them to choose from that list just compiled the three most urgent items for immediate implementation.
8. **Both parties, educators and those under them, should commit themselves to implement immediate those three items..**
9. After a period of time, say one or two months, a fresh meeting should be held to evaluate their implementation and to see how to proceed in the coming months.

APPENDIX ;

TEENAGERS' PLEA TO THEIR PARENTS.

We quote below a poem of George Lawton similar in content to “A Memo from Our Children” You may use it in any of the three ways suggested above. Namely:

1st: **For Personal Reflection and Action.**

2nd: **For Discussion and Sharing with Likeminded People.**

3rd; **For a Direct Discussion with the Children, Students and Youngsters.**

POEM: TEENAGERS' PLEA

- Stand by us not over us.
- Make us feel we are loved and wanted.
- Spend time, lots of time with us.
- Train us by being firm, yet affectionate.
- Bring us up so that we will not always need you.
- Allow us to be ourselves.
- Try to be as consistent as possible.
- Don not makes us feel inferior.
- Say, “Well done”, when we do something well.
- Accept our wishes even if you disagree with them.
- Give us direct answers to direct questions.
- Show interest in what we're doing.
- Treat us as normal when our conduct seems peculiar.
- Accept our feelings and perceptions. They are ours!

- Teach us by example.
- Treat us as persons with inalienable rights.
- Don't keep us young too long.
- We need – fun and companionship.
- Make us feel at home in our home.
- Don't laugh at us when we act clumsily.
- Treat us as junior partners in a firm.
- Make yourself “childlike” to be able to understand us.
- Help us to lead our lives, not yours.
- Give us the right to have a voice in our lives.
- Accept us as average children – just as we try to accept you as average parents.

(With small changes: from George Lawton)

