



EXPECT SUCCESS

IN 2018, I RESOLVE TO BE A BETTER PERSON



Last week, I came across an article about the most popular New Year's resolution of 2018. Surprisingly, it was not about dieting. The Marist Poll found the most popular resolution is "being a better person." But, what does that mean? How do we measure being a good person? Who is the judge?

Moral philosophers say you need to self-reflect on who you are as a person. Borrowing some lines from Michael Jackson, it's about "*starting with the man in the mirror...if you wanna make the world a better place take a look at yourself, and then make a change.*"

Self-reflection is hard because we often allow ourselves to be morally flexible, meaning we make concessions for our behaviors to justify our actions. So, what steps can we take to self-reflect and resolve to be a better person? And, what can we teach our children? Maybe we can start by passing on the practical advice our parents and grandparents repeated to us. Many of the phrases are easy to remember, and most importantly, easy to understand by children of all ages. What is old, still rings true today.

"Do unto others as you would have done to you." The Golden Rule still applies now just like it did when we were kids. A good first step in determining our words and actions toward others is to reflect on how we would like to be treated. What does that look like? Sound like? Feel like? It serves as a very good moral compass.

"If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." This old adage was not just about getting scolded after we had said something mean, it was also meant to encourage us to think before we opened our mouth. Teaching your child self-control when it comes to verbalizing her thoughts about something or someone is an important life skill.

"Actions speak louder than words." Children are especially perceptive when it comes to imitating their parents' actions. How do you treat the cashier? The waitress? Your neighbor? The stranger on the sidewalk? Practice friendly greetings with a smile and a hello; it's an easy start and costs nothing. Society doesn't need grand gestures; start small and watch how little things can have a positive ripple effect on others.

"Many hands make light work." The world is filled with talkers, and not enough doers. Resolve to be a doer. Lending a hand can make the job go faster and our burdens lighter. Encourage your child to do the tasks with you so he sees the benefit of working together, whether it's unloading the dishwasher, folding towels or folding chairs after a concert. Help him to see opportunities where he can help without having to be asked first.

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." Resolving to be a better person should not be about gaining or expecting recognition. Some of your most fulfilling rewards come from within, when nobody even knows what you did, but you did it because it was the right thing to do. Helping your child find the inner joy in being kind is a priceless gift that needs nurturing. Take a few minutes at supper time or bedtime to share acts of kindness in your day-done by you and done to you....both are important.