

“Raising Good Adults”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

It is a mistake to focus on raising good children. Our task as parents and as a society is to raise good adults.

Too often by “raising good children” people mean “children who won’t bother me.” To ensure that children have values is a great deal of bother, indeed. It requires time and effort and love.

We raise good adults by demonstrating how adults ought to treat one another. Therefore, if parents speak unkindly to one another at home, they are likely to raise adults who will speak unkindly to their partners. Only if they say “no” to themselves will they raise adults who will learn what and when it is best to do without.

Parenting books and classes teach us how to treat children in part because it is easier to set boundaries for one’s toddler than for oneself. But if you deprive your children and spend lavishly on yourself, become angry when they speak cruelly but speak cruelly yourself, then you are teaching that childhood is a temporary phase of restraint. When one is an adult, all bets are off. Is there a more efficient means of creating a chaotic society than that? The best way to raise a good adult is to be one.

Remember, the kids are watching.