



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHERS DIARY

Turn adult life into child's play

Is there a difference between you selling a large parcel of land and your child buying Park Place before passing go in Monopoly? You may feel your business experience is just that — business — and your child's business is just a game. You may perceive, on the other hand, that you are both playing a game and at the same time are working and learning with different goals and motivations.

It is quite permissible, and, moreover, should be encouraged, to motivate children to learn through play and not work. Basic learning skills and techniques can be developed, reinforced and internalized.

As parents, we often give our kids inappropriate cues of dealing with situations. We show our intolerance, get hot under the collar, use profanity and literally exhaust ourselves without ever dealing with the problem head on and achieving success. Yes, our kids are raised in our image and it is that very image that must convey the best strategies in life if life is ever to be completely rewarding.

Think of life as one big game. Yes, your work, your home, and raising your children is a game that requires lots of rules, organization, involvement, strategy, interpersonal communication, responsibility, and all done with a smile and sober mind. That simple game of ball rolling you have with your 1-

year-old is setting the stage for the thinking games of Scrabble and even filling out an income tax form.

When it comes to our kids, French psychologist Piaget sums it up accordingly: "The more the child sees and hears, the more he wants to see and hear." Couple this with love and enthusiasm, and your child is on his way. And all as part of a game.

The rewards of play

Be sure you always take the time to answer the questions presented by your kids. Never dismiss them as being silly or superficial. We often project our intelligence on our kids' questions and react accordingly. If our kids had the experiences and knowledge we possessed, they wouldn't ask the questions they do.

As certain as the sky is blue, there will be questions you cannot answer. After all, we are all limited in what we know. Let the game of learning take you to the library, or place a phone call to a knowledgeable friend. Be enthused about the revelation and compliment your child for having asked the question. One good question will most certainly lead to another.

Make a question game chart. You and your child each week have to think of questions to ask each other. You both have one day to find the answer; parents have to be fair in this regard and only ask age level questions. At the end of each day you can compare strategies and techniques in finding the answers. The key here is to get the answers in the fastest way possible. The one who gets the answers right to more questions and with the least amount of steps, wins for the week. You can then figure out a reward system that is appropriate.

I bet there is some work in your briefcase that could be done by your kid. For example, I bring home my test papers to be marked in part by my two girls; my 9-month-old son just eats them — that's fun for him.

Use the evening meal to intelligently discuss situations at work, the mortgage payments, and which new car to buy. The game is to have all the pieces fit according to the families expectations and desires. I wager to guess your child may have a word or two to make the game an even greater challenge.

family