

6-8-12 Grand Lessons, Grand Children

I love conversing with children. I find them worth listening to. They're questions are intellectually stimulating, especially when you consider their young age, their sincerity and their point of view, which usually differs from your and what you've read; you know that factual stuff written by adults.

With children, one thing leads to another, all because they are willing to speak and ask, since those societal filters and parameters are lacking or they are at least small and newly forming rather than the large, settled into place, impediments carried around by adults. Don't get me wrong; we all need rules to be part of society but I hold up the scientist and the philosophers as examples of adult truth seekers who still follow rules of civility. I think about them when I chat with the little wise people we call children.

My grandchildren, Colin and Taryn, spent the weekend as their parents moved. Ah, the two days offered many opportunities for public health lessons, biology and philosophy! It was grand.

They jumped out of the car with the wish list bursting forth: "Can we go for a walk to the farm and play kick ball and then play in the tub?" Public Health Benefits (PHB) were on their way!

"The Walk" was the top priority, as usual, (and Cesar Milan would agree!) and required a bit of preparation; just a bit, not too much. Taryn announced, "I need a hat, a scarf and a bag." (Oh, no, I thought, A mini me!) "Well, you know where I keep your exploring hats and bags. Go choose them." She thoughtfully perused my scarf collection, made her selection and then moved on to the lower hooks with children's bucket hats and canvas bags. Colin chose an army green safari style hat and bag to hold his water. Taryn was soon decked out in flowered scarf, pink bucket hat and a small shrunken wool purple bag decorated with little chickens and roosters. She had never seen it before but that was the one for her! I donned my hat and bag, water and insect repellant. Colin added binoculars, just in case he needed a close-up look at something like birds or a fox. I told him it was a great idea but cautioned that it would feel heavy after a while. He wanted to bring it. PHB #1: Be prepared. PHB #2: Take personal protection measures. PHB #3: Listen to adults and then make your own decision, being responsible for it, too.

The walk began with observations of changes since their last visit. Trees had fallen from storms and allowed for a peek into why they fell: we saw the beautiful hollows and trails left by ants inhabiting the previously hidden center of the pine trees. As we helped each other step over the now fallen logs crossing our path, we noticed there were spider webs everywhere we looked. They sure are enjoying this summer for some reason! Not only are spider webs sticky but at this time of year, they also hold a lot of pine pollen. So, even though I told them that spiders are very useful creatures, catching a lot of bugs, it was agreed that we could move the webs out of our way, at no harm to the spider, for they would easily and quickly rebuild them. We armed

ourselves with “spider sticks”, and continued the walk, swinging and swiveling our weapons in front of as moved along, looking much like the Three Musketeers, I suspect. PHB #4: Learning to use only as much force as is necessary is a good thing. PHB #5: Seeing the beauty of nature in all stages nurtures an appreciation of life. PHB #6: It feels good to be armed and that brings confidence to walk further.

Along the way to the farm, the children noticed trails, moss and rocks. We arrived, it seemed, in short time and I asked if they remembered how we used to have to drive because, if we walked, it would take a long time and they would not have the energy to walk back. Now, they’re legs were longer and they were stronger and here we were, quickety-quick, even with all our talkety-talk and spider web de-webbing! They smiled. PHB #7: Recognition of improvement leads to more improvement and it feels good!

Back at my place, as I began to get supper ready, Colin spied something unusual on the counter and commented, “Grammy, that is the biggest pickle I ever saw! Where did you get it?” I told him, “That does look like a pickle, doesn’t it? And it could become one too, by soaking it vinegar and sugar and salt and spices! But right now, it’s just a cucumber; an English cucumber, and we’re going to have some for supper.” (Note to self: Tell my daughter to take the kids for a tour through the produce isle and talk about vegetables!) Public health benefit #8: Smiling creates beneficial endorphins. PHB #9: Home prepared food lessons are a good thing.

They ate well, they listened well to bed time stories and the day ended with I-love-you-s all around. PHB #10: Love is grand.

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