

All Things Maternal – A Therapist’s Perspective
By Deena Solwren, LCSW

Q: Dear Deena;

I’ve really enjoyed your columns. They’re a great addition to NPN. I have a general question that I hope is appropriate for you. I wonder how children view and experience adults, particularly to figure out if I’m doing a good job with my own kids.

Thanks,
Lisa

Dear Lisa,

Thank you for your positive feedback and support! I thought I’d try a different approach in responding to your question. I hope you and other readers enjoy it...Let me know what you think.

Children of all ages and stages of development are constantly learning about life from the totality of their experiences and environment. Parents provide the most important and powerful influence on their children - more than any other force.

We can learn about our children’s experiences, perspective and understanding of their world by carefully observing their behavior and talking with them rather than at them. Children behave how they’re treated. So, if you like how your child acts and treats others, you can rest assured that you’re doing a good enough job as a parent. Additionally, it can help to have a benchmark of what is considered normative, both behaviorally and “creatively”, for other children of a similar age. If you have concerns about your child’s development, speak with your pediatrician for age appropriate norms – as there is a range when specific milestones are reached.

Let me share a humorous view into some children’s understanding of their life experience. The following questions were asked to children ranging in age from 4 to 6 years old. (Special thanks to Laura Thai-Jenkins of Cannon Road Elementary School.) Some of their answers are included below:

Why are there Mommies?

1. She's the only one who knows where the scotch tape is.
2. Mostly to clean the house.
3. To help us out of there when we were getting born.
4. They take care of people.

How are mommies made?

1. From dirt, just like for the rest of us.
2. Magic plus super powers and a lot of stirring.
3. God made my mom just the same like he made me just with bigger parts.
4. From little girls - first mommies are little girls then they turn into kids.

What ingredients are mummies made of?

1. Clouds and angel hair and everything nice in the world and one dab of mean.
2. They had to get their start from men's bones. Then they mostly use string, I think.
3. Milk.

Why do you have your mommy and you don't have another mommy?

1. We're related.
2. God knew she likes me a lot more than other people's moms like me.
3. Because she takes care of us and we don't need another mommy.

What kind of little girl was your mommy?

1. My mom has always been my mom and none of that other stuff.
2. I don't know because I wasn't there, but my guess would be pretty bossy.
3. They say she used to be nice.
4. I don't know. I don't think about her when she was a baby.

What did your Mommy need to know about your Daddy before they got married?

1. His last name.
2. She had to know his background. Like is he a crook? Does he get drunk on beer?
3. Does he make at least \$800 a year? Did he say NO to drugs and YES to chores?
4. Get pets, get pets, get pets.

Why did your Mommy marry your Daddy?

1. My dad makes the best spaghetti in the world. And my mom eats a lot.
2. She got too old to do anything else with him.
3. My grandma says that mom didn't have her thinking cap on.
4. Because she wanted babies.

Who's the boss at home?

1. Mom doesn't want to be boss, but she has to because dad's such a goof ball.
2. Mommy. You can tell by room inspection. She sees the stuff under the bed.
3. I guess Mom is, but only because she has a lot more to do than dad.

What's the difference between Mommies and Daddies?

1. Moms work at work & work at home, & dads just go to work at work.
2. Moms know how to talk to teachers without scaring them.
3. Dads are taller & stronger, but moms have all the real power 'cause that's who you got to ask if you want to sleep over at your friend's.
4. Mommies have magic, they make you feel better without medicine.
5. Mommies take care of us. Dads go to meetings.

What does your Mommy do in her spare time?

1. Go to work.
2. Mothers don't do spare time.
3. To hear her tell it, she pays bills all day long.

What would it take to make your mom perfect?

1. On the inside she's already perfect. Outside, I think some kind of plastic surgery.
2. Diet. You know, her hair. I'd diet, maybe blue.
3. Make-up would make her pretty.

If you could change one thing about your mom, what would it be?

1. She has this weird thing about me keeping my room clean. I'd get rid of that.
2. I'd make my mom smarter. Then she would know it was my sister who did it and not me.
3. I would like for her to get rid of those invisible eyes on her back.
4. Nothing.

If your kids are old enough to comprehend and respond, try asking them these questions. You're sure to get a new appreciation for your child's experience and understanding of their world. Of course, the same questions can be easily modified to be about fathers.

"All Things Maternal" is a trademark of Deena Solwren's. Deena is an experienced licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and a mom who's been there. She has a private psychotherapy practice with offices in Rockridge and Pinole. She works with individuals and couples regarding infertility, pregnancy, post-partum adjustment, attachment parenting, changing roles & changing self image, balancing work & family life, and mother/daughter relationships. She is currently accepting new clients and may be reached at **(510)364-2864**.