



# Relationships *The Adlerian Team*

## Giving You and Your Child an 'A'

By Sue Smarkala

Many of us feel a huge responsibility for raising our children to be responsible and respectful members of our communities. The job is one for which we are not always well prepared.

How can you be the best parent for your child? How can you build the foundation on which the adult individual will stand? They have your genetic makeup. Now, what environment can you provide that supports them to become capable and well balanced adults? Parenting concepts are available from many authors. Let's look at an approach that honours you and your child as the best you both can be.

In their book, *The Art of Possibility*, Rosamund and Benjamin Zander, discuss the practice of giving a mark of A to those around us. Typically, a mark of 'A' in our society recognizes excellent performance, achievement of rigorous and demanding standards. The use of an 'A' here is to create a 'can do', positive, appreciative and abundant view of ourselves and those around us. Seeing yourself and your child as A human beings is not about measurement but about living the A potential – you open yourselves and your child/ren to your creativity in living into the best you can be.

By giving A's, you operate in the belief that you will experience an A attitude from yourself and your children. Using an A mind set, you live in the moment, you are not worried about 'what if' scenarios, you trust intentions and outcomes. In living as an A parent, with A children, you are in the presence of 'limitless possibility'.

You may have heard the adage that, what you expect is what you will receive. If you have a belief that all small dogs are yappy – you will always notice noisy small dogs – because they support your belief. Well behaved little dogs will go unnoticed – because you are not looking for those kinds of dogs. Similarly, you will notice A behaviours - if you expect to see them.

Giving an A is a shift in paradigm. You are no longer becoming excellent, you ARE excellent. You embody all that you imagine an A person is, as soon as you make that statement. You even get to describe the way you look as an A person.

The first step is for you and your children to imagine yourselves as A individuals. What is your attitude within the family? What are your feelings about being part of a family? Who are you becoming in this family, in your school, in your community? Capture this through discussions, writing and telling stories describing times you feel you are using your "limitless possibility" as a parent or child. Involve the whole family in this process so that everyone gets to experience the playfulness of possibility.

- I am an A parent because my children enjoy my company, I feel like an important member of our family, we have great conversations about all kinds of things. Home is a fun place for us all. ...
- I am an A child because I am happy. I am an important part of my family. I love to help my dad wash the car, we have fun. ...

These descriptions are written as if the A behaviour is happening right now. In writing the outcomes and feelings of A actions/beliefs, the family starts to be a team, to see these attributes in their relationships, to live into them. A is the norm – setting the stage in the universe of possibility.

By having a vision and holding the attitude that your child is an A, you can support him/her in being an A. As players in this game of A, you encourage and help bring out A behaviours. In so doing, you move from a hierarchical – "Thou shalt", to a partnership of "Let me show you.", "How are you doing?" You expect and model A behaviours for your children. In coaching for A behaviours, you and your child are a team. Living with A parents and children builds optimism in the home, results in greater listening and understanding between parent and child, and says loudly and clearly, "I believe in you."

As a parent, it is difficult not to impose your views and standards onto your expectation of an A. For instance, an A child completes Saturday's assigned chores before bedtime. As a parent, you might prefer they were completed by 5PM – possibly so you can ensure the chores are completed before bedtime! By insisting on a timeframe – just in case – you do not give the trust due an A child. The A belief is that the child will accomplish agreed tasks. The A parent must trust that the A child will meet his/her obligations. The parenting comes in when the child does not meet the expectations. The parent can then examine with the child all the options there are for learning to meet his/her responsibilities. You now have an opportunity to teach your A child about, for example, time management, about being part of a family, about commitment to promises, about friendship, about being a sister/brother. You help them live A behaviour, knowing that they are an A.

"This A is not an expectation to live up to, but a possibility to live into." R., B.Zander

Ref: Zander, Rosamund S., Benjamin. *The Art of Possibility*. London, England: Penguin Books, 2002

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