



PARENT LEADERSHIP:

Welcome to the Interpretive Stage of Parenting!

Ellen Galinsky, author of *The Six Stages of Parenthood*, points out that parenthood often *“follows a pattern: periods of harmony, of getting along with each child, followed by periods of disharmony when [you] and the child are out of synch.”*¹ *The times of disharmony often herald new phases of growth, and can be indications that the child “needs different things...and we [as parents need to] adjust.”*²

In Month 60, you are entering a time of major adjustment where you need to start thinking deeply about how to interpret the world to your child.

In Month 59, we briefly reviewed the six stages of parenthood and introduced you to six major decisions facing parents as you enter the **Interpretive Stage of Parenting**. We made these three dominant points for your consideration:

- As a parent, how do you intend to interpret the outside world to your child?

- Do you understand the world through the lens of truth or relativism? KinderKronicle presents its information as truth.
- It is essential that you listen—really listen—to your child, your spouse, and other family members to get a feel for how to approach interpreting your values.

As a reminder, this stage begins about age five (it’s usually triggered by the start of schooling) and ends as your child approaches adolescence. In other words, the Interpretive Stage of parenthood lasts for about **96** months. In this stage, parents “figure out how they want to interpret reality for their children and more firmly decide on the [family and personal] values they want to promote.”³

The first step in approaching this stage is to clarify in your own mind what your personal and family values are and what values, virtues, and character traits you want to focus on in your home.

KINDERKRONICLE-CHANGING LIVES ONE FAMILY AT A TIME

Continued from page 1

For example, if you value honesty, empathy, friendliness, kindness, or other such virtues, these are the traits and virtues you should be focusing on in your home. A primary parenting task for the Interpretive Stage is to instill such virtues in your child to guard against unwanted outside influences. More about virtues [towards beginning in Month 72](#).

As you gear up to enter this new stage of parenthood, it is beneficial to evaluate how your parenting journey has gone so far as you prepare to deal with new challenges and changes. You might ask yourself questions like:

- “What has been working well in our family?”
- “What challenges am I having as a parent?”
- “What do I wish I would do differently?”
- “How frequently is my parenting matching with my ideal?”
- “What outside-the-home organizational environments do I want to surround my child with?”

Asking yourself these types of questions helps you to decide how things are going in your family, so you can keep the things that are going well and find ways to tweak your parenting in things that aren't going as smoothly as you'd like.

As stated previously, before you can effectively interpret the outside world to your child, you must give thought to **Interpreting oneself as a parent**. This is true for both Mom and Dad. According to Galinsky, this task has three parts:

FIRST, it means that you come to understand yourself better as a parent (you know how you generally react and act, you know what you're good at, parenting-wise, and you know where your actions don't match up to your idea of “good parenting.”)⁴ When you identify what aspects of parenting you are good at, and what parenting traits you need to continue working on as a parent, you are more self-aware, and more likely to be more patient with both yourself and your child as you try and try again to follow the principles that you hold dear.

SECOND, you decide “consciously or not, how [you] want to behave toward [your] children, and similarly how [you] want to interpret [yourselves] to your children.”⁵ In other words, parents in the Interpretive Stage think about how they come across to their children, and whether they are making a good impression on their children. As author Robert Fulghum said, **“Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.”**

Entering the Interpretive Stage is a time of reflection, ideally accompanied by action, which helps parents be the people they want their children to see them as. Leading by example is the best way to instill positive growth and change and knowledge in your children.

When it comes to your personal character traits, do they reflect what you want your child to become?



Continued from page 2

THIRD, parents often must walk a fine line between sharing information and withholding it, based on the age and maturity of the child, along with the seriousness of the subject.


For example, if a parent has a bad day at work, their child can sense it, and if the parent doesn't share anything, the child may think he had something to do with it. But if the parent shares too much, it may be too much for the child to handle.

This delicate balance of sharing and withholding can be difficult, but as you decide, over and over again, what you will share or not, and how you will share information, it helps you refine how you view yourselves as parents and how you want to approach parenting your child in many different situations.

It is also important for Mom and Dad to be united as parents. If you are not on the same page regarding what values to teach your children, or how to approach serious topics, or how much and in what way information should be shared, your important messages and teachings for your child can get lost in power struggles. Then everyone loses.

For this reason, communication—between Dad and Mom as well as between you and your children—is very important. Agreeing on a unified message helps you as parents to clearly demonstrate and teach the values and virtues that are most dear to your family as a whole.

Communication is also vital as you teach principles of independence to your child. Both parent and child do a lot of “growing up” during the Interpretive Stage. The principles and values you introduce and encourage in the Interpretive Stage end up being refined and reinforced in the Interdependent Stage (the child's teenage years). Future issues of KinderKronicle will discuss ways to teach independence in loving, responsible ways to help you along this journey.

The Interpretive Stage is a long and important one. There are a lot of things parents need to do during this stage of parenting, but you can do it. When you take time to reflect regularly on how you are doing, and whether you are matching your actions to your stated ideals, you can better keep you, your child, and your family on track. 

1. Galinsky, Ellen. *The Six Stages of Parenthood*. Da Capo Press, 1987.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.



CHILD CHATTER NEW ENVIRONMENTS SUCH AS KINDERGARTEN CAN EQUAL BIG EMOTIONS. HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Child: Mom, Dad, I need your help! Now that I'm five, I'm spending more time away from home!

Parent: True—that's a natural part of growing up!

Child: I know, but being away from you, whether at school or at a different activity, can be scary!

Parent: Yes, it can be, can't it? So, what exactly are you worried about? If I know what's wrong, it's easier to help you.

Child: Well, there're lots of things that can make me worried. Sometimes I get nervous when I don't know my teacher or the other kids very well. Sometimes, I don't want to leave you, because I know you love me and I'm safe with you. Sometimes I even worry that something might happen to you while I'm gone, or I worry that I won't know how to do something. Or I wonder if you will come back to get me. Who will help me when you aren't there? Other times, I get worried because I don't know all the rules like I do at home. What if I do something that's wrong?

Parent: Whoa, those are a lot of worries! I can see why you get scared or act out sometimes when you start something new! But I promise I am here to help. First, I want you to remember that it's okay to have big feelings about things. Most people get nervous when they are starting something new.

Child: Even grownups?

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

Parent: Yup, even grownups! But it can help to remember that you can do hard things and new things can become less scary with time and practice. So, let's start with being nervous about new teachers or kids. We can practice things you can say before you meet them. For example, if you see a kid that looks nice, and you want to play with him, what could you say?

Child: I could say "Hi, I like to play with blocks! Want to build a tower with me?"

Parent: Very good! That's a great way to ask someone to play! And, a great way to get your teacher's attention is to raise your hand—that way, she knows that you have something you want to say, but you aren't making a lot of noise while she's trying to tell your class something.

Child: That's different than at home! But I think I can do that.

Parent: That's something else that gets easier with practice. Now, if you are worried about whether something might happen to me while we are apart, or whether I will come back to get you, that's okay. But I promise that we will be back together soon! If you'd like, I can put a paper heart in your pocket. Then, if you start to miss me, you can put your hand in your pocket and remember that I always love you, even if we aren't always together.¹



Child: I like that idea! What about when I don't know all the rules? Will I get in trouble?

Parent: That is a good question! You are right—there are often different rules in different places. And you might get in trouble sometimes while you are learning the rules. But that's okay! You'll know not to do that thing the next time. For example, remember when you wanted to walk up the slide instead of sliding down at the park?

Child: Oh, yeah! You said I can do that on my slide at home, but that it wasn't safe when there are other kids around, like at the park.

Parent: Exactly! Sometimes it just takes a little time to figure out what rules are different. And really, learning new rules is a sign that you are growing up and that you are capable of more things! One way I can help is to practice with you ahead of time, when I know there is a different rule.

Child: Thanks; that will help me not be so worried!

Parent: Finally, we work a lot on problem solving here at home. You can problem solve in other places, too! Part of being afraid is worrying that you won't be able to handle something.² But you have lots of practice in solving problems, and there are teachers, and other grownups, like us, who can help you, too!

Child: Oh, like when you tell me to think of ways to help both of us be happy with something?

Parent: That's right! I want you to remember that it's okay to get nervous or scared about things. But I also want you to know that I love you and I am here to help you, and your teachers want to help you, too. And I know you can do hard things!

Child: Thanks, Mom and Dad. 

1. <https://www.ahaparenting.com/Ages-stages/school-age/Help-kids-adjust-school>
2. Ibid.

**NEXT ISSUE-
MONTH 61
LOOK FOR THESE
EXCITING FEATURES
AND ARTICLES**

**PARENT LEADERSHIP:
Interpreting the World
to the Children**

**CHILD CHATTER:
What To Expect From
Me Developmentally
This Year**



KinderKronicle Publisher:
World Peace Parents
Foundation

Editor: Kristina Kugler

Letters to the Editor:
Editor@beginwiththe
children.com

Editor - KinderKronicle
P.O. Box 71501
Cottonwood, Utah 84171

www.beginwiththechildren.com
www.worldpeaceparents.org



© Copyright 2008-2021
World Peace Parents Foundation.
All Rights Reserved.

World Peace Parents®;
Begin with the Children®;
Putting Family First®;
Family Hour®;
Empower the Family®;
KinderKronicle®
and A Chat with your Baby®
are registered with the U.S. Patent and
Trademark Office.