

A question to a Parent: Who's Supporting You?

Sometimes parents need some support in saying or doing the right things for their children. Here one of our school workers talks of how important it is for parents to have a support system to help and encourage them when things go wrong.



So, lockdown is upon us, unprecedented and uncertain times ahead. Life as we know it is suspended and shutdown. Families are now together in a way they have never known, parents and carers faced with months of keeping it all together indoors. Never has the need to go to the park been greater, admiration of our frontline workers higher.

Some things don't need to be said but for fear of being obvious, I'm going to say it: Having a child is one of life's most marvellous life affirming adventures, with all the promise and hopes for their happiness and future. It's also the hardest most challenging job in the world with no instruction manual or training apart from the blueprint of our own parenting experience.

One of the hardest things for a parent is to admit they are not enough for their child if things start to go wrong and to have to reach out to an agency for help. One of the privileges of our work is to speak with parents, to hear about their families, their backgrounds, their support networks, their aspirations and their fears.

The question that I ask parents sometimes is 'who's supporting you?' This aspect is often overlooked, often too occupied with the demands of the family, parents carry on unsupported.

To quote my 2nd year social work practice teacher, the marvellous Sister Lynda Dearlove, 'in people's lives, sometimes the wheels fall off and we are in the business to try and help to put them back on again'.

During the lockdown period, I spoke to a parent who was still working whilst her husband was at home with the early stages of a terminal degenerative illness. Her workplace had been less than understanding and job losses are on the cards. The referral for support was for her son who is not talking about his concerns. Having spoken to her son in school previously, it was apparent that not speaking was not necessarily a problem for him at this time as he was processing the situation and the timing wasn't right for that discussion to take place just yet.

Mum had been proactive and supportive in finding simple activities, such as a walk over the woods, cooking together and painting the garden fence, where she could spend time with her son giving him the opportunity to have a safe place to talk should he need to.

I thought she was amazing so I told her so. She cried - full of self-doubt as to whether she was doing the right thing.

'Supermum' or 'Superdad' is a lofty ambition most of us can only aspire to. Good enough parenting will do nicely.

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