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Teach Your Kids To Show Themselves They Care

By Regina Pickett Garson

The day my daughter came home from school talking about a Valentine fundraiser my heart sank. The school was selling heart shaped brownies for the children to send to their "special friends." They could even send them anonymously. Everyone, she explained, was trying to buddy up to make sure to get a brownie. I know this is not nice to presume, but what if your child doesn't get a brownie, what if they don't find a buddy?

Most of us can remember times when we were left out. Maybe everyone else paired off for a dance and we never got a date. The most popular kid in class threw a party and we weren't invited. Luckily, a brownie is easier to produce than a date or a party invitation. It's also easier to use in learning to love and appreciate yourself.

One event comes to mind, which was very special to me. I won a small award, nothing grand on a world scale, but I wanted to celebrate and I really wanted flowers. Now, my honey would have bought me flowers if I had told him I wanted them, or I could have even sulked until he read my mind.

Instead, I did something very innovative for me. I bought myself flowers. I didn't spend a lot, just a small bouquet to tell myself that I appreciated me. I was proud of what I had done and those flowers felt good. Every time I looked at them, I felt good. Now when I think back to that award, what I remember most is not the award, it is that I learned to give myself flowers. I learned to take responsibility for my own "feel goods."

I keep hearing ads for Valentine's Day and every time I do, I think about those flowers. I think about all the Valentine Days I rushed to an empty mailbox and sat alone feeling left out of the world. Valentine's Day can be the unhappiest holiday of the year, and I love holidays. On Valentine's Day, we routinely put all of our emotional feel goods in someone else's lap. We are supposed to wait patiently to be told how wonderful and how loved we truly are.

It sounds worse every minute. I think it's not just okay, it's probably a good idea, to tell the kids that when that brownie cart comes around to buy themselves a Valentine. Tell that to yourself, too. If you sit around waiting for someone else to tell you how special you are you may wait for a very long time. I don't even mean that to sound negative. But somehow, it seems like I have spent more Valentine Days wishing for Valentines than getting them and I can't honestly say that I haven't got my fair share. I truly

have, but it is the times in between that bring so much pain and there is no reason for it to be that way.

If kids learn it early, they are truly ahead of the game. They won't spend chunks of their life in aimless waiting. Moments spent with special friends are treasures, but so are the moments spent alone. And I can almost guarantee, those kids will feel a whole lot better eating a brownie they provided for themselves than sitting around watching everyone else eat theirs.

Those flowers I bought myself were some of the best I ever got and not because they were the grandest. It was because I learned to appreciate myself. I learned to accept responsibility for my own "feel goods." There is no shame in that. If you have a special someone in your life, that is a bonus. It is truly a treasure -- never to be taken for granted. However, in the ebb and flow of life, it is inevitable that we are all going to spend at least some part of it alone. The only person who stays with us from the time we are born until the day we die is our own self. Shouldn't we truly appreciate and make certain that we feel special too?

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Regina Pickett Garson edits and publishes Magic Stream <http://www.magicstream.org> -- which is among the earliest online self-help and wellness resources. She teaches at Virginia College in Huntsville, Alabama.

Kids and Pets, will it work?

By Mariangie González

Kids and Pets, will it work? by Mariangie González

How can my child benefit from having a pet?

1. Social skills and self-esteem. Feelings and positive experiences with their pet can help children feel good about their own. Loving a pet can also help kids to love and trust other people.
2. Exercise. All pets need to exercise, and playing with their pet is a fun way to incorporate some physical activity to your kid's lifestyle.
3. Responsibility and respect. To learn how to take care of their pet can help kids develop empathy, concern and responsibility towards other beings. On top of that, during the life cycle of the pet, parents have the opportunity to talk to their kids about birth, sickness and death.
4. Parent interaction. Kids and their parents can spend more time together playing and taking care of their pet.

How can my child help take care of the pet?

1. A small child can help out by feeding or providing fresh water to their pet (portions must be measured by you).
2. The child can help walking the pet, not alone of course, but just another time to spend together with your kid.
3. Children can help you in bathing and grooming the pet.
4. Assign to your child small, simple tasks that can be performed under your supervision.

How can I keep my child healthy and safe around a pet?

1. Choose your pets wisely, if you don't already own a pet, study and learn from the different breeds and species, you will find that some are specially "kid friendly".
2. Consider any allergies a family member could have, before acquiring a pet. Consult with your kid's pediatrician about any allergies that may be present.
3. Take your pet to the veterinary to a general check up before you bring it home.

- * Always supervise interaction between pets and kids.
- * Teach your child not to touch any pet, unless you say it's OK to do so.
- * Never leave pets and kids unattended. Kids tend to play rough and that could provoke an attack or harm a small pet.
- * Make sure your child stays away while the pet is eating, sleeping or taking care of its own offspring.
- * Teach your child to keep a good hygiene, not to touch the pet droppings and wash his hands after playing with the pet.
- * Treat immediately any scratch or bite caused by a pet. Consult with your child's pediatrician if the scratch or bite tears your child's skin.

Mariangie González is an Agronomist with a major in Animal Science and runs the day-to-day operations of her home-based business and website which carries natural pet care, pet aromatherapy, holistic pet health, pet toys, pet jewelry and much more. She can also help you start your own

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