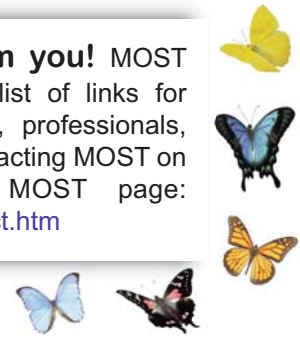




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## *Patience: One Day at a Time*

My name is Maureen and I am a Mom who lost her patience but is working on it: one day at a time.

When my children were toddlers I prayed every night to give me patience to be the parent that I wanted to be. I would pray for forgiveness for all the times I was not the parent I thought I should be. There were many. I remember reading a bumper sticker that said "I'm just a kid, please be patient with me." Oh, the guilt. Of course they were just little, and of course they deserved my patience, but also how could they not test my patience? They were little and there were a lot of them! I would wake up in the morning convinced I would start off the day being this good, patient Mom; some days I made it until dinner time, and others just until breakfast. But every day was a new day, and I can honestly say that every day I tried.

True patience did not come until my children were teenagers, and even then it was not a constant presence. There were moments that I really was awed by how well I did. Of course there were also many that I was just truly ashamed of how I reacted, but that is another story. What did I do to learn this patience? How did I get it? My teens taught me.

From the time they were little when I messed up as a Mom, I would wait until I had composed myself (and that good Catholic guilt gripped me until I would confess and make amends). I would tell them that I had not been the Mom I wanted to be or the Mom that I know that they deserve. I would tell them I was sorry and give them a hug. Usually they would tell me that it was okay, "We all mess up once in a while." I did this not only to relieve my guilt, but also so that they would know that it was okay not to be perfect ALL of the time. It was only human to mess up every once in a while, but you should own up to it and apologize for anything hurtful you might have said or any thoughtless or selfish acts you might have done.

I wanted my little gang to know that I, like all parents am VERY human and quite flawed (on many levels), but I love them with all of my heart and try to be the best Mom that I can. I may not always be the Mom that they need me to be; I can't read their minds. And sometimes I do not love them the way that they may need at that exact moment, but that does not mean I do not love them the best way I can and with all of my heart because I do. Let there never be any doubt about that.

Not until my trio were teenagers, could they use words and reasoning to express their own frustrations with me (can you imagine?), and ask that I hold off and just listen for a moment instead of giving a knee jerk reaction to their requests. (Like the answer would be anything but NO to some of the things they really thought I would be ok with?) Listening to them and trying to understand their reasoning often reminded me of how I thought and felt at their age. I had to remind myself of how I would feel if someone spoke to me the way I wanted to talk to them in those moments of non-negotiation. They taught me to

slow down and find words that would not be demeaning or hurtful: very similar to what I tried to do with them when they were toddlers and elementary school age. How would I feel if someone at work just came right out and told me that I was really making poor decisions that could forever ruin my life? I wouldn't like it. It's quite a challenge to come up with a way to put this kindly but without compromise; don't you think? They helped me, but it was a slow process. I was thankful, in the end, that they would be pretty blunt in telling me that I did not need to use those exact words to be honest about how I felt. Kids are smart, and they know, without words, if you do not like something or if you are mad. There is no need to belabor the fact by letting your real unedited thoughts slip out of your mouth. (That, girlfriends is saved for menopause). Most of the time, I think your children know what your answer is going to be even before they ask it, but they feel like it is worth a try anyway. They wouldn't be a kid if they didn't.

For some parents it is totally fine for them to say, "Because I said so" and end the discussion. Usually in our house if I say "No, I really don't think so" that is enough but when pressed I usually don't just say, "Because I said so" because I know that I would not be satisfied with that myself. I will try to be honest with them about why I am not fine with them, oh, say- going to a co-ed sleep over party.... Ok, I am REALLY not cool or "with it" even if EVERY other parent is okay with that. I am not. Or why I am not fine with them going to a concert in another state? I have pretty good reasons that are not hard to spell out for them with these requests but sometimes they ask if they can do things that my gut just tells me is wrong or is not a good idea, and I really can not put into words or make a logical argument for why I have to say no. I just have to be honest with them and tell them I am afraid: pure and simple. I am afraid, and I love them too much to say anything but no. I trust them, and I love them but I am afraid and they will just have to be patient with me. "I know that you can understand and respect that, right?", "I'm a Mom and I have had a lot of experience getting to this moment. Although I can not tell you why something is so, I believe it and have faith in you that you will trust me, respect me, and understand that I will just have to say no even if you do not understand why."

I ask them to have patience with me. I am just a Mom. They put up with me one day at a time.

Maureen 

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