



February 2019

My Advice to Our Kids

Barbi Horstkoetter

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.swosu.edu/sayre_student_anthology

Recommended Citation

Horstkoetter, Barbi (2019) "My Advice to Our Kids," *SWOSU Sayre Student Anthology*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 7 , Article 12.
Available at: https://dc.swosu.edu/sayre_student_anthology/vol1/iss7/12

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Monographs at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in SWOSU Sayre Student Anthology by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



My Advice to Our Kids

By Barbi Horstkoetter

Two years ago, my little family received a miracle we didn't know we needed. Due to unforeseen circumstances, we brought two of our nieces into our home to live with us. Zar was one, and Mariah was eleven. My eldest son, Zack, turning 18, was off to explore the world as an adult, and my youngest son Jake was fifteen (going on twenty-five.) Imagine people's faces when I said I have children from age one to 18! We never intended on having more. Little did I know, God had other plans. To describe the drastic changes we all made to our lives would take a novel, filled with endless stories of laughter, love, and lessons learned. Now, we have a twenty-year-old successful young man, fulfilling his dreams, a seventeen-year-old who can't wait to make his mark on the world, a thriving thirteen-year-old who is trying to find her passions in life, and a two-year-old who's personality is larger than life. Like a sponge, she soaks up every single thing she sees and hears. No one told me that girls are so different than boys. I find out daily that every word, look, and attitude is being watched and imitated. The boys didn't do that to me, so it wasn't such a big deal with them—probably a good thing since I was still very young and pretty dumb back then.

Growing up, I never thought my actions impacted anyone. They were *my* choices, *my* decisions, *my* problem. Not once did I think my behavior would have an impact on other people. Who was going to watch what I did? Finally it clicked that everyone has an impact, and everyone has a choice of how to influence others. Not only does our family shape us, but also our life lessons, cultures, friends, and enemies. Now that I am sending children out into the world, I wanted to make sure they had some of the lessons I chose *not* to learn until much later in life.

If I could imprint a few things on them that would last forever, it would be these things that matter to me. I would have to tell them that life is hard and unforgiving. It's an endless test of fill-in-the-blank and trick true or false questions to which we can't figure out the answers until it's too late. Not knowing is half the fun and most of the lesson. I'd want them to know they will always be their own hardest critics, as well as their own main constant driving force needed to continue on. They can't always depend on other people to be there. No one else will make their dreams come true. As with most people, they will never be as beautiful and muscular or young or skinny as they were the day before. Everyone ages and changes; it's just a fact of life. Every choice they make is only a path down another road that leads to another choice down another path. I would tell them that they are the only ones that give themselves true happiness. Searching for that in other people will only bring them heartache.

Even when they are surrounded by the people they love the most, they may still find themselves incredibly lonely. Happiness is a choice we each have to make for ourselves; so is misery. Work hard and be strong—there will be people who will depend on their strength, and those who will abuse it. The people who will rely on them the most will come as the greatest surprises, so will the people who fail them. They must always be proud of their accomplishments and dreams and hold their head high. No matter how much it hurts, never stop loving or believing. They will always succeed as long as they try. Being kind doesn't cost anything. There is always someone watching, waiting, aspiring, even judging. People they never thought would watch are watching, and those are the lives they will impact the most by their kindness and love. Always be kind, you never know what others are battling with. They may never know what their smile could do for someone else's day. My advice is if they see someone watching them, pass on a smile. It may be the best thing that happens to someone that day. Listen to other people's stories! Make them another lesson learned without having to live through it. Spread love, not hate.

It's inevitable, we will all lose the ones we love and others will lose us. Love leaves a memory no one can steal. Everyone is always so serious about death, but, hey, no one will ever get out alive. I'd ask them to live their lives to the fullest. After all, it's the only one they will get!! Never squander time being angry or evil. Be the exception. Set the example and never stop loving with all that you are. I can leave to them. John Walter Bratton said the best inheritance that can be left to children is a good example. That is a goal I pray I can achieve.