

PERSPECTIVE
HAVING FAITH WHILE PARENTING ALONE
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“I would like to request that, no matter how busy you may be, you find the time to get together to talk with your children. The length of time is not important. What matters is that parents use their wisdom.”

—Daisaku Ikeda (*Faith into Action*, p. 57)

Last night I watched my son play basketball for an hour and a half. I attended his practice not because I had nothing better to do—there’s always plenty to do—but because I enjoyed it. As a single parent of two adolescent boys, it is a rare opportunity spending time with singular attention on one of my boys.

I watched Philip and his lithe, wiry body sprint at full speed, jump with all his might, pass hard and precise and shoot from the heart aiming only for the basket and those two little points. My heart takes a small leap every time he makes it. I can tell that he loves what he is doing. He seems eager to learn and play. He is determined and focused.

I wonder to myself where this boy gets his confidence and determination. I don’t recall having that when I was his age. Maybe it’s because he is a boy—they say that adolescent boys are generally more confident than adolescent girls—but I feel it is more than that, it is something deeper.

SGI President Ikeda says: “Even if it’s only a brief meeting, give your children a hug when you see them. Touch them and talk to them. Try to make time to listen to what they have to say. As long as you have love and compassion, you will find the wisdom to make this work. The desire to save others becomes merely an abstract goal if those who practice faith cannot communicate with their own children nor build strong and happy families” (Ibid.).

I am Philip’s sole custodial parent. Since he and his brother, Jordan, were in preschool (almost nine years ago), I have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. During this time I have spent countless hours listening and supporting them while meeting all their physical needs. It has been a challenge beyond my expectations. Looking back, I can see that raising them with this faith has not only brought forth my human revolution but theirs as well. It is evident in the most inconspicuous ways that my faith and practice are influencing their ability to live out their adolescence with the self-assurance and a single-minded attitude needed to survive in this chaotic world.

The tensions and struggles in today’s society can make being an adolescent a traumatic experience for any young person. Without this practice, I feel my sons would be bending to an inordinate amount of pressure creating low self-esteem, lack of focus, emotional disturbances and apathy. So far, they have avoided these cracks in the adolescent paradigm.

After Philip’s basketball practice, I introduced myself to the head coach. When I told him I was Philip’s mom, he gave me an affirming nod and said, “He’s a good kid.” I felt pleased and proud. I am reassured to know that my faith is being reflected back to me through my son.