

Love the Child You Have

From the moment we meet our child, visions of all their potential begin dancing in our minds. We visualize what they will look like, what their profession will be, or where they will live. We can't help but dream of how tall they will be, what talents they will have, the places they will go, mountains they will climb, and the difference they will make!

Then it happens, as it should, these little humans who we thought we could mold into whatever we wanted, become different than what we intended. They develop their own thoughts, opinions, hopes, dreams and goals.

We may discover the child whom we dreamed would become a doctor, lawyer or engineer does not want to pursue post secondary.

Or they have a diagnosis that has made learning difficult.

Or the one we fantasized about being a professional athlete detests sports and competition.

Or they make choices with their friends that hurt others or themselves.

Or we hear a doctor give a diagnosis that will forever alter our child's life.

Or we read a psychological assessment that says our child has a mental illness.

Or a moment in time changes their trajectory, if only temporary, that will see them with a criminal record or requiring treatment for an addiction.

**One of the most profound lessons I have learned as a mother is to
parent the children I have, not the ones I wished I had.**

Now hear me out, I am not saying that we just let go of the wheel and allow our children to do whatever they want. They will always need us to set limits, provide guidance and safe boundaries. This will always be a requirement of good parenting, no matter the age of our children. We need to be the unwavering North Star to help them navigate life.

There is, however, a delicate balance in providing the right amount of direction with the right amount of freedom which essentially allows our children to have confidence to become their authentic self.

**My parenting changed when I understood that
letting go of my (sometimes unrealistic) expectations was actually a grieving process.
It was a loss that I needed to come to terms with and
imperative that I work through it similar to how I would walk through any other loss.**

When we can understand and appreciate that process, we will find peace in how we view our children. It is in accepting **AND** embracing all our children's strengths and challenges that we will see them in their true light.

It is in this space, I believe, that our children will genuinely feel loved by us and in turn, they will learn to love and accept themselves. ***Isn't that what we all want for not only our children but ourselves: to be loved, accepted and appreciated?***

This article was written by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. Tammy is Northern Gateway Public School's Student Support Facilitator. She is a support for schools, students, parents and caregivers to promote wellness and success in school. Tammy has been a Registered Social Worker for more than 24 years and is a mother to 4 children; 2 in high school and 2 in university.