

# Giving the Gift of Peace to our Children

by Zona Josephine Ascensio

From term papers to great artistic masterpieces, everything has a starting point. Likewise, the behaviors, attitudes, and ways of being we learn throughout our lives have origins. Some of these we learn at school, others we learn from the media, but, I've learned that peace is a lesson that is primarily learned at home.

The family I grew up in wasn't exactly the most peaceable. My mother was a good woman, but she was involved with a crowd that was far from the right one. We lived in homeless and domestic violence shelters. Once we even lived out of a car and ate at the Salvation Army soup kitchen. Throughout this time my brother and I were exposed to fights, drugs, and many other negative things. My opinions were made by see-

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ing the negative effects violence has on a family. I made a vow that if I ever had children, I would make sure I raised them in a peaceful environment. Now I have Sonora, my one-year-old daughter. I want to protect her from going through what I went through. I started thinking about how to live out the promise I had made to create a peaceful home for her.

When exactly do we start to learn about peace, I wondered. Does it start when our parents teach us to share? Maybe it begins when we learn not to pull hair or hit others. I believe it starts as soon as a child meets her family. I know my actions and behaviors set the groundwork for

Sonora's developing personality. From the moment of birth she looked to her parents to learn how to live life. Peace is learned and strengthened by the foundation set by our families.



I believe that the attitude we display is very important. If we show no manners, disrespect others, or are quick to display anger, our children notice. We may send the message that these actions are "okay" when, in actuality, they might not be. On the other hand, if we are peaceful people, our children will learn from that example. Later in their lives they might have children and raise them in a peaceful environment, and the cycle will continue.

In the end, it is all about us. I try to maintain peace by avoiding arguments even when I feel I am right, by staying patient, and controlling my temper. It is my goal to instill peace into the hearts of my family by remembering to set a good example. Sonora is the happiest baby I know, and I'm glad I have given her that.

Peace is not a lesson that can be taught only in a school. You can't go into a bookstore and buy a copy of *Peace for Dummies*. We, as parents, can start a cycle of peace in the world by teaching our children about peace at home. That is the only way to be sure that peace will be born within their hearts.

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