

## **Passage**

### **By Mark McClure, MD**

I first wrote this editorial almost a decade ago when my children had graduated from college. My daughter is now a pediatric intensive care nurse and my son works for MeadWestvaco in supply chain management. I have since been blessed with the birth of my first grandson who will celebrate his first birthday this September. I am doubly blessed to have a magnificent wife, Cheri Elliott. She also has two wonderful children who each have a lovely grandchild, ages three and nine.

As we reflect upon our many blessings, Cheri and I have jotted down the following truisms regarding child rearing that have guided us along the way:

- First and foremost, love your children unconditionally and don't keep it a secret. Tell them that you love them. Often.
- Allow your children to make mistakes, but also teach them how to learn from their mistakes by teaching them how to problem solve.
- Teach your children to be tolerant of religious, racial, and sexual differences. Avoid infecting your children with prejudice.
- Teach your children how to show respect for their peers, their elders, and all creation. Teach them how to respect the opposite sex as equals by your words and deeds.

- Encourage and teach your children to become lifelong learners by exposing them to quality art, music, dance, and literature instead of mindless television and video games.
- Teach your children how to become responsible citizens of their community, state, nation, and world.
- Encourage your children to incorporate spirituality into their daily living.
- Teach your children how to achieve optimal health by modeling a healthy diet and lifestyle.
- Teach your children how to share their many blessings with others.
- Teach your children how to responsibly save, budget, and spend money.
- Teach your children how to establish healthy personal boundaries.
- Discipline your children with dignity. Be firm, yet loving; consistent, yet reasonable. Avoid idle threats, ultimatums, and shaming.
- Encourage your children to do their best, but make sure that they know this doesn't mean that they have to be perfect. The same rule applies to parenting.
- Allow your children to chase their dreams, even if it doesn't conform to your dreams for them.
- Encourage plenty of play and laughter, both individually and as a family.
- Never stop trying. Parenting is a perpetual work in progress.

Although we haven't always been successful in adhering to the manifesto listed above, we've made every effort to do so. These time-honored principles have helped us and our children navigate the tricky waters that loom between birth and adulthood. As difficult as the voyage has seemed at times, we can't imagine a more glorious adventure.

I have recently experienced another passage. My older brother recently died from metastatic colon cancer at the age of 61. Although he was a brilliant lawyer, he died intestate – without a will. Keeping our financial and legal affairs in order is another gift we can give our children. But seven out of ten people don't have a will and half of all people with wills have wills that are at least five years old. To put things in perspective, \$100,000,000 a week goes through probate courts from intestate estates here in the United States. Furthermore, if both parents die without a will, the state will be forced to assign custody of surviving minor children. End of life directives are also vital. Without a living will, your children will be forced to make difficult decisions that may not represent your wishes, yet only 29 percent of Americans have a living will. A durable power of attorney should also be appointed so that financial affairs can be managed if a person is unable to do so. Finally, a letter of instruction regarding wishes and a list of assets, advisors, and their location will be greatly appreciated. Generic templates and instructions for each of these documents are available online. Don't delay until it's too late. Do it now.

*Dr. McClure, co-founder with Cheri Elliott, ANP, of Landmark Urology and Complementary Medicine in Raleigh, is this publication's medical editor. Visit him on the web at [www.urolmd.com](http://www.urolmd.com) or contact his office at (919) 571-4399.*