

Social Science Section: Cultivating Family Life

Daring What is Possible

Family life today is no longer a given. Whereas upbringing and education used to be carried by tradition and universally valid values, today we find ourselves at the convergence of varying points of view. The Social Science Section sees the family as a place of development for the creative individual preparing for the future.

Becoming a parent is and remains a gift. It happens to us. Children choose their parents, and are equipped with endless trust and confidence in them and in the world. In contrast to this status of being the chosen ones, parents face uncertainty and helplessness concerning the children's upbringing and education.

Family life requires immense capacities of integration. In daily family life, past, present and future want to be taken into account and integrated. What are the beliefs, the tradition, and the heritage that have formed us? Are we still aware of the ideals of our youth? We also need to open ourselves to the future of our children in order to be able to take appropriate action in current, everyday situations.

When our children enter into the period of youth – at the latest – the question of ‘forming community’ becomes topical. At this stage, it is important that adults be experienced as contemporaries. Are we open to the issues and challenges of our time?

Relating to the Sympathizing ‘I’

To begin with, we are chosen by our children, and then later challenged, again and again, beyond our limits. Yesterday, in a family conversation together, I managed to freely ask for more support with the housework. Right after the conversation, there stood nine-year-old Adam at the sink, unmasked and with shining cheeks, eagerly scrubbing the pots spick-and-span. He happily did without story time so he could still wash the kitchen floor. Then he marched off to bed, full of great good fortune, and assuring me that tomorrow he would clean the whole living room. Certainly Adam is a child of his time: Not very open for everyday duties, he often vehemently resists when it's his turn to set the table for supper. Today it worked – addressing him in his sympathizing ‘I’ and in this way inspiring his enthusiasm to help out.

How, in our everyday routine that is geared toward functional goals, can we foster openness, in order to create a generous space for such moments in which an ‘I’ can acquire a foothold on the earth? More than ever, the struggle for inner and outer authenticity, for seeking the spiritual in the earthly, seems to me to be the prerequisite for daring, in life's large and small tasks – again and again, untiringly – to do what is possible. | Susanne Hofmeister, Heidelberg, Germany

Next ‘Family Culture Conference’ at the Goetheanum: “Courage for ‘We’ – Becoming Parents, Living Family, Forming Community”, May 5-7, 2006. Contact: Susanne Hofmeister; ph. +49 6221 83 06 68, www.familienkultur.ch

Bild: Fostering openness in the midst of everyday routine to make space for the individuality acquiring a footing on earth.