

Five Buck\$ Worth of Romance Advice

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When we hear the name Abraham Lincoln most of us think of the gentle-giant president, the Gettysburg Address, and the Emancipation Proclamation. Rarely do we see our sixteenth president as a romantic, but romantic he was. What a lucky woman Mary Todd was, for it was Lincoln who once said that the best thing a man can do for his children is to love their mother. Talk about 19th century smooth. His words rang true then, as their echoes resonate truth now in the 21st century.

I've seen the results of Lincoln's advice not so much as America's Romance Guru, but more through my seven years as an elementary school teacher. I didn't make the connection at first, but after a few years, the pattern began to emerge. Those students who were polite and respectful, the ones who treated their peers well and were well-liked, tended to be the same children who wrote about both parents, who would have Mom and Dad attend parent conferences, and who always knew when it was their parents' wedding anniversary.

These parents spent time together. They made an effort to share special days with one another. The dads loved the moms, and the children could feel that.

When children see a strong, loving relationship between their parents, a sense of security, stability, and safety is anchored within them. "If Mom and Dad love each other so much, they must love us, too," children reason, feeling that nothing will separate the family in this world where over 50% of marriages end in divorce, and so many children are being raised in single-family households.

A strong bond between parents allows children to know that love is okay. Not just romantic love, but love for friends, family, pets, and teachers. They learn there's no shame in being kind. It's pleasing to make others happy. They will internalize these characteristics which will undoubtedly resurface during playdates, at school recess, and any other child-social gatherings.

Not only will your children become happier people, but the affection aimed at Mom will plant the seed for strong relationships for your children's future. Little ones may want to get in on Mommy and Daddy's hug or sofa-snuggle. Teens may tell you to "get a room". But, no matter how they react, they will see what love is, not from a TV sitcom, a PG-13 movie, an article in a teen magazine, or what their friends tell them. They learn love from you.

Legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden, said, "The person you are is the person your children will be." What a powerful, poignant, and

provocative statement. If it's true, we as parents have incredible responsibility to live our lives as we hope our children will live theirs. So, show them true love, for isn't love what we all strive for? Don't you want your children to find as loving a relationship as you have? Then... show them.

Buy Mom flowers. Tickle her when she washes the dishes. Have date nights without the kids. Hold hands in public. Snuggle on the couch. All the while, letting the kids see you love their mother.

Your children will develop into strong and healthy people whose relationships will blossom, while yours will stay as romantic as those days you were courting, all thanks to the man on the five. Thanks, Abe.