

Do Your Eyes LIGHT UP?

Sandra Pelletier with
husband Christian Naylor
and their son, Ford Naylor.

By Sandra Pelletier

Recently I was shown a quote by Nobel Prize-winner Toni Morrison that left an imprint on my heart and soul:

When a child walks in the room, your child or anybody else's child, do your eyes light up? That's what they're looking for.

Those words are haunting me, probably because I am a mother of an adorable one-year-old baby boy and, of course, my eyes always light up when I see him. But I'm wondering if that will always be the case. What about when he's into the "terrible twos" and having the tantrums that are supposedly typical for that stage? And what about when he's a teenager and his room (I imagine) looks like a hurricane recently ravaged it?

The wise and wonderful Toni Morrison goes on to say that even though you may think your deep love is always on display because, of course, your children know you love them, it isn't always apparent. Your children are not mind readers, after all. So often when they see you, they see a critical face. You may be thinking that their hair needs combing or they need new shoes or their clothes are rumpled, and that's what is displayed on your face—it's the critical face.

Put yourself in their place for a moment. Think about how your own mood is immediately uplifted when you are greeted by friends or family who display a genuine look of happiness just because you have entered their sphere. Their eyes light up and your soul is nourished. This connection is so important.

“When a child walks in the room, your child or anybody else's child, do your eyes light up? That's what they're looking for.” —Nobel Prize-winner Toni Morrison



It's really about staying conscious—conscious of the words you say to your children, conscious of the words they hear you say to others, conscious of your tone of voice and the expression on your face. Be conscious too of the food you are feeding them. We parents are feeding their bodies, minds and souls every moment of every day they are with us. We are preparing them to go into the world and repeat the behaviors they have learned by watching us because, of course, that's exactly what children do when they grow up.

The family abode should be a safe and sacred sanctuary where children can learn and be nourished. I am grateful for the opportunity to present the best example for my child that I can. Anyone can be a parent, but being a *good* parent is a fine and noble calling. Thank you, Toni Morrison, for reminding me of that.

Now let me take this one critical step further. When we hear the word “family,” our first natural inclination is to think of our children.

“Family” also includes our romantic partner, our parents, our siblings and anyone else we deem worthy of including in that endearing term. Too often we take for granted the ones we say we love the most. So also be conscious of lighting up your eyes when you see any members of family as every day we get a new chance to leave a positive impression with them. **B**