

CHILDREN OF THE EARTH

Pagan parenting the Southern way



Prepared for and on behalf of the South African Pagan Council

by Morgause Fontelève

With thanks to Ginney May and Jacqui Curtiss
and interviewed Pagans who contributed
their experience and opinions on parenting as Pagans.

Edited by Aurelius, Morgause and Damon Leff

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Pagan Parenting

by Morgause Fontelève

Pagan parents pose themselves questions on correct and successful parenting. Our families are insular units of a society that is not always Pagan friendly. How do we equip our children to deal with the difficulties that lie ahead and with a good education, ethics, morals, principles as well as spirituality?

Pagan children are not raised in a vacuum. They frequent schools and are exposed to other belief structures. They meet other children from different backgrounds and are subjected to the scrutiny of teachers, peers and the peers' parents.

They are exposed to the media, patriarchal way of thinking, sexism, "me-ism", a world of exploitation and even degradation. How do we best equip our children to deal with the tough times that could lie ahead of them?

Education

Someone once wrote that "the success or failure of a democracy lies in its system of education." [The Theosophical Movement - Theosophy Company (India) Private Ltd.]

The concept of freedom must be an inner ideal which imparts strength to our character and daily activities. Valuing freedom is the only way of attaining the Wisdom with which we as occultists should be enamoured. This right should be accorded to our friends and enemies alike.

But what is freedom? Is it the ability to move around unrestrained? However true, physical impediments are only an outward loss of movement. Being a mental slave is far worse for the psychologically imprisoned are afraid to think for themselves. And what is valid for the microcosm must also be applied to the macrocosm. When faced with socio-economic and political problems the collective is tempted to relinquish their personal liberty. They become passive, through repeated conflicts and the struggle to survive. They desist and surrender all to some power allowing it to think for them. The society we live in, the nation we are part of, can also enjoy freedom and suffer through the lack of it. Political freedom does not necessarily mean true freedom; not until it has been tested.

How do we educate our young to protect themselves against the servile surrender to those powers? They must be encouraged to develop discrimination, to recognise the danger signs. Madame Blavatsky wrote that a proper and sane system of education should produce the most liberal and vigorous minds, strictly trained in logic, accurate thought, and in not falling prey to blind faith.

We need teachers who will kindle liberty in the hearts of our children; intellectual, moral, unprejudiced, unselfish and respectful principles, so that they can look after themselves intellectually, morally and spiritually, equipped to avoid the destructive tendencies and fads of our times and of being deceived, way-laid and

exploited. They should be taught to recognize the truth, evolving into self-reliant, responsible adults, folk of integrity and honest citizens of our Republic.

We need to encourage our children's curiosity and imagination. We must teach them to satisfy their curiosity with learning and convey the joy of learning in everything we do with them and for them.

Parenting Skills

In times gone by parenting skills we learned from our extended families. Grandparents, uncles and aunts all lived close by, and an elder was always close at hand to give advice and guidance. Experience talks tons where kids are involved. We often hear parents remarking that raising the second child was far easier than the first one, and this is of course through the gaining of experience and the making of mistakes whilst raising the first child.

The most valuable parenting skill that we should remember is discipline and the best tip we can give here is to remember "who is in charge?" Parents must be very careful of the reversal of roles especially with children with strong wills. Children should not rule the homestead! Parents have to take on our responsibility as parents and embrace our duty in training our children to become ethical adults with principles and morals. We should also remember that the transferral of values and the will to become respectable adults is a role which is primarily a parenting role; teachers and schools assist us in this task, but it is ultimately our responsibility.

Nature is our teacher and it is natural for a child to measure itself against authority. From the moment they are born children are evolving towards independence, and this testing and measuring themselves up against us is normal, natural and healthy. How we deal with it is sometimes the issue. As parents we have to define and set the parameters/boundaries and institute consequences for the transgression of these. We have to assert authority when these boundaries are challenged. This too is a natural law. My mother always used to assure me that I was being disciplined because I mattered so much to her; so much that she wanted to ensure that I behaved in socially acceptable ways. In other words, discipline must be met with love and in accordance to the age of the child. It is imperative that the child understand the process of punishment, redirecting, time-out, grounding, loss of priveledges, etc. They have to be part of the process. Discipline does not only entail chastisement, but praise when praise is due.

As parents we must also learn to lead by example. Children see and absorb everything they see and hear and they come to their own conclusion very quickly. Children hate weakness and inconsistency in parents. Be sure to follow your own rules. We have to learn to walk the walk and talk the talk, if they are going to look up to us and respect us enough to be compliant and obedient to our requests and instructions. It is our duty to teach them respect, compassion, kindness, understanding, confidence, consideration for others, tolerance, acceptance, etc. Some of us just have to cast our minds back to our childhood years to realise that one is sometimes exposed to bad examples right in one's own home: cruelty, substance abuse, lack of consideration, violence, and so on.

We must remember that values and ethics [especially work ethics and the acceptance of chores] are not learned in one day. It is a parent's job to remind and remind again. No matter how annoying this is, it is our job. We must

remember to be loving, consistent and always approachable. We brought our children into the world and we are responsible for their correct development.

Be consistent and don't allow bad behaviour to go unrebuked or unpunished. Children want to know that you are watching and that you care enough to rap them on the knuckles. Bad habits are born this way. Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) wrote something very useful pertaining to a child's education/learning: "Parents who wish to train up their children in the way they should go, must go in the way in which they would have their children go." We have to lead the way! We must never lie to our children or lie in front of them. They will take this as a form of sanctioning lies.

Let us remember that respect for parents and authority figures are crucial for the healthy development of self-discipline in our children. We can help our children to respect authority by making our word and our actions worthy of respect. Let us give clear instructions, listen to our children, and get together for sessions of talking and planning. All of these tips will assist us to encourage them towards self-discipline and create a climate in the home that is conducive to good, healthy family ties.

However, it is a cold fact that the majority of us still need to learn how to effectively impart discipline to our beloved offspring.

Discipline

When giving instructions to our young ones, we should be very specific and put clear time-frames to the execution of these instructions.

When we perceive an attitude of non-compliance in our children, we should first look them straight in the eye and give them a reminder of what is what and who is who. We can then walk away and grant them the opportunity to comply. These tactics usually do the job, but just in case, commence searching for an appropriate consequence for the non-compliance. The consequence must be related to the misbehaviour and must always be logical as well as varied. Children get accustomed to forms of punishment and then they are no longer effective.

If the warning system does not work, ask your child to retire to his room and give yourself the opportunity to calm down. Discipline must never be met in anger. Once you are calm you can speak to him and explain the why, the consequences and the duration of the punishment. Always be sure to enforce the consequences. Do not give up half-way, out of pity ... your child will take your commiseration as a sign of weakness and take it for granted that he was right and that you were wrong and unfair to start off with. Children normally get argumentative and whine when discipline is being enforced. Remember to ignore this. This is the one time you will not listen to your child, unless it is to assist him in the planning of the execution of his punishment.

We must learn to forgive our children for their misdemeanours. In this way they will learn the power and the liberation of forgiveness.

Never discipline through shouting, swearing, name-calling, insulting, violence/hitting or sarcasm. As parents we must be in control of our emotions, no matter how "mad" our kids drive us. Don't make the mistake of bringing up "old things". Leave old mistakes that have already been dealt with in the past. To rehash things is wrong and unfair. Furthermore, we must never shame our children, or pass caustic, belittling remarks in front of his peers or visitors.

Punctuate the moment with a warning look and then tackle him or her later, in private. Effective consequences are guaranteed to break the nasty pattern of non-compliance.

We must have sufficient emotional maturity to show respect to our children and to assure them that we are there to assist them in "getting things right". Listen, take note of what they want and how they want to get it right. Acknowledge their justifications, good intentions but do not allow these to veer you off your consequential actions, unless it is the case where a compromise would benefit the child and the situation more than rigid discipline.

We must not forgive to praise our children immediately, when they have done something right. Praise reinforces our children's correct behaviour and builds their self-esteem. We must be sure that the praise is sincere and honest. Don't overdo it, for they will perceive it as a tactic and turn it to your disadvantage.

Meeting effective discipline with constancy can be a hard job. We must continue to remind ourselves that the purpose of discipline is to empower our children with self-control and self-discipline.

Communicating In the Home

Parents and teenage children are hardly ever in sync. Our musical tastes, opinions, fashion sense, etc. differ drastically. It is important to allow our children to make their own choices. We can communicate to them what we dislike about their tastes, their dress sense, their propensity for disorder, but we must accord them freedom of choice. This will instil in their hearts the spirit of mutual acceptance and tolerance towards differences. The family is the training ground for life.

We must let our children know that in our society order is better than chaos, that face to face communication is far more valuable and real than instant messaging, but also allow them the pleasure of their "make-believe" friendships and relationships. Do not make the mistake of running these down.

Teenagers tend to be self-absorbed and selfish. Remind them how to share, how to be kind and compassionate, but allow them the right to choose where they wish to apply these qualities.

Let's not forget to take their hormonal surges into consideration. They will be moody, atheistic little anarchists. Teenage progression to adulthood is often stressful and poignantly sweet.

We must be clever enough to overcome the urge to tell them all about our long-lost adolescence and how good we were at doing this or that. It irritates them; unless he asks you to volunteer some anecdote that can help him/her to understand better some or other requirement of society, refrain from telling him about how things were done in the "good ol'days".

We must also not come across as always being too "cock sure". Children want to know that we are human (not weak, but human!), that we too struggled and did not always succeed. They find weakness, spineless incongruency coupled with our teenage capabilities to be daunting and it insults their adolescent sensibilities. It causes them to withdraw, become timid and incapable of connecting.

Whatever we do, we must never offer to rescue them. All they want of us is to be their available and present support system. They want our sympathy, not our "I told you so's ..."

Punishment and Spanking

The latest research shows that children who get spanked are prone to suffer from low self-esteem, depression, and to resort to aggression and violence to resolve their problems. Corporal punishment actually teaches and perpetuates violence. Some experts even go as far as saying that children who receive regular hidings accept the lower paid jobs when they eventually enter the job market. No wonder most of us instinctively dislike spanking our little ones.

Calm down when you are angry. We all are under a lot of stress. Don't be impulsive and lash out verbally or physically when your child displeases you. Detaching and counting to ten normally helps. Next, talk to your child in a normal tone. Be firm rather than violent. Then you can take your pick from the following list on how to meet punishment: time out, hiding, doing chores, takes away priveledges, sending them to bed early, etc.

If we may extend another tip here, rather opt for taking away priveledges than to the adding to the child's already stressful burden of homework, chores, sports, etc. The objective here is to teach them, not to make them suffer in order to repent.

Small children have the habit of asking "why?" Never make the mistake of explaining yourself to a small child who repeatedly challenges you. Tell it that that's the way it is, "because you said so". It is non-negotiable! Assert yourself with firmness and the child will learn to respect your wishes.

Lastly, spanking leads to tell-tale reactions which could embarrass you in public and instil in the child's hear feelings of fear. We want our children to listen to us because they trust and respect us. We want them to obey because they do not to wish to disappoint us and not because they fear us and our reactions.

Gender Roles

Mums must be the reflection/manifestation of the Goddess' motherhood. They must be approachable, loving, caring, understanding, Dads must be protective, fatherly providers. This does not mean that the Mum cannot take on a leading or protective role and that the Dad cannot give expression to his nurturing nature. Fathers play an essential role in the psycho-emotional evolution of our children and set the measuring unit for our children's future families. Who does the cooking, the dishes, and the laundry are generally non-issues in a Pagan household.

Both parents must be able to demonstrate their affection for their children. Hugs and kisses are the order of the day! You can't tell your kids enough times that you love them. This helps them to develop a positive self-image as well as reassures them of the security that the family unit provides. It is not an unnecessary or useless institution as some intimate.

Children [no matter at what age] must always feel that they can look at their parents for wise advice, moral and emotional support. And these roles are not gender specific.

Isolation and Persecution

I believe we should raise our children on our Spiritual Path, taking part in ritual and coven life.

If at any point your child express negative feelings re the coven, the circle casting, the way he is perceived by others at school, that he is being ostracized because of his family's belief, do not panic. It happens to all of us. Sooner or later!

Children perceive their uniqueness very early on in life. Sometimes they question these differences and ask themselves if the difference is worth the while. Perhaps this difference is perceived by them as being imposed, unfair and this may give rise to feelings of rebellion, worthlessness and the inability to cope with what he perceives as his failure to be popular, to be "normal" and acceptable, and that this is dictated by extraneous circumstances not of his making.

If you perceive these symptoms in your child, avoid labelling him a Pagan or a Witch in front of his peers as it is important for a child to feel accepted and valued by those in his age group. Give him the opportunity to explore "normalcy", different spiritual avenues and interests but maintain your spirituality and ritual practices constant at home. He may engage different experiences outside, but at home he will be immersed in the familiarity of Paganism. What is important is that he does not resent you for the pressures and anxiety of non-acceptance by his peers and take a negative stance towards the family spiritual Path.

Some of us have children who feel isolated and who struggle with being accepted by their peers and the parents of their peers. They also experience anxiety going to school or in social situations.

Quite often it is sufficient for the teenager to know that his family has a tradition it follows, a certain form of spirituality that is beautiful and meaningful, that he is part of this close-knit group, or extended, understanding and supportive spiritual family, that love him and to which he belongs, whether he publicly participate or not in coven activity.

If our children feel the spiritual connection the problem-period will be brief. If it is more protracted, it is advisable that we chat with the child, on odd occasions, re spirituality and religious matters, indirectly involving him in what is happening within the tradition, etc. In this manner our children will still learn the values that will guide their behaviour and ethics even as adults.

Useful Tips to Successful Parenting

If we are always too busy for our children or irritable because a hard day's work has tensed us up, they will begin to feel neglected, despite all the valid reasons and justifications which you might cook up for them. You are the parent. Make sacrifices; make time. We must spend that time with our children, doing family things together, travelling together, reading to them, making music together, cooking, hiking, discussing and playing games together.

Let there be an atmosphere of caring and respect in our homes. Spouses must mutually respect one another in order to receive love, admiration and respect from the young ones.

Let us make a concerted effort to always be available and to listen to our children objections and problems. Let us talk to them, listen to what they have to say. Let us get to know our children. Let us get up close and personal with them.

Let us remember to teach our children basic life skills, always encouraging them to do their best, praising them for their efforts. Whether we want to or not we are role models for our kids, so let us ensure that we are positive ones, instilling in them the love for righteousness, ethics, principles and morality through our example of discipline, being humble and honest in our pursuit of spiritual perfection.

It is so important to consume meals together. Due to the frenetic pace of modern-day life, a lot of us have forgotten the importance of family meals and have resorted to eating our meals separately, in front of the television set. At the table one gets the true sense of togetherness and family. Listen carefully, communicate, and build "togetherness". At mealtimes parents have the golden opportunity to listen to what is important or pressing in the lives of their young ones and give them sound advice on how to deal with their issues.

We must provide our children with the opportunity to feel like an important part of the family, of his peer group, his soccer team, the girl scouts, and so forth. We must actively enhance our children's feelings of self-worth. Let us tell them how important they are to the whole. Make them feel special. But do it honestly. Children can spot lies and embellishments a mile away.

We should encourage our children to express themselves in their own way. Set firm but reasonable standards, by which he can freely gauge their own progress. By demonstrating respect for their opinion, thoughts and emotions, we in turn earn their respect.

Our children should also be given responsibilities within the family and we should provide as many opportunities as possible for them to put their newfound skills to the test and thereby learn, analyze, weigh up situations and deal with failure, without resorting to overreacting or emotional outbursts.

Resolving Conflict and Family Meetings

Family meetings provide us with the opportunity to express our feelings and opinions, regarding personal and family matters. It also teaches children to voice and deal with their in a practical way. Family meetings also allow for the development of communication skills and through that the improvement of self-esteem, as well as allowing themselves to believe in and rely on an emotional support system.

Oh, no doubt, we are going to come across a bit of mockery and jesting when we call our first family meetings, but don't let that put us off. We are the parents and as co-moderators we can summon everyone to sit around the dining room table to discuss family matters and come to unanimous decisions. Children can also be given moderating duties. This exercise will be extremely beneficial for them in the long run.

Every member of the family must be encouraged to contribute. Nothing is too bad, or too trivial to be discussed. All the family members must be well-behaved and supportive of the "speaker" and whatever it is that presses him. Everyone must get a turn to voice his opinion, make his suggestions, or air his discontent. Delegation of family responsibilities and duties must also take place during these meetings.

Praise and encouragement must be integral parts of these family discussion sessions. Planning of the week ahead (e.g. study routines for the examination period and considerate behaviour from all present towards this end) can also be addressed. The inclusion of planning for the week ahead and the time management skills which the children are exposed to at these meetings will come in good stead later on in their life.

Consideration and respect are vital parts of these meetings. Interruptions must not be allowed. The speaker must be protected at all costs. We must teach our children decision making and problem-solving skills. They must be taught to prioritize as well as to make decisions on matters that involve them.

In case of conflict, the meetings must be utilized to clear the air and, after some brainstorming, to reach a unanimous and fair decision. Meetings should be held on weekly or fortnightly basis at least. The family must always be in touch and we as parents must always have our fingers on the pulse.

We must make sure the meetings are fun and do not last too long. Prizes and special mentions which are attached to rewards must be part of this system of remaining in touch with our loved ones. The meetings must result in a sort of "win-win" situation for all. Parents must follow up on decisions made and the implementation of the solutions and report any feedback to the family at the next meeting.

Ethics, Morals and Responsibilities

We must teach our children conventional, social and conversational etiquette. Honing these skills through practice and example will empower our children with the ability to engage in positive interaction with others. They should be taught right from wrong and share with him your experiences and how to deal with them, in order that they may also apply Pagan values and ethics to their personal decision making.

It is our duty to tell our children about our family traditions, our ways and rituals, our ancestors, and to instil positivity and pride for their Pagan heritage in their hearts. By doing this we will edify our children's sense of uniqueness, reinforce their belief in their talents and character traits, and encourage them to develop a positive self-image and compassion towards others.

We should expose our children to a different things and experiences and thereby assist them in developing adaptability and the ability to overcome the fear of change, failure and the angst of tackling obstacles.

Children should be taught to earn their money or how to pay back for something they have broken or lost. They should understand the law of restitution and retribution through the examples that we as parents set. We must take care that this is not being harsh, but the way things work in the grown-up world.

Confessing, or owning up to our mistakes and making amends for it as well as apologizing, are also two valuable lessons that we as parents must ensure to impart to our children. We must learn to say "I am sorry!" when we are wrong. Children do what children see.

Pagans are not a "People of the Book". So how do we figure out what is ethical and moral? The following is an example how the Pagan Community view and apply social, spiritual and moral principles.

SAPC CODE OF PRINCIPLES

2.2. The Code of Principles

2.2.1. As Pagans we recognize humanity's duty towards the environment and acknowledge that Nature is our Mother and teacher. We should strive to protect Her and to live in harmony with Nature.

2.2.2. We acknowledge the interconnectedness of everything and should therefore strive to practice kindness, generosity, hospitality and cooperation.

2.2.3. We acknowledge equality of the sexes and should therefore not regard one above the other.

2.2.4. We should honour those who teach and acknowledge those who have given themselves in leadership to the revival and advancement of Paganism.

2.2.5. We should avoid gossip and the repetition of unverified facts, and avoid passing judgment on others. We should not promote a spirit of animosity towards other religious paths.

2.2.6. Honour is a sacred virtue. Let our actions be upright, causing harm to none. We should at all costs, avoid deceit, exploitation of others, fraud, violence, theft, abusive behaviour, substance abuse and any form of action deemed illegal and detrimental to society.

2.2.7. We believe in religious freedom and should therefore be tolerant and accepting of other Pagan and non-Pagan spiritualities and religions.

2.2.8. We should remain true to our highest selves and strive to act with wisdom and strive never to do anything that would bring our religion and spirituality into disrepute.

2.2.9. We should be honest with others and let them know that we expect nothing less from them. Our word should be our bond.

2.2.10. Pagans should strive to obey the just laws of the land and its government.

2.2.11. Pagans should strive to act with dignity. Let our words, thoughts and actions be in line with our philosophy of life, respect and reverence towards all.

2.2.12. Pagans reserve the right to preserve our cultural and Pagan heritage (including the use and carrying of swords, knives and ritual tools) and traditions in the form of rituals, doctrines, practices and religious holy days.

Parenting Angry Children

How do we deal with difficult children who throw tantrums and have such strong wills they want to have their way in every single situation? As parents we never know when the dam wall is going to burst again. And worst of all we don't know how we will deal with the child's inappropriate wrathful behaviour which often time causes embarrassment all round.

Such angry behaviour in children stems from physical or emotional pain, stress, frustration and a sensation of powerlessness. It can also be symptom of a more serious nervous disorder (ADHD, depression or bi-polar disorder).

As parents we are not equipped with diagnostic tools and must resort to those in the medical profession to deal with the abovementioned disorders. All we can do is get to know our children well and know what it is that is bothering them. Is it school? Peer pressure, is he being bullied, is it insecurity caused by a turbulent family environment? What are his grades like? All we can do is wait for the aftermath of the outburst and then attempt to discuss or resolve the situation. Keeping a peaceful and calm atmosphere around the house will assist difficult children to cope with daily stresses.

We must spend one-on-one quality time with our children and try to limit the visual intake of violence and anger through movies, pc games, etc. When we spend time with our children, let us be focused on them and them alone. This will allow them to feel they are special and that you enjoy their company when they are behaving well.

Angry children need our support. They need to be shown that they are loved unconditionally, and that they can be taught how to appropriately deal with anger. Tackle the situation immediately. The situation does not get better with time; it only gets worse. Do not tolerate rebellious and disrespectful behaviour. Set down the rules. You are the parent!

Repetitive cases of disobedience can really frustrate a parent. A useful tip is to be kind but firm. Get down to your child's level, square him in the eyes, place your hand gently on his shoulder and tell him what you would like him to do. "I want you to leave the cat alone!" or "I want you to put the matches where they belong!"

Most of all, an angry child needs his parents' support. He needs to be shown confidence, that he is loved unconditionally and then shown how to appropriately deal with his anger.

Beware Of Mixed Messages

As Pagans and parents we should beware of the mixed messages we give our children when we ask them to keep our rituals and religious activities a secret. The logical question that springs to our children's minds is "If it is ok, why do we have to keep it a secret?" They wonder why they cannot speak about the God and the Goddess in front of family, friends and acquaintances. Why others say nasty things about our Spiritual Path if it is not true? Why they react so vehemently and accuse us falsely when confronted with our spiritual reality?

It is our job to explain to our children that their vehemence is provoked by ignorance and fanaticism. They know no better.

Children might not have the maturity to fully understand the consequences of religious intolerance, but they sure feel these on their own skin. Parents suddenly decide that little Johnny cannot play with little Jimmy, because little Jimmy's parents are bad people. Pagan children suddenly develop what many have termed "toxic guilt" and commence resenting their parents for it.

How do we, as Pagan parents, explain to our children that it is not ok to publicly speak about our rites and rituals, our altars and magickal tools? Not unless it is someone who is sympathetic towards our religious practices.

Which brings us to the next problem: do we raise our children in the Craft? Or do we keep them in the dark and ourselves in the broom closet? Is it fair to ram our spiritual choices down our children's throats? Do we send our children to private or public schools? Or do we opt for home-schooling?

Well, I believe that even when our children are not ready to understand certain complexities in life, that they can understand the great privilege of freedom, of total open communication and a spirit of sharing that reigns in a Pagan household.

Our son was raised in the Craft and was taught that our rites are sacred and secret. He frequents a government school and has never discussed our spirituality at school or with his friends. However, when friends started coming over to our house for band practise, they started noticing the difference between our home and theirs. Questions followed and these were followed by concerned parents (who then kept their children away from ours). On the other hand it also lead us to finding of other esoterically minded parents in the area. Like drew like.

Our son never made us feel guilty for the accusations and injustices he had to put up with in primary school; on the contrary he reassured us that all was fine and that these children and their parents were narrow minded and could not accept that people have different ways to approach the Gods/God. His character, his sunny nature helped him overcome this social hurdle, and before long, the "good Christian children" were back at our house, which has become their favourite hang out. Their parents still look at us down the length of their noses, but at least our boy's life is no longer negatively affected. They don't accept our differences, but they put up with them and reserve their judgment of us and magnanimously do not include our child in it.

On the school register we are Pagans. Full stop! The teachers and head master know it and know well not to use the writing of Bible verses as punishment for our son, for as Dad says, one should not use religion to punish a child.

We give our son the freedom to attend a Christian Youth Entertainment Centre every Friday night. He is well loved and very popular at the Centre, even though they know that he comes from a Pagan home and that he is there solely to enjoy the company of his peers, the live band, the skating, the pool tables, and of course the girls. Once he expressed the desire to attend Mass; we allowed him to go with friends, but that soon wore off, as Sol enjoys lying in late. "Churchgoers rise too early!" he says in his totally un-Apollonian reasoning.

Not so long ago our son announced that he was an Atheist. He does not believe in God. I let him read the Code of Principles of the SAPC and half an hour later he had refound his Pagan self. No amount of atheistic metal music and socio-political hype can take away the sound Pagan foundations and his love for the Lord and Lady.

Through the work and dedication of our Pagan leaders, the time has come in our country for us to stand up and testify to our Paganism. People who know us and know what we stand for will put two and two together and come up with the undeniable answer of 4. It is time to show that Pagans are reliable and responsible professionals, family people and upright citizens who pay their taxes, mow their lawns on the weekend and who occasionally hold festivals out in their gardens or in Mother Nature.

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Parenting & Rites

by Morgause Fontelève

We have the honour and privilege to live under the most progressive Constitution in the world and South African Pagan Orgs have received recognition as formal, registered religious bodies in our Country. Now, more than ever, Pagan parents have the responsibility of finding the time to raise their children in a spirit of freedom and equality. We need to address gender issues and rites of passage with our offspring so that they can be enriched by the knowledge of our ancestral heritage and ways and to experience and grow up to be well-balanced, fulfilled adults, equipped with what it takes to make good spouses and in turn good Pagan parents.

The pressures of modern day living have taken a hold on our lives. In many ways we are "absent parents". Our children are raised in crèches, by nannies and in front of television sets where they are bombarded by advertising and conditioned not to think "outside the box". It is our responsibility as parents to counteract the effects of the inevitable exposure to this outward influence and to "take back our time" and to consider the importance of rites of passage in Pagan living.

Time

The passing of time has always been a mystery for young, the ageing and the old. But does time pass? Or is it the eternal now that moves through us and returns upon its tracks to find us aged?

Things happen in cycles.
History repeats itself.
Coming full circle.
As it was in the beginning, so it will be in the end.

These are all maxims which explain the cyclical nature of time for man who is prone to linear thinking.

It is time Pagans realize that every milestone in a person's life deserves to be acknowledged, understood and celebrated. Celebrating these events will enable us to connect to the event itself and to infinity of time, which we witness time and time again.

Pagan Parents can choose to weave the golden thread of joy across the tapestry of our children's lives or allow this mystery to go unsolved and the changes which come over us as time goes by, understood. Only in this way can our children take ownership of who they are in eternal time and space.

The Naming Of a Child

Birth is a joyous event. The parents are congratulated by all, the baby needs to be welcomed into its spiritual family and to receive a name by which it will be known amongst Pagan circles. At this naming rite blessings are also bestowed upon the child and parents.

Father: "We are gathered here today, before the Ancient Ones, the Lord and the Lady, as well as our fellow Pagans, desirous to dedicate and name our child. We humbly beseech the Lord and Lady to hold him dear and to protect him as he grows and develops into a man of the Ancient Gods."

The High Priestess now steps forward and traces a pentagram with a double-edged crystal on the bottom of the baby's feet and on its hands.
 "May he walk the Ancient Path of Knowledge and may his deeds honour the Gods of his forefathers."

The High Priest now bathes his indicator in a very gentle solution of saltwater and draws a symbol of the Four Quarters on the child's forehead. He blesses the child further by saying:
 "May the Ancient Ones, the Lord and Lady ever smile upon you, gentle soul. May they guide and protect you every single day of your life. May they make you wise and powerful, knowledgeable and compassionate."

The bell is rung three times.

Next the High Priestess asks the parents to step forward and make their declaration, holding the baby over the altar. The parent's declaration is done jointly, or by reciting the phrases alternately:
 "We dedicate the fruit of our love to the Ancient gods and vow to lead him with Love and Ancient Wisdom so that he may grow to be knowledgeable and full of honour in the ways of our craft. May he know right from wrong and may he harm none. May he one day chose to follow in our footsteps. From this moment onwards his name will be _____"

All present: "So Mote it Be!"

The High Priestess then says: "We welcome _____ into our midst."
 She takes the baby in her arms and raises it above her head. "By this name you shall be known in all our temples and circles, by this name you will be given respect and protection. We bless and consecrate your life, that it may be holy. May you grow in honour and trust, in, beauty love and righteousness."

All present: "So Mote it Be!"

Bell is rung and gifts are presented to the baby. Cakes and ale and merrymaking follow.

Coming Of Age

Unfortunately in today's day and age, very few Western Cultures still celebrate this extremely important phase in the lives of our children. It is still an intrinsic part of Jewish and African cultures. Neglecting to acknowledge the entry into this phase leads to a lot of misunderstanding and unhappiness in the life of a young man or young lady. For this reason we are dedicating an entire section to the rites of coming of age and exhorting all Pagan parents to celebrate, elucidate and acknowledge the coming of age of our children.

Young Ladies & Menarche

For the young ladies the onset of menarche [or the time of the first menstruation] could happen as early as 10 years old or as late as 15 years old. Mums and Dads this is a time to sit her down and congratulate her. Make a big fuss of her. Let her know that the Goddess has blessed her and the moon blood is a sign of this blessing. Explain to her the changes that her body is undergoing, how the body discards the unused endometrium, how ovulation works, the menstrual cycle, and that tell her that she can now conceive.

If she is still very young give her a general run-down of the birds and the bees; if in her mid teens speak to her about contraception, the importance of using condoms, sexually transmitted diseases, the pill of the day after, etc. Let your daughter know that though her body is readying itself for motherhood, that she is not yet emotionally, physically or psychologically mature enough to become a mother and enumerate the duties and responsibilities of parenthood. Praise her, shower her with respect and gifts and encourage her to pursue her studies and talents and to be open with you one day when she feels she is ready to become sexually active.

Our daughters should see the great privilege of being able to carry life in their womb like the Mother and feel completely at ease with the transformation she is undergoing and be proud that she is taking her first steps on the road to womanhood, like every single woman for millions of years before us.

Let our daughters know that they can be proud and not to give in to the negative culture of internal/hidden tampons, deodorized sanitary towels and mood enhancers. A menstruating woman is different; a few days before and a few days after the moon blood. Help them embrace this and not to attempt to deny and suppress Mother Nature who expresses Herself through us.

Let us lead our daughters to the acceptance that menstruation is something sacred and meaningful. It should not be viewed as an illness or even as an inconvenience. Let us also not deny it, in our attempt to discard what is most sacred within us, our femininity, in our desperate drive to share equality and men. We are wo-men. Not pseudo-men.

The ceremony should be celebrated in the privacy of the home with only close family and the coven present. The parents will erect the Temple and the young lady will stand robed in white and barefoot before the altar.

The father kisses the daughter three times on the cheeks and blesses her in a greeting:
 "Blessed Be my beloved daughter. Today we honour you for you have grown from your mother's womb to full womanhood and are now blessed by the Moon Blood of the Mother Goddess. I look at you and I now longer see my little girl. I see the Maiden and love and my love and respect for you have grown."

The father now sits his daughter on a mock throne and prostrates himself before her.

Those present utter unanimously "All Hail and Blessed Be!"

The Mother takes a bowl of mineral water, lights a twig in the fire and extinguishes in the water, blessing it. She walks around and asperges the area surrounding her daughter. Next she lights some camphor in a lamp and pays homage to the inherent divinity of her daughter. She kneels before her daughter, takes her hands in hers and says:

"Tonight we celebrate your transformation from girlhood to maidenhood and hail you as you tread your first steps on the road to Motherhood and Croning. May you continue to love and trust with childlike conviction, may you be blessed with abundance, peace and joy. May good health and beauty walk with you for the rest of your days."

She rises and kisses her daughter on her forehead and prostrates herself before her.

The father approaches the throne, takes his daughters hands in his and looks deeply into her eyes. May the light of the asters illumine your Path by day and by night. May you walk in perfect love and perfect trust, now and always.

The coven responds with "So Mote it Be!"

The mother blesses her daughter further. "May your womb be the doorway for Pagan Folk and joyous children of the Goddess. May your children possess you grace and your capacity to love."

All present: "So Mote it Be!"

The parents now hand their daughter a ring or a necklace containing a red stony [ruby or a garnet]. "May the Gods bless these tokens of your femininity and through them bless your sacred fires and all those who rise from them."

All: "So Mote it Be!"

The family and friends will now embrace the young lady and kiss her on both cheeks. Cakes and ales [celebration] follows.

Coming Of Age in Young Men

Young men coming of age normally coincides with the appearance of the first public hairs, the breaking of the voice, and other less visible hormonal and physiological changes (like a bad skin condition, the enlargement of the penis and scrotum). Shortly after this the boy will experience his first ejaculation, perhaps during his sleep. It is vital to explain to the young man what is happening to his body. Fill him with pride because he is becoming a man. Explain to him masturbation and assist him in not taking on the whole "guilt trip" and "shame" the rest of society places on this act of release and discovery of the sexual self.

The ceremony is to be celebrated at home by parents and close members of the family. The parents will erect the temple and the child will stand robed and barefoot in front of the altar.

The father will ring the bell thrice whilst the mother will kiss the boy and say: "Blessed be our son who has survived childhood and is now ready to step into the role of man. We honour you who now show the first signs of the Virile Lord and who now tread the mysterious path to manhood."

The father hugs his son and gets him in this manner "May you never forget your childlike loves and ways and may you be full of enthusiasm and trust in your newly taken responsibilities and strengths."

All present: "So Mote it Be!"

The Mother then makes this wish for him" May the Moon and the asters light your road by night and the sun warm your blood by day."

All present: "So Mote it Be!"

The father then embraces his son and says: "May your loins father the future of our clan, and may your children possess your dignity, your honour and your capacity for courage and love."

The family responds with at: "So Mote it to be!"

The father now hands his son two leather or silver armbands or a wild boar's tooth, or an antelope's horn or custom made knife. "Tonight we celebrate your transformation from child to man. May the gods bless you with wisdom and courage, integrity and honour now and all of your days!"

The family now welcomes him with a "Blessed Be!"
Cakes, ale and merrymaking will follow.

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I'm Coming Out

by Morgause Fontelève

As parents we make grand plans and have big dreams for our children, our future grandchildren, but being a parent sometimes means giving up those very dreams for the sake of our kids. Through the frenetic and demanding tempo of our society and in part through our own inability to set "our own pace" and through that remain "in touch" with our loved ones, who they really, and what makes them happy, we set ourselves up for disappointment. We condition ourselves to expect certain things from our children, but let's face it, our children come home pregnant, get arrested, take drugs, decide to leave school, change religious persuasion and inform us that they are "coming out".

In these sort of situations we, as Pagan parents, must keep reminding ourselves that it is not about "us", but about "them". Our children!

Acknowledging our child's sexuality can be difficult for some parents, and coming to terms with the fact that our child will not be following our expected or preferred path with what regards relationships, can be quite a blow for some.

What do you do or say if your child announces that he/she is gay/lesbian/bi?

Whatever you do, do not offer judgment; offer love and acceptance instead. Give your child support. Stay proud. Separate your hopes, ideals, principles, projected dreams, from their sexual identity and continue to love them unconditionally. If you have a close relationship with your child it shouldn't even come as a surprise, but as a confirmation.

The cause for homosexuality is not as yet fully understood, but one thing is known. A person is born gay. It is not a choice and it does not come about as a result of being exposed to the wrong influences.

During puberty our teen's hormones run amok through their developing bodies. It is a time of tremendous mental, physical and emotional adjustment. They may even experience confusion with regards to their sexuality. It is then that we have to remind ourselves of the complexities of the 8 genders and allow them time to discover who they are. Don't put pressure on them for choices; do not try to persuade them. Be there, be understanding, be supportive. Be patient. Help them embrace who they are, openly and honestly.

Anti-Gay Violence and Prejudice

How do we assist our children to deal with "anti-gay" prejudice and violence, in society and at school? Please know that the Bill of Rights accords gay, lesbian, bi individuals the same right to protection as anybody else. It allows no room for discrimination. It guarantees everyone equal treatment. This means that schools are under the legal obligation to protect students from any form of harassment, including "anti-gay" violence.

Bullying and harassment have become real plagues in our public education system. Always keep an open channel with you child and report any unsavoury incidents to the School Board, immediately. Do not allow the bigoted, biased majority to instil fear or a sense of inferiority in your child's heart. Fight back and ensure that your child is not ostracized or forced to stay at home because he is different, a Pagan or a homosexual citizen.

Keep vigilant for the telltale signs of depression and avoid “pushing” your child (through negligence) to becoming a statistic.

On a last, but very important note: According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, we as parents, need to understand that homosexuality is not a mental disorder. It is the natural inborn sexual expression of our child (and every gay individual), whom you have loved since birth, and whom you will continue to love.

Warning

I would like to issue a warning against “reparative therapy” and “transformational ministries” which some of the Churches advocate in order to eliminate the homosexual tendency and identity, by offering conversion, salvation and redemption. The emotional and psychological damages of these methods result only in repression and frustration.

Be close to your child and don’t push him/her to seek solace in the loving arms of the followers of Jesus. Allow him/her to find understanding and acceptance within their own family and circle of friends.

We’re A Family

To end on a positive note, under the Civil Union Act of 2007, the civil partnership of same-sex couples has become a reality. There are many gay couples, worldwide, in committed long-term relationships that are raising children.

This means the wedding you so dreamed about and planned in your mind, is still going to take place and that grandchildren [through adoption or artificial insemination] are a definite possibility to look forward to.

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C:\Documents and Settings\Private\My Documents\PARENTING\Understanding Your Gay Teen - FamilyEducation_com.htm



Pagan Healing For Men & Women

by Morgause Fontelève

"The man is the head of the house. The woman is the neck; the neck turns the head "

-My Big Fat Greek Wedding-

Most of us have come to the disappointing realization that when the days of the Vikings, Knights of the Round Table and hero-saviours died away, so too did the poetry, the beauty, the chivalry, the magic ... all of that nobility made way for the cold, sterile world of industrial exploitation, violence, desirable ugliness, injustice, crime and despair.

Mankind began plundering, burning, raping Mother Nature and turned on itself and women to do the same thing.

Théun Mares, in the Quest for Maleness (1999) wrote that a child grows up acting out what he feels his parents are doing to him.

From this statement it is obvious that it is from our parents that we learn the basic values of life, discipline, respect for authority and all life, etc.

Let's face it, our behaviour has a long lasting impression on our children. What a tremendous opportunity! What a formidable responsibility!

Let us teach our sons that masculinity does not equate with stereotypical chauvinism. They should stand proud in their masculinity and reclaim their power as males.

Young Pagan men should be taught to stand up for Pagan Pride, for Mother Nature, for their Pagan brothers and sisters. They should be knowledgeable, rational and logical, without neglecting their feelings, without neglecting to listen to their hearts. Every male should strive for his internal balance and know his inner female counterpart. The female/partner in his life, is his inner woman. She mirrors his inner female gender.

Being a male does not give men the right to dominate, verbally abuse, control or break down women. Pagan men should not "take revenge on Mummy, by picking on other women". Men should treat their women/partners as the queen/king in their lives.

Pagan Fathers, remember that if you don't fulfil your role/fate as a father, your sons will not be able to learn from you what they need to know in order to be equipped for family life and fatherhood later on in life. Don't be weak or manipulative.

When little boys become adolescents they do not communicate as much as they did when they were younger. Rather, they observe and emulate the actions of the father.

Pagan Mothers, do not be over-bearing and dominant towards your husbands. Allow your sons to evolve to their full potential and to develop a healthy sense of self-confidence and inner strength. Let the examples in the home be positive ones. Give the boys time to get to know themselves, for in that lies the true power of being male.

The true power of the female does not lie in the "hen-pecking" of men, but in choosing the compatible partner and supporting him in his cause. She never undermines the male's belief in himself, but rather compliments him and uplifts him and his efforts.

A male gauges his worth by the acceptance other males give to him. Men give one another leadership, respect and following. Women should understand this mystery and respect it.

A realized male acts without fear and is never tempted into reacting. He is never defenceless. He is ever vigilant and aware. Reacting is akin to being emotional and losing control to what is being confronted. Men do not bully others who are less strong, men do not victimize women or children, nor do they impose their will on others. A realized male knows his worth and always welcomes the female perspective.

It is important that Pagan men respond to their partner's need for warmth and tenderness. Gardeners should not neglect their gardens. Men have a projective role to play, whilst women have a receptive role to play. Let us learn from Mother Nature and mimic her lessons. Men are the creators and women the producers of their purpose.

The fulfilled male has overcome the imbalance as well as the rebellion against the Mother. He works with Her towards the higher good of his immediate family and towards that of the Whole.

Being a true female means being in touch with your intuition and your inner power (which is femininity). Be gentle, nurturing, and remember you are not the weaker sex. Women are not victims. Women's natural role is to preserve and to protect. Women don't need to be liberated from being women. Rather, they need to be freed from the idea that women are inferior to men. We are not their competitors but their partners in life.

Let us tell each of our daughters that they are special and that it is not necessary for them to ascribe to societal stereotypes of saint, mother or whore. Each woman has a role to play and none is nobler than the other. Let us teach our daughters that they are not defenceless. Women are capable of thinking for themselves, of fending for themselves and their little ones. Women are creatures with a purpose: they cooperate, support and nurture life.

Men remember that women are not the antagonistic opposite of yourselves. Women conceive. Through women, the purpose of your lives manifests. Men are not merely sperm donors and women are not merely incubators and walking-talking titty-bars.

Procreation is a sacred act and family life should be devoid of this animosity and tension between the sexes. The whole battle of the sexes can be entirely eliminated/avoided by men striving to be the best males they can be, and in women striving to be the best females they can be.

If a male wants to be respected he must act like a man. He must lead, be responsible, point the direction, and show you how to do things.

To understand their inner male, women must observe their outer male. You cannot be yourself without a mirror.

Marriage is being committed to the outward manifestation of your opposite. The male (in men and women) loves and embraces his partner. A relationship where there is no inclusion of your opposite (of your woman/partner), is sterile both on physical and metaphysical levels.

Let us remember that living life is not about walking the road to self-denial, but it is also not about alcohol and substance abuse, the exploitation of the weaker, lack of discipline, dishonesty, lack of respect, debauchery or licentiousness. It is striving towards balance.

Let us teach our children about our wounded feeling functions. Let us teach them to focus on the ancient myths that teach us about the steps to spiritual enlightenment, about the wounded masculinity function and wounded femininity function and how we find both within our individual existences. The lack of communication between men and women stem from this, turning our inner duality into a malfunction that affects our relationship with others and society as a whole.

The wounding of man's generative being affects his personal value and psychological make-up and his ability to create in more subtle ways, as does the "silver-hands" syndrome affect women's ability to do, and the negative programming that she is rendered helpless, permanently disabled/wounded by the paternal figure from whom she expects protection affects her ability to trust, giving rise to her reluctance to let go and accept her man's leadership.

Man cannot wish away his feminine side. He has to explore and get close to the handless maiden within himself. The hero cannot truly manifest if the feminine nuances (feelings of loneliness, lack of self-esteem, powerlessness and hurt) are not dealt with. He has to rescue his internal maiden and mother her back to perfect trust and spiritual wellbeing.

Woman must explore and overcome the inability to feed her inner hunger and overcome her helplessness, by persevering and enduring; it's alone in the meditative nature of her internal king, that she can find her curative feminine powers. The feminine in the internal male alone can heal the masculine wound in the female.

Men and women who have healed from their inner wounds and no longer give in to the urge to blame something extraneous to themselves, becomes true healers of men, true gifts to an ailing society.

Modern day Paganism has lost sight of the values of beauty, virtue and goodness. Modern Paganism has been imbued with the messianic message of dooms-day culture and darkness. Our Pagan ancestors embraced beauty, light and virtue as inherent to their way of life. The ideal of beauty and goodness was manifested in the morality and decoration of their clothing, residences, and lifestyle. The beauty of art was uplifting and specifically designed to inspire one towards striving for the good.

Let us revive these ways within our homes!

May all our children grow up to be healers!

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South African Sabbat Tales

By Virginia May

Aardvark's First Yule

Aardvark was busy scratching for ants and termites as usual when Porcupine came up to him and asked him why he was digging termite hills. Aardvark thought this was a strange question because Porcupine had seen him dig out many termite hills and knew it was Aardvark's favourite food. Aardvark asked Porcupine what he meant. Porcupine replied – "it is not the fact that you are digging for termites that I find strange – it is the fact that you are not joining the others for the celebration." "What celebration?" asked Aardvark. "You mean you don't know about Yule?" asked Porcupine in surprise. Aardvark shook his head. He thought about it for a while but realized that his parents had not told him many tales about the Sabbats. He vaguely remembered that Samhain was when the Sun King had died and was also the beginning of the New Year and that all the adults had celebrated but he had been more interested in scratching for termites than concentrating on dead things.

Porcupine was all excited and said to Aardvark to stop digging and to follow him to the big clearing where everyone was gathering for Yule. Aardvark was a bit nervous because everyone would also include Jackal. Everyone knows that Jackal cannot be trusted and that Jackal would eat any of the small creatures if he got a chance. Aardvark was not keen to go. Porcupine assured him that no animal would dare eat another animal at the Yule gathering. So nervously Aardvark followed Porcupine to the Yule gathering.

In a clearing amongst the thorn trees was the most amazing sight that Aardvark had ever seen. All the animals were gathered and the clearing had been decorated with flowers and leaves and it seemed as if all the stars in the universe were hanging in the sky above the clearing. Fireflies added light and glow worms added colour. It was indeed a glorious picture. In the centre was a chair with a cradle in front. On it sat the most beautiful woman Aardvark had ever seen. Aardvark asked Porcupine why there were people in the clearing. Porcupine replied "they are not people – they are the Mother, the Maiden and the Crone. She is the Triple Goddess. Today is the Winter Solstice – it is the longest night of the year. This is when the Old Sun King is already dead and the Mother has birthed the New Sun King. We celebrate the new life of the Sun King for the days will grow longer and he will bring us warmth."

Aardvark was very excited for he understood that Yule was a celebration of rebirth and renewal when life was wrested from the realm of death and light was born of darkness. As the Crone had said "there is never an end to life. That is the great mystical secret of the Winter Solstice." Aardvark was very glad that he had come. He wished that he had brought gifts for the young Sun King but the Crone told him that when the Sun King was older that Aardvark could play with him and show him where all the best places in Nature could be found. Aardvark was delighted and said he would do that. Each animal in turn promised to aid the young King in anyway they could. Even Jackal promised to help the King and did not attempt to eat anyone – at least not that night.

And so all the animals celebrated and there was much joy and love throughout the land. And when dawn came Aardvark was very happy and very tired. He went to sleep and dreamt of the Spring that would soon be upon them.

Porcupine's Imbolc Caper

All the animals were busy cleaning up their dens and nests. It was Imbolc. The weather was still very cold but the days were getting longer and the thorn trees were starting to get new buds. It was that time of the year when everyone got busy in preparation for spring that was soon to come.

Aardvark knew that there would be a festival in the Sacred Clearing tonight. He was very excited about it. He knew that the Crone had given way to the Maiden. The Maiden was very beautiful with long flaming red hair, a pure white dress and a cloak of green. She had a ring of flowers around her head.

As the sun set all the animals gathered at the Sacred Grove. In the centre lay the Sleeping Maiden. She lay on a bed of leaves –still and perfect. Aardvark wondered if she was even breathing. Porcupine explained that the Maiden was awaiting the kiss of the young Sun King before she would awaken.

The young Sun King meanwhile was walking the labyrinth to the clearing. The journey was taking long. It was hard work. Aardvark wanted to know why the Sun King had to go through the labyrinth instead of just walking into the clearing to the Maiden. Porcupine explained – often it is the journey itself that gives us the answers – not the end of the journey. We already know what is at the end of the journey.

Aardvark thought this was some very good advice but he still wished the Sun King would go faster. Going through the labyrinth was almost hypnotic or meditation like. Aardvark's mind began to wonder. He was one with the Universe, he was peace, he was..... interrupted by Porcupine who nudged him as the young Sun King exited the labyrinth.

The young Sun King bent down and kissed the Sleeping Maiden. She awoke and they fell in love. They became betrothed and everyone was pleased. They celebrated and danced in the clearing. The dancing would go onto dawn but Jackal had other ideas about how to spend the rest of the night.

"Pssst" said Jackal to Aardvark – "Let us go and see how the Human's celebrate Imbolc. They have fire." Aardvark was not too sure. He knew that fire could be very dangerous and if it got into the veld that they would all loose their homes and possibly their lives. Fire was a big problem for the animals and humans had a bad habit of just burning off ground because they were too lazy to cut the grass – or they had thrown cigarette ends out of their cars when driving past. Even glass bottles worked like magnifying glasses and started big fires.

"Humans can control fire and Imbolc is their festival of lights," whispered Jackal. Aardvark was intrigued. He knew it was not right to follow Jackal but the idea of controlled fire and lots of it was too much. He trotted after Jackal to the fence that marked human territory. Sure enough there was fire. At first it was just one small candle. Then each candle was used to light another candle until the whole place looked like one mass of bright beautiful candles.

Porcupine realized that Aardvark was missing and went looking for him. He found them standing by the fence looking at the most heavenly lights. He could hear soft Celtic music and see humans dancing in the candlelight. They were also celebrating Imbolc. He smiled.

Then the smile was wiped from his face as he saw Jackal and Aardvark make for the gate. All animals know better than to go through the gate into human territory. Humans kill animals and humans have animals that kill as well. Porcupine screamed out to Aardvark to stop. But Jackal and Aardvark were too far away to hear.

Muttering under his breath, Porcupine followed them. Sure enough his worst fears were soon realized. A huge black dog came racing in their direction. He knew that Aardvark would be defenceless against a dog and ran to cover him. Porcupine at least has huge spikes and most dogs know better than to tamper with him. As he jumped in front of Aardvark he yelled "run!" As Jackal was already setting the example – Aardvark followed. Porcupine knew he had to hold the dog off or else it would still get the other two.

Porcupine deliberately went the other way. This was a mistake because the gate is the only way out. The dog cut off Porcupine's retreat and before Porcupine knew it he was trapped in a shed. The shed turned out to be a garage with cars in it. Porcupine got under a car because it was too low for the dog to get under. And there poor brave Porcupine spent the night.

Porcupines do not like the daylight and they do not like dogs. The dog spent the entire night sitting in front of the car blocking off any chances of escape. When the morning came the humans arose and Porcupine was discovered. He was very afraid that the humans would kill him. Instead one human got down on the ground and looked under the car and began to make strange soothing noises. He thought that maybe the human was actually trying to communicate with him! It didn't look very dangerous lying on its stomach. Humans are not very tall that way and they don't have pointy teeth or sharp claws. Porcupine began to feel less afraid – especially when the human removed the dog.

Just as things seemed to be going well – the whole world exploded into loud noise. Porcupine ran for the nearest corner and hid with his spines pointing outwards. He prayed to the Goddess to save him.

The human moved the car and hoped it had not frightened the porcupine too much but it was the only way to rescue the poor animal.

The human then rescued Porcupine from the garage and helped him to freedom without hurting him in anyway and thanked the Goddess for sending such a magnificent animal to visit.

Porcupine ran through the gate and all the way home. He decided he wasn't really actually frightened of that particular human being but he didn't really want to do that again. He snuggled up in his den. Then he closed his eyes and went to sleep thinking about the big lecture that he was going to give Jackal when he saw him again.

Aardvark Gets an Egg – An Ostara Tale

The Spring Equinox is here and it is time to celebrate Ostara. The Sun King has woken the Maiden with his kiss and together they have been working magick to bring about springtime and the growth of the animals and plants.

The Sun King and the Maiden decide that the only way to bring new life to the land and to ensure springtime - is to spread their magick through the land. They need to come up with a plan. The Sun King has an idea.

They boil and colour eggs and draw upon the magick of the eggs. The plan is that they will spread the eggs throughout the land, and this will bring the magick needed to make springtime happen. They gather up the eggs in a basket and set out to spread the eggs as far and wide as they can.

However Jackal saw them making the eggs and it has made him very hungry. As the Sun King and Maiden spread the eggs around Jackal is busy collecting them all. He knows he can't eat them all at one go. So he thinks "what can I do to keep the eggs all for me? He decides to burry each egg in a different place. This way he can snack where ever he goes and if somebody finds any of his eggs - he will still have some left to eat. Jackal thinks that he is very clever.

Aardvark sees that Jackal has stolen the eggs from the Sun King and the Maiden. He runs off to find Porcupine and tell him what has happened. "Porcupine - Jackal has stolen all the magick eggs from the Sun King and the Maiden. Now we won't have Spring."

Porcupine started to laugh. Aardvark did not think that it was funny at all. Porcupine explained why he was laughing so much. "The Sun King and Maiden planned to spread the magick around - but that trickster Jackal has done the job for them."

And Aardvark realized that Jackal had indeed spread the eggs around and therefore had spread the magick around too. In fact Jackal had done an even better job than the Sun King had originally planned. Springtime would come in abundance.

Aardvark was glad that Jackal had not ruined Spring. He was also very hungry and thought that the eggs looked rather delicious. He decided he would follow Jackal and see if he could steal an egg for himself.

Jackal was hiding an egg near the human fence line. There were people in the garden but they did not see Jackal and he ignored them. He knew there was less chance of the animals going near the fence to steal the eggs that he has stolen.

When Jackal had gone Aardvark went up to the fence. He saw where Jackal had buried the egg and dug it up. Much to his surprise he did not find an ordinary egg but a polished egg that gleamed so much that it looked like a gemstone. He knew he could not eat it. He would take it to Porcupine back at the Sacred clearing.

Just as he was about to go he noticed something egg like and very shiny on the other side of the fence. It looked like an egg but it didn't smell like an egg - it smelt - well it smelt delicious but not like anything he could recognize. He put his nose through the fence and grabbed the egg like thing. He noticed that the humans had hidden lots of these shiny eggs in the garden and that the little humans were looking for them.

He grabbed his stolen egg and retreated away from the fence where they could not see him. He bit into the egg. The shiny stuff came off. It was foil paper - human litter. Aardvark knew that to litter was very bad indeed so he took the wrapper and pushed it back through the fence where he knew the humans would pick it up. The humans the other side of the fence were very conscientious about litter. He wished all humans were like that.

He went back to his egg that was no longer shiny with foil. It was brown and sticky. It was delicious. Aardvark had never tasted chocolate before and decided that it was even better than ants or termites. He ate the whole egg by himself before returning to the clearing with the polished egg that he had stolen back from Jackal.

It seemed that all the animals had followed Jackal and brought the now polished and shining eggs back to the Sacred clearing. They laid the eggs at the feet of the Sun King and the Maiden and began to dance a circle dance around them and the eggs. The animals spun faster and faster and raised huge amounts of energy. The energy was that of love, light and hope. Around and around the animals spun until they could no longer keep dancing. They fell down tired and very happy. All around them the Earth turned green and blossoms started to grow. Springtime had arrived.

Aardvark Falls In Love – A Beltane Story

Aardvark was busy scratching out his favourite termite hill. The birds were singing and all the flowers in the valley were out in bloom. If Aardvark had ever seen a Walt Disney movie he would know this was a perfect moment. And then it happened – She was there. She was the most enchanting creature that Aardvark had ever seen. He was struck down by her beauty. Aardvark was in love.

Porcupine watched in amusement as the animals paired off as is the way of Beltane. He had been with his wife for many years and was still very deeply in love. He was most amused to see Aardvark all shy and trying to impress a young lady Aardvark. He realized the best thing he could do to help Aardvark was to invite her to join them for the Beltane ritual in the Sacred Grove that night.

Aardvark was most relieved when she said yes. He found himself at quite a loss for words and really wanted to impress her. Porcupine told him to just be himself – it was the best thing he could do. This was very sensible advice.

But Aardvark was young and foolish and desperately wanted to impress the love of his life and he listened to Jackal instead. Jackal thought that the best way to impress the ladies was to look good. He thought that Aardvark should add some feathers to his hair to make him look more handsome.

So Jackal and Aardvark set out looking for colourful feathers. There were lots of colourful birds in the valley like *sunbirds*, *fire finches*, *krombeks*, *loeries* and *weaver birds*. All had spectacular plumage. If they could find some loose feathers they could make a fantastic head dress for Aardvark.

There was a large group of fire finches sitting on the fence indulging in one of their favourite pastimes – man watching. This particular man watching was turning into a highly amusing event. The humans had erected a large pole in the garden with long flowing colourful ribbons. They were dancing around in circles and making merry with mead and wine. They had decorated the whole garden with flowers and they were wearing head dresses probably intended to look like fire except for the King and Queen who wore gold crowns.

The birds were having a fine time watching this when all of a sudden one of the humans broke away from the rest and headed in the direction of the fence – well in a very indirect way. They sort of wobbled to the fence would be more accurate. Then the human started to giggle like Hyena and fell over. Her head dress fell off

over the fence and was lost. The birds scattered out of the way and chose a different spot to continue man watching.

Aardvark and Jackal were surprised by the sudden presence of a bright orange feather head dress. It was the perfect thing for Aardvark to wear to impress the young lady aardvark. He put it on and went to the river to admire his reflection. Jackal said that he looked like a gentleman. Aardvark swelled up with pride.

All the animals were starting to gather at the Sacred Grove. Jackal thought that Aardvark should make a late entrance so he could impress everyone with his new outfit. Aardvark was normally a shy animal but he really wanted to impress his new love.

The other animals were all gathered around in a circle for today the King and Maiden were going to get married. They were all ready for the ceremony when Aardvark walked in with his bright orange feather head dress. The animals began to laugh for Aardvark looked very silly. The lady aardvark was not impressed when Aardvark went over to her. She said that he looked like a girl. Luckily Jackal was with him for Aardvark was so nervous that he could not speak. "Aardvark brought the hat for you but the only way to carry it without spoiling it was to wear it." Aardvark sighed with relief because Jackal had thought up such a clever answer. But the lady aardvark replied – "I do not want the gift. I think we are perfect the way we are and do not need to change to impress others."

Aardvark looked at his feet and was feeling very dejected. The lady aardvark felt very sorry for him and said that she thought it would be a good idea if they gave the head dress to the Goddess as a wedding gift. Aardvark brightened up immediately and thought that would be a good idea. So they gave the orange feather head dress to the Goddess and when she put it on it became a crown of flames.

Then the God and Goddess got married in front of all the animals in the Sacred Grove. There was much celebrating and rejoicing. And then the couple went away on their Honeymoon. The animals paired up with their loved ones and went to have a romantic evening too.

All except Jackal - who was sitting by the fence watching humans jumping over a small fire.

The Aardvark Faery – A Litha Tale

Summer had been good. All the animals frolicked and enjoyed long lazy days and plentiful food. All was well in the valley. Aardvark was very much in love and things were going really well for him.

The air was hot on humid on Midsummer's night and Aardvark was feeling the heat. It was still some time until the ritual in the Sacred Grove. He was down by the river having a nice cool drink when Jackal came strolling over.

Jackal said to Aardvark "did you know that on Midsummer's Night that human's sometimes try to see faeries?" Humans believe the veil between man and faery is thinner on Midsummer's Night, "said Jackal – "I have heard them call for them when they light the Midsummer night bonfires. They also add nine local herbs to their fires. Those herbs are: Acacia, Aloe, Rooibos, Buchu, African potato, Devil's claw, Leonotis, Impepu and Honeybush"

"How do you know all this?" asked Aardvark. "I know many things" said Jackal slapping Aardvark on his side. "I also know that if you turn around three times then look into the river at your reflection you will bring out the faery in you and it give you magick powers."

"The faery in me?" asked Aardvark doubtfully. "Yes – it only happens on Midsummer's Night. Why don't you give it a try?" asked Jackal pushing Aardvark in a sort of circular motion. Aardvark being good natured thought he would give it a try. So he turned around three times and looked into the river.

"Can you see anything?" asked Jackal looking over Aardvark's shoulder at the reflection in the water. "I... I think so" said Aardvark in an amazed voice. "I have got wings – large green wings!" Jackal chuckled for when he had turned Aardvark around he had gummed on some wild banana leaves to the side of Aardvark to make him believe he was seeing his faery self.

"I have an idea" said Aardvark. "If the humans want to see faeries on Midsummer's Night we should give them faeries." And without waiting for Jackal to reply he ran off in the direction of the gate with the intention of appearing as a faery Aardvark before the humans. He was hoping that maybe they would make a food offering to the faery. He was hoping for chocolate.

"Wait!" yelled Jackal – but it was too late. The enthusiastic Aardvark was already half way up the drive way to where the humans had their big bonfire. That is when the big black dog appeared and started to bark. Aardvark realized that no matter how magickal he felt – he was scared of dogs. He turned and ran away. The big black dog ran after him and tried to bite him but all he got was a mouth full of banana leaves. Aardvark got away.

Jackal came up to Aardvark and apologized. He said he had learnt his lesson. It was mean to play tricks on others and even meaner to poke fun at other's beliefs. Jackal was very sorry indeed.

Aardvark was a gentle animal and soon forgave Jackal and told him it was time that they went to the Sacred Grove for the Midsummer's Night Festival with the other animals. They trotted off to the gathering.

In the grove all the other animals were already gathered. The Sun King was there with the Mother Goddess both dressed in full splendour and full of love for each other. He was dressed in gold and she was dressed in red. She was pregnant. Like the summer itself they were in full bloom and life was good. Midsummer marks the shortest night of the year. The animals celebrate and dance until dawn.

Jackal sat at his favourite spot by the fence watching the humans dance around the biggest bonfire he had ever seen. Jackal was sure he heard one of the human's speaking to another "either we used too much of the herbs tonight or else I saw an Aardvark with wings." "Right," replied another "and pigs can fly."

The Corn Dolly Jackal – A Lammas Tale

Porcupine was fed up with Jackal stealing fruit. Jackal was an opportunist feeder and would eat anything – meat, insects, fruit and vegetables. As long as it was food he would wolf it down. At this time of the year there was no shortage of food

and Porcupine felt that it was very unfair of Jackal to eat Porcupine's private food stash.

Jackal however felt that anything that he could eat – he would eat and ignored the constant complaining from Porcupine. However Porcupine was very clever and he came up with a plan to stop Jackal from eating his food.

Porcupine gathered up some really delicious fruits but he covered them in a very sticky sap which was very much like glue. Then he put the fruit where he knew the greedy Jackal would find it – half hidden in a pile of grass. He hid in the bush to see what would happen.

Sure enough along came Jackal and he smelt out the fruit hidden in the grass and he immediately started to eat it. Then he found the fruit was all stuck together and the glue like stuff was sticking to him. He also found that the grass that the fruit was hidden was sticking to him. Very soon Jackal was totally covered in grass.

Porcupine jumped out from where he was hiding and said – “I hope this teaches you a lesson on stealing.” And then he started laughing because Jackal looked so silly. He looked like a big corn dolly. Jackal went down to the river to look at his reflection and he did indeed look very silly all covered with grass. He vowed that he would not steal Porcupine's food ever again.

Porcupine thought that Jackal looked very much like the corn dolly's that the humans used to celebrate harvest festival. Admittedly he had more legs than a normal corn dolly but the grass coating really made him look the part of the straw man who was torched each year as a symbol of the God's sacrifice for his people.

That night at the Sacred Grove Jackal hid at the back as he had not been able to get all of the grass and glue off of him and he was afraid that the other animals would laugh at him. It was Lammas – first of the harvest festivals. The God and Goddess were there but he knew that the God would not be with them for much longer. The Sun King has to give all his strength and power to the land for if he did not sacrifice himself they would have no food and everyone would perish.

The God and Goddess gazed fondly upon the animals and the land that they loved so much. In fact they loved them so much that God was willing to die for them. The animals did not forget this and with the food they harvested and stored they thought of the God and Goddess and feasted in their honour. That night was a strange one – full of happiness because they had plenty of food for the winter but also a night of sadness because they knew that soon the God would be leaving them.

Luckily for Jackal the Goddess took pity on him and cleaned off all the sticky stuff so he too was able to join in the celebrations.

Pumpkins for Porcupine – A Mabon Tale

It was the time of the second harvest festival – the Autumn Equinox. Day and night are equal in length but the animals know that days will soon get shorter and the nights longer. Final preparations must be made for collecting and storing of fruits for the winter. It is the time of Autumn Harvest and thanksgiving for what we have abundantly reaped.

It was also the time when the sweetest pumpkins were growing the other side of the fence. Porcupine was scared to go through the gate because he knew the big black dog lived there. But that night he noticed that the big black dog was inside the human house and there was nobody around to stop him from getting at the pumpkins.

The gate was not open so Porcupine decided he would dig under the fence – right where the pumpkins were growing. Porcupine has long claws that are just perfect for digging and soon he had made a space big enough to get under the fence and into the vegetable garden.

The garden was full of pumpkins – there were big ones, small ones and ones in between. They all looked so delicious that Porcupine did not know where to start. So he took a bite of a small one. That one tasted a little bit green. It was not ripe enough. So Porcupine tasted a medium sized pumpkin. It tasted very nice but he was sure that the biggest pumpkin of all would be the sweetest. Sure enough it was. Porcupine went around and tasted every pumpkin in the entire garden.

Then Porcupine saw it – the biggest pumpkin he had ever seen – but it was under a crate to protect it. Porcupine decided he would liberate this huge pumpkin and take it home with him. It would feed him for a very long time. So Porcupine tried to lift up the crate – but it was too heavy and he dropped it. It must have made a crashing sound when it dropped for inside the house the big black dog started barking.

The human opened the door and the big black dog came running out. Quickly Porcupine ran under the fence where he had dug a hole and escaped. The big black dog stood barking at the fence and the human came out to see what had happened. The human saw the damage that Porcupine had done and was very angry. He picked up a huge stone and dropped it into the hole Porcupine had dug under the fence and then filled in the hole. He cleared away all the Pumpkins. The garden was left empty.

Porcupine was very sorry for what he had done. He realized that if he had not been so greedy and had taken just one pumpkin then there would be plenty of pumpkin for everyone. But because Porcupine had been so selfish there wasn't any pumpkin left for anyone.

Full of remorse he trotted off down to the Sacred Grove for the Mabon Festival. The God was now very frail and weak and the Goddess was engulfing him in her arms. The ever protective Goddess would wrap her land in her love and protect it with a mantle of sleep. Many of the animals would soon go into hibernation and the trees would lose their leaves. Meanwhile they had an abundant harvest and they gave thanks for reaping such a bountiful crop. They gave thanks for the fact they had each other and celebrated all night long.

Aardvark Goes Scrying – A Samhain Tale

The land was cold and the mornings were filled with cold mists. The leaves on the thorn trees had mostly changed to brown. The flowers were gone and yet the land still had a stark beauty all of its own. It was Samhain – the last of the Harvest Festivals.

The days were short and the nights were long. The animals had plenty of food and had made sure they had fresh bedding that would last them to spring. They

thought gratefully about the God who had sacrificed his life so that they could receive all these things.

On Samhain the veil between the dead and the living is very thin. This is when it is time to scry or try to get messages from those who have passed over. Death is never the end it is the beginning. It is also the beginning of the Pagan New Year.

Aardvark was missing his granddad Aardvark – a wise and humorous old boy. He was greatly loved by all – especially the children. Aardvark had been very young when Granddad had died. He wished he could have spent more time with him.

Jackal said that he knew how to scry in the river. Aardvark asked what scrying was. Jackal said it was fortune telling or communicating with spirits. Aardvark was very eager to communicate with the spirits. He asked Jackal what he should do.

Jackal said that you go down to the big clear pool by the rocks. There you wait until the moon comes up so that you can see the reflections of the spirits in the black water. You ask the spirits to come forth by chanting the magick words. You must say them three times:

“Spirit, spirit, burning bright,
Show yourself to me tonight.
As I ask I shall see.
So mote it be.”

Aardvark was excited – he had so many questions to ask his granddad. But he wanted to ask them without Jackal hanging around so he politely asked Jackal if he could have a moment alone by the pool.

Jackal left Aardvark alone thinking that this would be the perfect time to play a trick on Aardvark. If he crept up from the other side of the pool and hid in the trees he could use a spooky voice and pretend to be somebody speaking from the dead. Giggling to himself he went to position himself under the bushes by the pool.

Aardvark came up to the pool and said the magick words three times. He looked down into the river. All Jackal could see was the reflection of the moon. He was just about to speak when a voice spoke from just below him. He realized it must be a spirit in the water.

A strange voice said to Jackal “Jackal you have been a naughty Jackal this year. You have played many mean jokes on Aardvark. I am the spirit of Aardvark’s ancestors and I am here to ask you to apologize.” Jackal got such a fright that he ran away – forgetting all about playing a joke on Aardvark.

Cat grinned to himself softly. It was fun for the cat species to scare the dog species for a change. He turned back to watch as Aardvark talked with his granddad. “I must be getting soft” thought Cat, “it’s not like me to do a good deed.” And with that he flicked his tail and wondered back home – over the fence to see if there was any good tit bits left over from the Samhain dumb supper.

Much later when Jackal met up with Aardvark – he started to apologise for being mean but Aardvark cut him short by thanking him for the good advice about scrying and how much he had enjoyed talking to his granddad again. Jackal was surprised but managed to say nothing. Side by side they went to the Sacred Grove to celebrate Samhain.

In the centre of the Sacred Grove the Goddess sat alone. The God was dead and she was grieving. The animals remembered their loved ones – ancestors who had passed away. But the memories were not sad – they remembered with fondness of the good times and celebrated the life of those animals. They remembered them filled with life and laughter. They knew that the Goddess would go into the underworld and retrieve the God. He would return and that they should be looking forward to things still yet to come. Love and light would be born into the world once more. With death comes the promise of a new beginning. For this is how it is with the Circle of Life.

And so the New Year began and all new years start - with hope and celebration.



Interviews to Pagan Parents – collated by Jacqui Curtiss

Is religious training important to my child's development, especially if I believe it's important for my child to choose his or her own spiritual path in life?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Religious training is important to a child's development, but it must be age appropriate and from the child's parents.

GINNEY MAY: I view religious training of small children as indoctrination. I don't mind my child joining me in a circle, but I do explain the religious aspects of it. As for the way they teach Christianity to infants, I find it Barbaric.

RAENE PACKERY: Yes it is – children need spiritual roots to grow from. It is important that they have a solid spiritual foundation, one that is structured with unconditional love. This will play a big role in the type of adult they grow into.

SHARON PARKINSON: I am teaching my children ABOUT the different religions. Their father is Christian, so they go to Church and I am teaching them my path as well... and I am teaching them about various other religions too.

MELANIE MOORE: Yes, for the community inclusion more that the religious path.

KARIN BURNES: Yes

CANDACE JANE: It is vitally important to train your child from birth about the old ways in a simple way as they will subconsciously follow you. How can they choose a path if they don't know their own.

DES BORCHERDS: If religion is important to you it will affect the child's development, training can only be of benefit. As in all things children should be guided until they can make an informed choice, especially choosing their own path.

MORGause and Aurelius: Yes, it is important. The child must be trained in the comparative understanding of religions and taught tolerance for all paths. The child will then automatically grow up with an understanding of the Inner Mysteries of different faiths. The child will also possess all the commonalities and know how to make an enlightened choice. Teach him that it is the essence and not the dogma which matters. The child should never be made to feel obliged to follow the parents' Path. It must be exposed to it and made to feel like it is part of it, until such time as (through experience and experimentation) it can make an informed choice. It's accepting difference and letting them explore that and making up their own minds that matters. You do not choose your child's favourite colour. Understand and respect the fact that your child doesn't have to be like you.

COLLEENE MOLENTZ: I think that instilling a general love for others and nature, and teaching children about as many different paths as possible, are the best ways to give a child some spiritual background without forcing her/him into a specific worldview

Kate Smulian: I pondered this question long and hard. And came up with many answers, mostly I don't like the phrase religious training. I think it depends on the child's character and even then I think 'No!' *Show* them religion, all of them, then step back. It is not my place to train/teach/brainwash children religion nor anyone else's, this is my personal strong believe as I will not push/inflict my religion on anyone and find it inconceivable that people do. Maybe teaching spirituality is a less emotive word and that I have done from the start, teaching my girls to go within for their answers and showing them the magic of nature and the earth.

In which age group is it appropriate to begin formal religious training?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: When they start to ask questions. For example, why do we celebrate why don't we believe in Jesus? What is the Pentacle or the cross? My daughter started to ask questions like these when she was six years old – when she started primary school. I have however always told her Pagan stories, fairy stories; we do activities such as planting and caring for our fairy garden. She has always understood and had respect for my altar and I have always told her about the wheel of the year and the significance. We have always looked at the moon together and she knows the phases. We have done these things since she was born.

Ginney May: Over 6 years of age, when they can clearly distinguish between real and fantasy. Before that, you are forcing ideas on them that they will just accept blindly as real.

Raene Packery: I think informal training can begin from when they start to talk, so I'd say from about a year old. Not sure what you mean by formal training but if you mean the typical type of "religious instruction" I would begin formal training from about three or four.

Sharon Parkinson: Each child is different. My 9 year old daughter is just beginning to learn my path. My 10 year old son has been learning for a while now. My 7 year old son is starting next year.

Melanie Moore: Birth, as long as it is age appropriate.

Karin Burness: I believe that while the child is in the womb it is one of the ways to teach passively, because of the pressures in society a subtle training during infant and toddler stage, but a formal training after 16, when they are able to keep silent, decide and question.

Candace Jane: From 6yrs formal classes but allow them to light candles incense etc from about 4 years

Des Borchers: The younger the child the easier they learn; however I believe that inner circle work should only begin at 18years

Morgause and Aurelius: Right from the word go; we found it worked quite well, for us. A child must be part of everything in the household, the teaching, counselling session, as well as the ritual celebrations. Our son was given his name (shortly after birth), was breastfed and raised in circle, has been helping cast and run circles since the age of 3, has had his puberty rites done,

but we believe that proper formal training should only start at the age of 15, should he have the propensity and the interest.

Kate Smulian: When the child begins to ask questions.

What sort of information is appropriate for my child?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: This also depends on their age. Keep it as simple as possible. I told my daughter that we believe in the Earth and the Universe and balance in the elements and the importance of caring for the planet that we live on because without this and the elements in harmony we would not be able to survive. I have taught her that the Goddess is the mother of the Universe and she keeps the balance. And to value everything in the universe from a leaf, to a spider as all of these have an important role in keeping the balance in the universe. As they grow older, you will know the type of information they need from the questions that they ask. It's important to always answer as succinctly and honestly as possible.

Ginney May: I think, start with the simple stuff – what is Paganism, what are religious holidays. I think Magick is for when they get older.

Raene Packery: Well the information appropriate would depend on the child and their ability to understand and digest the basics. I wouldn't delve too deep but I would definitely give my child enough information so that she can feel confident in her faith and in that enough room to explore on her own. Learning the basics such as the concept of Deity and the ways to interact with Deity, the cycles of nature, the elements, the phases of the moon, the Wiccan Sabbats etc to name a few, would be fundamental.

Sharon Parkinson: Parents should know their children's capabilities and what they can and cannot assimilate. If unsure, try a few things, the basics, and if the child does not seem to take it in then wait a while and try again.

Melanie Moore: Non-violent, inclusive and respectful information.

Karin Burness: In the early years, general knowledge based on simple guidance and instruction, progressing with a more intricate understanding of world religions and your household beliefs and views.

Candace Jane: I have started to teach our children in the coven all about circles , how to create one , why we have one etc. also the quarters/drawing pentagrams/magic names /different gods/goddesses/how to dress an alter /how to chant changing seasons and their importance and about Sabbats

Des Borchers: Young children love stories and myths. Broad outlines.

Morgause and Aurelius: Information is knowledge, knowledge is power. Provided the exposure to information is monitored by the parents, once the "Pagan imprinting" stages have successfully been accomplished, then all information is valuable. The child must be encouraged to develop its power of discernment and this will aid him/her to reach the conclusions which will help them connect. Remember, ignorance breeds fear and fear is false expectations appearing real. These limit the chances of your child blossoming to his fullest spiritual potential.

Kate Smulian: If they are old enough to ask the question they are old enough for the information.

How do I explain the differences between Paganism and the other conventional / acknowledged religions to my child?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: This depends on the type of questions they ask. It's important to teach your child to respect and embrace the differences in others. I have told her that all religions have important messages and lessons for our soul. My daughter has asked many questions about Christianity and Jesus. I have told her that although I do not believe that Jesus was the son of god, I think he was an important man in history during those times. His stories have lessons that we can learn from. I have also told her that the bible was written many hundreds of years ago and parts of it have been changed so we can't believe everything the bible says and should rather read it as a story.

The main difference, for me, which is pertinent to her, as I have told her, is that the bible says the we have dominion over the earth and as Pagans we believe that we survive in unity and harmony with every living thing in the universe and without balance, nothing will survive, we therefore need to nurture the earth and not dominate it.

Ginney May: By carefully explaining in a scientific manner what each religion is. Religion for Dummies is a pretty good example of this. If they are old enough to read, let them read this book.

Raene Packery: I would focus on what Paganism is rather than what it is not compared to conventional religions. I would explain how other religions "practice" their faith without prejudice and answer all questions openly and honestly. I would also emphasize that it is important for people to choose their own spiritual path and that no religion is above the other. Deity accepts and loves everyone equally no matter how they are perceived.

Sharon Parkinson: That will follow naturally when they are taught about the different religions.

Melanie Moore: Acceptance and respect. Their path is theirs and no one else's. This isn't too difficult, since I find that children notice the similarities first. My daughter pointed at a picture of Mother Mary and called her by a Mother Goddess name. She pointed at an image of Jesus and said 'Buddha' (a member of my family is Buddhist, and she saw those images first).

Karin Burness: Through art and literature, by helping them explore what feels right and having them explain how they feel towards paganism and acknowledged religions. By having them participate with you as a Pagan and with friends in acknowledged religions.

Candace Jane: So far we have told them that we essentially revere the Goddess not the God but that they can choose both if they wish/ a child's concept of duality/Matriarchy emphasising that the Goddess is as important to us as the Christians God

Des Borchers: I would begin by telling stories of Christianity, Islam and Hinduism; Then point out how different they are and that we have our own ways as well.

Morgause and Aurelius: Never criticize. Talk about it openly; children listen and assimilate; later they ask questions and these questions always make one realize

just how much they actually take in and how much of it they actually understand. You'll be surprised how much they pick up from just listening ... try to ram it down their throats and they will reject it. Make Paganism and Environmental Action, recycling, an integral part of their daily lives and spirituality. Children learn what they live. Teach them the "reduce, re-use and recycle" maxim. Lead by example. Take your child into Mother Nature and show him/her how to connect. Children who spend their lives indoors struggle to connect with the natural world as well as the fact that Nature needs to be protected. Get children to think about conscious energy use. Teach them where things come from. Teach them that Witchcraft is a religion filled with respect for Mother Earth as well as all the creatures which inhabit it.

Kate Smulian: Difficult with the smaller ones, though movies such as Brother Bear, Fern Gully, and Pocahontas even Peter Pan and Cinderella show fairies, magic etc.

How should I raise my child as a Pagan?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: I have taught my child the basics of things like **"harm none," "respect your own bodies and those of other people," and "respect and celebrate the differences between individuals."** A child with an understanding of the Wiccan Rede will eventually grow to understand matters of ethics and responsibility. A child who respects his or her own body will come to understand the **sanctity of life**. In addition, self-respect results in self-confident children who are less likely to become victims. Children who learn not only to respect the differences between people but also to celebrate those same differences will understand the meanings of cultural diversity and religious tolerance. Basic information provided now, will provide a firm foundation for more intense information, when your child is ready to handle it. Children will let you know what information they need, if you pay attention.

Children learn from examples. They learn more from watching us than they do from what we say to them. We can teach them more by "doing," than we could ever hope to teach them by talking. Remember always that being a Pagan parent should always begin with being a good parent. Teach your children with love; respect their space and their basic rights as people. Let them know that their opinions matter. Remind them daily that whether we walk a Pagan path or some other, we're all walking our individual paths on the same planet; for that reason alone, we need to learn to respect our individual differences and live together harmoniously.

Ginney May: To respect and revere nature. I teach my child never to litter and not to hurt trees. I also allow him into the circle when I hold Sabbats.

Raene Packery: By living a Pagan lifestyle and being aware and mindful of the Rede. I believe that a child will automatically learn to grow into or adapt your way of doing things and thus lifestyle. By being the best Pagan YOU can be and allow your child to learn from nature as much as possible.

Sharon Parkinson: Teach them the basics. Allow them to observe your rites and rituals (child friendly ones). Allow them to participate in some of them that have children's activities, like Ostara. Let it build up from there.

Melanie Moore: Community (Family etc.) is the centre of a child's world before Faith and Spirit become important. When they do become important, that is when

the child should be allowed to begin on their own path. Until then, I will teach them about my faith in the way it effects them, namely through social interaction.

Karin Burness: With patience, involving your child with setting up an altar to understanding festivals, we need to be tolerant towards how extended family and their friends feel towards your belief/views, and forming groups where children are able to communicate.

Candace Jane: By example and by doing rituals privately together. Allowing them to pray out loud perform the ritual themselves with guidance/teaching them the laws of nature/making them keep their own pets and be responsible for them etc

Des Borcherds: With pride. But also teaching respect for other religions.

Morgause and Aurelius: Include your child in everything you do, make the child feel at home, like he/she belongs. He must become familiar with everything that pertains to the Craft. Make it fun for him/her. Little by little. Easy does it. Start early, start young! Bear in mind that in the pre-school years children are extremely receptive and can learn the disciplines and necessary life skills, which include acceptable etiquette during ritual, social behaviour, etc.

Kate Smulian: I don't want to, I want them to make their own path and choose their own religion/spirituality.

How do I honour my child's Will and Path and still parent in a Pagan way?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: When we give them the basics of our religion, we give them examples of open-mindedness and tolerance. We arm them for the day when they may face some of the same discriminations that we have faced, because of our religious choices. We give them a sense of the sanctity of life and the accessibility of the divine. We teach them to celebrate those differences that separate us as individuals, rather than to use those same traits to discriminate against others. Our children have a right to make their own choices; we must remain aware of this fact during our short time of being responsible for their well-being. Hopefully, our instruction on the ways of the Pagan path will teach our children to make responsible and educated choices regarding their lives. This instruction serves as a blueprint to guide them through their decisions, knowing that should they decide to pursue a different path, they'll still have our love and support. We can teach them love, respect, reverence for nature, and tolerance of all people. They'll learn to question, to seek, to endure, and to stand for those things in which they believe. Valuable life lessons can result from solid Pagan training.

Ginney May: By making all information freely available in a scientific manner so that the child is well informed on all religions without getting emotional about any of them. Religion is not felt with the heart that is spirituality.

Raene Packery: Been well grounded in your path will give your child a strong loving foundation to grow from. Be open and direct but don't force your belief onto your child, allow him or her to ask questions and take the time to listen and let your child explore on his or her own. Be understanding and love unconditionally.

Sharon Parkinson: This can be difficult. Just show your child respect and honour as you would any person or thing and allow him/her his beliefs. Don't ever *veto* them, just explain the difference between his/hers and yours.

Melanie Moore: I repeat 'this is the way we (community/family/etc.) do it. Other people do it differently.' My partners say I sound like a stuck record. ☺

Karin Burness: How would you like to be treated? Our parents forced their ideals and views on us, be it religion or career. Be understanding and participate in your child's path to show that you respect their views, include them in your path. DO NOT allow them to turn away from you because you are stubborn and intolerant. Daily continue with your practise treat them the same way you always have as a Pagan parent. This may bring you to head at times, but as the parent you are the person they look up to, you chose your path continue to do what you do as a Pagan parent, they will choose theirs, no matter how you enforce.

Candace Jane: Learn the different religions with them, tolerate differences of thought. Gently going on with your own beliefs

Des Borchers: Teach your child to honour your will and path and to respect your experience, then it will be easier to honour them.

Morgause and Aurelius: Nothing can prevent you from guiding your child through life. Teach them that your reality is not the entire reality and assist them to eventually make an informed choice. We give our children the choice to choose what music they like best, what clothes they want to wear, what hobbies they prefer. Like with these mundane choices, we do not have to choose what arbitrary dogma they should ultimately follow.

Kate Smulian: I think you must ask the child directly and their guides/power animals/higher self at each stage, questioning yourself of your motives and reasons all the time. "Because it feels right." is a good reply.

Is holistic parenting important and why?

Jacqui: "**holism** *n.* The theory that living matter or reality is made up of organic or unified wholes that are greater than the simple sum of their parts. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition Copyright © 1996, 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company

holistic *adj.* Of or relating to holism. Emphasizing the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts. Concerned with wholes rather than analysis or separation into parts: *holistic medicine; holistic ecology.*

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition Copyright © 1996, 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company"

As Pagan/Witch parents, holism, is one of the key lessons we pass on to our children, and this we do by living holistically. This approach to life permeates every aspect of our lives as both individuals and as parents, it is about living life with integrity and balance. Balance and integrity are not stagnant points we achieve, but rather a fluid effort that requires our constant diligence. It is a moment to moment and action to action equilibrium that is an effort to maintain, but an important part of the path to enlightenment we have all chosen to set upon. Its gifts are as wondrous as it is hard work. This we do for our children and ourselves. We must constantly strive for balance in all areas of our lives.

Ginney May: To be at one with the universe and to live in harmony with her instead of against her, makes living more fulfilling.

Raene Packery: It is important as a child needs a good spiritual foundation and solid understanding of his or her faith. It's vital for a child to not be afraid to question and to have comfort in the fact that they can always turn to their parents for guidance.

Sharon Parkinson: If you are a holistic person, holistic parenting is a MUST. Do not change your parenting to suit your child's needs. Then they will get mixed signals.

Melanie Moore: Yes. I want to raise a whole person, with the ability to make her own choices when she is old enough. If I ignore one part of her parenting, I am doing her a great disservice.

Karin Burness: Yes, this helps you and your child remain focused, this will bring you closer as you are both participating.

Candace Jane: Vital...We have the new age children that understand the concept of energy and how it works but need the nurturing and deep rooted beliefs of The Ancient Ones. Without tolerance and love there is no future. I believe that our children are old souls come to teach us as well.

Des Borchers: Only if it works for you and your child.

Morgause and Aurelius: Yes – all these reasons.

Kate Smulian: I am not sure I understand this one. How can one not holistically parent? I wipe their noses deal with their night fears and teach them their a, b, and c's, answer their questions about where the dog goes when he got run over, this deals with the physical, emotional and spiritual levels.

What tools can I use to help me to better understand my child?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: I did both of my children's birth charts when they were tiny. When I look back on them, especially for my daughter, who is now 8, it's amazing how accurate they are and it has helped to give me insight into how my daughter thinks and assists with communication between us. Birth charts definitely have assisted me in parenting.

Ginney May: I think open communication is the best way to understand anybody.

Raene Packery: Unconditional love, patience and listening to your child are important. Be approachable and instead of judging your child directly, rather judge his or her actions.

Sharon Parkinson: Meditation DOES help there. Trying to get into your child's mindset and feeling from his/her point of view. BE your child for a while and you will know where to go from there.

Melanie Moore: Communication, with the child, with teachers, with my own parents and elders, with Ancestors, with my partners, with other parents etc. By focussing on the best for my child, the guidance will be forthcoming. I can only try to be ready for it and accept it as it is needed.

Karin Burness: Patience, interaction; allow them to question and you to answer.

Candace Jane: Talking with like minded parents. Allowing your child to take holistic courses. Erin took her first Reiki course at 5yrs and still talks about it and uses her healing stones. To heal with and is generally more aware of the holistic approach

Des Borcherds: Only lots of time and lots of love will allow anyone to understand their child.

Morgause and Aurelius: Know your child, love him/her, the rest will come naturally. By "know him" we mean understand his essence and do not attempt to change it into what you desire him to be. Always encourage him to do his best, to be himself and to trust you. Encourage him to speak to you about anything and everything, show interest in everything about him, listen and do not interrupt or jump to conclusions. Help him find solutions, but posing the options before him, however never forget to allow him to ultimately make the choices. Allow him to grow up and to be himself. Do not teach him guilt or fear. Do not try to control him through these negative-spectrum emotions. Teach him insight and tolerance. Children live in the moment, so teach them to look ahead. This will empower them with the ability to make easy transitions from one situation to another. Touch your child, be close to him, reassure him at all times that you are there to back up your words to him with action, if necessary, and redirect him when his behaviour is disruptive or not acceptable. Teach him to think positively by making positive affirmations (give praise where praise is due), by being a positive person whom he can learn from and want to emulate. Be supportive; guide him through the steps of every difficult routine, as well as choices, even if they be contrary to your personal choices. Give clear instructions explain and demonstrate and this will make it easier for them to comply.

Kate Smulian: I have a book called Pagan Parenting, it does not deal with dealing with SA Christian schools that believe/think/teach things that I do not understand or believe or think and I am angry that people think that this is ok. These are MY KIDS, I need teaching also. I plan to take bible study along with Cassie next year (grade 1), any hint of hellfire and damnation or sin and fear I will be on the warpath, I need help with what I can do and my and my kids rights.

What activities can I do with my child to teach him or her about Paganism?

Jacqui Curtiss: The following activities I have developed myself and others I have researched from the internet (referenced below).

General Wheel of the Year Family Activities:

Sun related activities:

Sun Journal: Keep a journal of the Sun, at least from one season into the next. Mark the times of sunrise, location of sunrise (direction & local landmark), the arch in the sky (does it go straight overhead, or more to the side, etc.), time of sunset and location of sunset. Younger Sun Journal: for smaller kids, use drawing as a means to create awareness of the sun and its travels. Perhaps pick a spot where you have a wonderful view of the sunset and visit frequently. As the child draws the setting sun, he/she will begin not notice that throughout the year the sunset location moves. You can do the same for the sunrise, if early morning is your time.

Differential Rotation of the Sun (Grades 9-12):

http://sohowwww.nascom.nasa.gov/explore/lessons/diffrot9_12.html

Build a Solar Cooker and use it! <http://solarcooking.org/>

and <http://www.bac.kwoodshome.com/articles/radabaugh30.html>

Make a Sundial: <http://kids.msfc.nasa.gov/Earth/Sundials/SundialMake.asp>

Make a Scandinavian Daymark: <http://hea-www.harvard.edu/ECT/Daymarks/index.html>

Astrologically related activities:

Watch for the Pleiades rising throughout the year. When the Pleiades rises in just before sunrise, summer is here! And when it rises at sunset, winter has arrived.

Pleiades Mythology: <http://www.iac.es/galeria/slouren/pleiades.html>

DREAMING

THE

SKY:

<http://www.britannica.com/bcom/magazine/article/0,5744,19036,00.html>

Location and how to find:

Where are the Pleiades located in the sky?

http://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/ask_astro/answers/980127b.html

Observe the night sky throughout the year. Winter and summer skies are different. Learn how to see the difference. Kids love stargazing! How can they not? Nothing takes you away quiet like watching the night sky, it holds all the dreams ever there were.

Tonight's Sky: <http://www.earthsky.com/Features/Skywatching/>

Small Eyes in the Night:

http://stardate.utexas.edu/radio/sd_search.taf?f=detail&id=20000129

Horticultural related activities:

Locate your state office of the USDA and the State Office of Food and agriculture. They can lead you to finding the "pick your own" farms in your area, local produce manufacturers and growers, animal breeders (is sheep and wool production), vintners, and such. Become familiar with the agricultural season in your area, so you can plan your Wheel activities out.

<http://www.usda.gov/nass/sso-rpts.htm> and

http://www.nasdaq.org/nasdaq/nasdaq/member_information/usmap.htm

Plan out any gardens you would like to work on through the year. Gardens are not seasonal but a yearly commitment. In this way you can work your own land through the Wheel. Gardens are great for kids, especially butterfly ones! (The Faeries like them as well). If actual land use is of question, plan out container gardens, they can transform a porch into an oasis.

HARVESTING AND DRYING HERBS :

<http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/mod03/03900063.html>

Drying Herbs: <http://foodsafety.org/he/he532.htm>

Herbs & Spices: <http://www.humorscope.com/herbs/>

Learn2 Build A Window Box: <http://www.learn2.com/06/0613/0613.php3>

Learn2 Plan a Vegetable Garden:

<http://www.learn2.com/05/0568/0568.php3>

Learn2 Attract Butterflies to Your Garden: http://www.learn2.com/browse/learnlet_detail.php3?learnlet_id=434

http://www.learn2.com/browse/learnlet_detail.php3?learnlet_id=434

Backyard Wildlife - Planting for Habitat:

<http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/Wildlife/g671.HTM>

General Sabbat Planning Ideas:

Check your local and state tourism offices They can offer great insight into local activities that can be done with your kids. You can get a feel for what is available in your area that will work with your Wheel ideas and schedule. Remember agriculture is not the only harvests that occur, there are fish and shellfish, as well

(both fresh and salt), there are many possibilities!

Check into local theatre and performing arts. Look into folk and ethnic festivals and other such gathering in your area - gatherings can be great fun especially on a summer's afternoon.

Folk dancing on the WWW: <http://www.ucolick.org/~sla/dance/dance.html>

Renaissance Dance Cheat Sheets:

http://www.pbm.com/~lindah1/sca_dance_steps.html

Incense is a part of any ritual, preparing you own with the kids can be great fun!

How to Make Incense: <http://www.botanical.com/botanical/article/incense.html>

Garland and wreaths are not dependent on any holiday in particular, but can be wonderfully decorative for any holiday and season. Use seasonal greens and plants to add a glorious splash to seasonal decorating:

How to Make a Garland Using Herbs: <http://www.inseason.com/holiday/garland.html>

[holiday/garland.html](http://www.inseason.com/holiday/garland.html)

Create a Living Wreath: <http://www.inseason.com/holiday/wreath.html>

Making baskets are another useful decorative, practical, and interesting project that is seasonal inclusive. Baskets can be used to decorative for the season, to carry things to and from, storage utility, and wondrous gifts. If you use natural things you can find on adventure walks, it can be rather inexpensive as well.

Contemporary Basketry: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Academy/5430/>

"Beginner Class Basket": Instructions for Coiled Pine Needle Baskets:

<http://www.nativetech.org/coil/coiinstr.html>

Another possible avenue to explore is ceramics and clay and making your own tools for ritual with the kids. Censers, statuary, bowls or dishes to hold the elements, wands, let your imagination wander!

A beginner's guide to the art of ceramics:

<http://www.jhpottery.com/tutorial/tutorial.html>

Clay Mouldering course: <http://members.tripod.com/%7EAstralos/clay-intro.htm>

Making seasonal cards is another wonderful way to prepare for an upcoming holiday. There are many options out there to explore, stamping, paper making, colouring, drawing, flower pressing, etc..

How to Make a Rubber Stamp:

<http://members.aol.com/letterboxr/carving.html>

Stacy's Rubber Art Stamping Pages:

<http://www.clark.net/pub/teal/stacy/rs/rspage.htm>

Making greeting cards and envelopes using wallpaper:

<http://www.verinet.com/~dawe/julie/library/specialt.htm>

Make Recycled Paper: <http://beakman.com/paper/paper.html>

Solar Print Cards: :

<http://familyeducation.com/article/0,1120,1-4079-0-4,00.html>

Have Fun!

Ginney May: You can do a lot with games, such as competition to pick up the most litter with great prizes. For older kids, a home made version of Trivial Pursuit. You can also bring your child up on suitable movies, such as Fern Gully and Once Upon a Forest. They are both animated, environmentally friendly kiddie movies. A lot of Walt Disney also makes children more open-minded – Pocahontas and Brother Bear spring to mind.

Raene Packery:

- Teach your child Pagan chants and prayers.
- Take your child into nature
- Let your child explore the changes in nature and in the phases of the moon
- Let your child get involved in celebrating the Sabbats and give him or her responsibilities such as things to gather and prepare for the day.
- Depending on age, give your child Goddess, nature and other Pagan drawings to colour in
- Let him or her join you in ritual
- Play games of a Pagan nature

Sharon Parkinson: There are many children's activities for the Sabbats and Esbats. Let your child observe as you perform magick.

Karin Burness: Read books together, allow them in festivals, let them dress your altar. Meditate. Bake together for festivals. Allow them to research and inform you on what they have learnt and how it relates to them or makes them feel.

Candace Jane: Creating sacred circles and secret spaces/
Creating a labyrinth with fun things to do on the way to the centre
Find faeries etc in the garden setting up their own permanent altar, allowing them to light the candles and incense, chanting with them.

Des Borchers: Read or tell them about the myths and lore. Allow the child to celebrate the Sabbats (and later Esbats) with you. Do rites of passage with them.

Morgause and Aurelius: Read to him, write for him, first stories of fairies and dwarfs, then progress to stories such as that of Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, Krishna and the Battle of Kurukshetra, stories of Camelot, Arthur and the Round Table, upgrade to myths and legends let him view movies with Pagan content ("Mist of Avalon"), For Samhain prepare an advent calendar with him, for Yule get him to decorate the tree with you, participate in making of garlands and gifts, the preparations of the Yule log, take him out on reconnaissance trips in the veld (getting to know the plants and herbs is important in our Path), take him along to Pagan gatherings and conferences where he may interact with adults and youths alike

Kate Smulian: After years of hiding an altar in the house – my girls (4 & 6) use to destroy/knock over/scribble on any altar I put together – I am now putting together a 'teaching by example altar', honouring the phases of the moon, gods & goddess and seasons openly and showing what I am and what I am proud of. This is in direct response to the school teaching them how to pray Christian style and bible stories. We are now going to opening celebrate pagan holidays and teach by example to my children and their school teachers.

Should I allow my child to do magick?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Only if they want to learn. Children are naturally magical beings and sensitive to many more things than adults. We must be careful not to abuse this. My daughter invokes the pentacle often, especially before she goes to sleep at night. She has not yet learnt how to banish it yet though ☺

Ginney May: Not until they're old enough to understand it and not without supervision. I think that this will vary for each individual child.

Raene Packery: Teach your child about magick, how it works and it's consequences but no, I don't think magick should be practiced by children. Start teaching them slowly from about 13 years old only and under your direct guidance. By that age they have no excuse for not knowing the difference between right and wrong and if they have been raised Pagan they should have a solid knowledge of their faith by that age too.

Sharon Parkinson: Your child will let you know when she is ready. Not by asking, but by doing. When the child starts trying to do things on her own, then it is time for guidance and for allowing her to do the basics.

Melanie Moore: Colouring in has been a hit with my child. I print pictures of Deity and religious events and as she colours them I talk to her about them. We also decorate the home for every festival, so she helps with the making of the decorations.

In day to day life, we do gardening, take walks, play games and prepare meals. All of these activities are given new focus when teaching is included. I like to choose a Deity for the evening meal based on one of the ingredients. We then tell stories about that Deity at dinner.

Karin Burness: Only when they understand what they are doing and why, we should be cautious as ego may be involved. I would only allow this after they are fully knowledgeable about the laws of magick and consequence, they must have formal training with your coven and be responsible for what they are about to do. I agree with most on the age of 18 or older.

Candace Jane: In small ways of course

Des Borchers: You cannot stop them. Better to guide and supervise.

Morgause and Luke Martin: Yes, once the child has understood the code of ethics that apply to your path (such as the Rede), understands the 7 Universal Principles, as well as grasped how the elements work in magick (through evaporation, combustion, dispersion, and decomposition) and how to use all of these (in their active or passive natures) to further their aims (never with the intent to harm) let them do spell work with you (always under your supervision). Let them cast a circle; teach them how to raise energy and how to direct it to a specific goal. Teach them to allow the energies to go, not to engage in holding them on this plane through the interference of thought/doubt. Teach them patience to await the fruit of their magick.

Kate Smulian: Yes, if they ask to.

Do I teach my child about divination?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Only if they want to learn. My daughter has seen me doing Tarot and has asked some questions. She has not yet tried it herself. When she asks, I will get her first set of Tarot cards. She also loves crystals, especially amethyst and regardless of their formal meanings, I think they all have their own meanings and are special to her.

Ginney May: Children already have it, if you don't squash it out of them.

Raene Packery: Yes, I think it would be good to get one's child to learn about divination from an early age. It is after all, a form of communicating with Deity/Spirit.

Sharon Parkinson: If you divine, let her see. If not, teach her about divination. She may be a natural. As divination is part and parcel of a lot of pagans, I would teach my child about the various forms.

Melanie Moore: Yes, but once again Age Appropriate It is important not to leave anything out. I can't imagine why not teaching the basics of divining would be an option. My mother taught me before I can remember and at 11yrs my father bought me a tarot deck, because I was interested.

Karin Burness: Only at 18 or older, your child may be interested at an earlier age, limit what they do, but guide them if this is their path.

Candace Jane: Yes and if they understand encourage them to do so in their own way

Morgause and Aurelius: Yes, let them watch as you work, answer their questions and if they show a propensity for any of the modes of divination, initiate teaching, never pushing, but allowing what is natural to bud and flower forth.

What if he or she doesn't want to learn?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Paganism in its essence respects will if the individual, if your child does not want to learn about Paganism, then don't try to teach them. Respect their right not to.

Ginney May: You can't force something on a child – otherwise they will resent it and turn away from it.

Raene Packery: Don't force the issue. Make the divination tools available to him or her and let him or her know that you are happy to wait until they are interested and ready to learn but don't let it become an issue.

Sharon Parkinson: Don't force it on her. Let her decide for herself. Forcing will only cause rebellion. Try to involve her, even as observer, in what you do and maybe she will eventually become interested.

Melanie Moore: Then don't push it. As long as she knows she can always ask.

Karin Burness: Do not force your child; this is a sure way of being like your parents, friend, colleagues etc. They are the only one's who can decide, it is freedom of choice/will.

Candace Jane: Do not teach them against their will however most normal children follow and copy their parents. Erin knew a lot more about Wicca than I thought she did before I started teaching her. Simply by observation

Des Borchers: Do not force them, eventually natural curiosity will take over.

Morgause and Aurelius: The learning process should be as matter of fact as possible; everyday things, like the lighting of candles and incense at sunrise, offerings of flowers or food offerings to the Gods and ancestors, apples for the birds, crumbs for the fish, etc. Everything in their lives must be geared towards

walking the Path. It's important to try and perceive your child's true nature. Notice what the child's nature is before society imprints a social personality on its eternal spark of the divine, and build on that.

Kate Smulian: I will force nothing in this area – I think this is where faith comes in. Faith in your children.

What if he or she asks something I can't answer?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Always be honest. Tell them that you don't know the answer and then try to find out what the answer is. It may be an activity you can do together. As Pagans we are constantly seeking and looking for answers, this will demonstrate this to your child.

Ginney May: Then consult a friend, forum or the internet. If all else fails, make a project out of it, with both of you seeking answers and then compare and see who has come up with the best results.

Raene Packery: Tell him or her that you do not know but that you will think about it, do some research or ask someone else that might know. Perhaps suggest researching the question together, this can only bring you closer and teach your child that you are too always open to learning new things. There is nothing wrong with not knowing an answer to a question, honesty is most important at all times.

Sharon Parkinson: ASK!!! There are plenty resources out there.

Melanie Moore: Then say: ' I don't know. Why don't we research it together?'

Karin Burness: Then you should both seek the answer by reputable sources, this way you interact and learn together. Do not ramble something you have not researched or from hearsay.

Candace Jane: Find the correct answer and inform them that this is a challenge and would they like to help you find the answer

Des Borchers: Research together, teach your child that you do not know everything and no one does.

Morgause and Aurelius: You tell him you cannot answer, but that you will do your research and come back to him with an answer. The process of research and discovery could be shared in this case, making of it a joint-venture that will re-affirm and strengthen the already existing bonds.

Colleene Molentz: Be honest. Tell your child that you don't know but will find out, and make sure you find out

Kate Smulian: I tell them that I can't answer and we find the answer together.

Is it important to be part of a Coven if I choose to raise my child as Pagan?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: No, not necessarily. Although, I think it would be nice for Pagan children to make friends with other Pagan children.

Ginney May: Being part of a coven is a personal choice. But it is nice to have the support of a group – but only if the group is a supportive type of group and has your best interests at heart.

Raene Packery: No, I do not believe that it is. Especially not if your family is strong spiritually and if you practice together.

Sharon Parkinson: It is never important to be part of a Coven, as an adult or as a child.

Melanie Moore: Pagans don't need covens. I find this question very Wicca/Witch centric.

Karin Burness: No it is not important, but ideal. We have limited views on how we feel and what we see, we should have our child and ourselves learn from others who may know more or have been practising for a longer period of time. A Coven is a wonderful place to debate, question and learn. A Coven is a community of like minded people with whom you become a family, this is the perfect environment to feel a part of what you practice.

Candace Jane: No, however it is advisable to join a willing coven on some of the larger festivals

Morgause and Aurelius: The family unit *de per se* is a coven. If the parents are teachers, this family will be an extended one, from which the child can only benefit.

Colleene Molentz: I don't think so

Kate Smulian: Replace the word 'coven' with 'community' and I answer 'yes'. One thing that the Christian church has to offer is a sense of belonging to a group of people that have something in common, even if you don't agree with all of it, belonging somewhere is very important and isolation can kill.

How should I discipline my child (does the law of return apply to children)?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: This depends on each parent's view of discipline and the child. Teaching consequence as in the law of return, is important though and through this method there is no need for shouting and smacking.

Ginney May: Discipline them as you would any child. A child with no barriers and guidelines will feel insecure and lost.

Raene Packery: Yes, a child needs to know that for every action there is a consequence and that what he or she does, be it good or bad, will return unto them. This is important when it comes to learning right from wrong. If they are not sure, then they should think about the consequences or come ask your advice.

Sharon Parkinson: This is personal choice AND Childs personality. Each child responds to different disciplines differently. Find the method that suits your child. If done in love and light there can be no comebacks.

Melanie Moore: With love and respect. Discipline is not punishment; it is the teaching of boundaries and acceptable responses to situations. Discipline consistently, in the least abrasive ways first (i.e.: talking), and keep trying every method (once the previous has been proven repeatable not to work) (i.e.: time outs, loss of privileges etc.) until either a working system is found or physical discipline is the next option. At that point stop and go to a trained social worker, child psychologists, counsellor, etc. to ask for advice. As a respected person said, Smacking just means we've run out of ideas. That said, I do believe that there are some cases where a smack on the bum with an open hand may be necessary, but I want to know that the pain I inflict will be the least of the responses that the undisciplined behaviour will lead to. And if the law does apply, do parents really have the right to return that punishment? I think that the law can take care of it's self without me.

Karin Burness: I believe the law of return applies daily. A child needs discipline to enforce good morals and ethics, would this constitute that you will be punished for doing your best?

Candace Jane: All children have to be disciplined in different ways to suit their personalities

The law of return applies to everyone in my opinion

Des Borchers: The law of return applies to harming. By disciplining your child you are protecting them from future harm.

Morgause and Aurelius: It most certainly does. Teach a child the 7 Hermetic Principles. These fundamental Universal laws apply to all, children included. Set firm parameters for the child, and have consequences for actions outside those boundaries. The consequences must be fair and met in a spirit of love and understanding.

Kate Smulian: I set boundaries that are flexible in most cases, ridged in life and death situations. The law of return applies to everyone, most especially to children, tenfold to your own.

How do I teach my child to celebrate the differences between individuals?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Children learn this mainly through example, i.e., how their parents behave. If the parents are tolerant of others different to themselves, the child will be too. So, as well as telling children to respect and celebrate the differences in people, we need to show them that we do the same, as parents.

Ginney May: Lead by example.

Raene Packery: They should be taught that Deity or Spirit loves everyone equally and that we are all born unique and special so it is important to respect the differences of another and to not judge someone that is different to them. The world would be boring if everyone were the same.

Sharon Parkinson: By showing her individuality counts.

Melanie Moore: By celebrating the differences myself.

Karin Burness: Again, by conversation and interaction. A question was asked of me this week: Would I still sit in church if I knew the priest was gay? (having

given no answer because this is a debate from Christianity and not the path I chose) I was then asked: If I knew the priest was a paedophile, what would I do? (Again no answer). We need to teach our children that there are differences in individuals and that if they can't say something nice (without lying) then don't say anything at all. I believe that this is one of the lessons they teach at school too.

Candace Jane: By not judging others yourself and encouraging the ideal that sharing is caring and that every one is special no matter what. This has to be done from a young age and reinforced by you at all times. A difficult task indeed.

Des Borchers: By doing it yourself in an open way. A child will mimic a loved parent

Morgause and Aurelius: By doing it yourself. By enjoying and celebrating the diversity in every member of your family, coven, extended family and circle of friends. Behaviour in children is learned.

Kate Smulian: By example.

How do I teach my child to respect their body and the bodies of others?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Children learn this through example as well, from you. Hug and touch your child as often as you can when they are little (there is also some research that suggests that this helps the brain to develop) and when you can, when they're older, while respecting their space. Let them know that they are loved and lovable – touch and eye contact are the best ways to do this and they help to create awareness of themselves and their space as an individual. We are a very "physical" family and I think this has helped my children to have the confidence that they do both in their physical being and in themselves. Also, a child with an understanding of the Wiccan Rede will eventually grow to understand matters of ethics, morals and responsibility. A child who respects his or her own body will come to understand the **sanctity of life**. In addition, self-respect results in self-confident children who are less likely to become victims. Self respect also leads to a innate respect of others.

Ginney May: Discuss it with them in great detail. Children like it when you explain things to them. This can also be made into games or drawings.

Raene Packery: The same as the above, Deity gave us all a unique body and we should honour Deity and our bodies by showing it respect and by respecting the bodies of others.

Sharon Parkinson: This is done the same way, no matter of religion. (or should be, anyhow).

Melanie Moore: By respecting others, them and myself. Talking about body and celebrating the form is my favourite way of respecting.

Karin Burness: It starts with their personal hygiene. We need to make them aware daily that we respect them and their bodies and hopefully this will help them respect themselves and others.

Candace Jane: From an early age you tell them how lovely they are and nurture the ideal of self worth I believe that if you regard them as little people and give them respect from an early age the rest falls into place even with the teasing at school. Erin was labelled a Satanist by an older child at school and she is only 7.

Des Borchers: Be tactile, hug a lot and kiss them all over. Teach basic hygiene and ones right to privacy and respect. Set boundaries.

Morgause and Aurelius: You explain to them that the body is the priveledge of those who are alive on this plane; it is an instrument with which we can serve the Gods, through which we may worship, experience, learn and enjoy. It is a true temple within which is housed our own divinity and as such it should be revered and respected.

Should I home school my child?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Many Pagans experience discrimination in both government and private schools, for them, home schooling is an option and can be very successful. I believe though, that much of what children learn from school is in interacting with others. With home schooling, this interaction is limited. I personally feel that removing a Pagan child from the "normal" school environment would make the child feel as if they are different or strange and not teach them to integrate. Children can only learn to accept those that may be different to them through integrating with those that are different.

Ginney May: Only if you have the time and are confident that this is the right choice for your child. Remember that there must be group activities that you can join in the area, such as football or Ballet. Children should not be isolated.

Raene Packery: This should be a personal choice of the parents. Personally, if I could home school I would. I will definitely be investigating this for the future.

Sharon Parkinson: Not necessarily. Some children thrive in home schooling, some in mainstream schooling. Religion has no say in this.

Melanie Moore: From before she was born, until she was 18months I had planned to home school. Since then I have seen that her personality doesn't suit it so we have found an environmental centric school, in the area so we don't have to drive. If she changes or requests it, I will home school for primary school. After that I will either continue or find a tutor/cottage school for her.

Karin Burness: No! How will they learn to interact? How will they learn to solve and handle problems?

Candace Jane: No they need to mix with their own age group and older/younger and be challenged by others

Des Borchers: Only if you are prepared to devote 6 hours a day with you child and a further 4 hours researching and preparing.

Morgause and Aurelius: No, children need interaction with peers; they need to be exposed to other view points and ways of doing things out there. They need to play, learn how to deal with differences, and learn to make choices. Interaction with peers will broaden his horizons, and teach him how to reciprocate in tolerance and understanding.

Colleene Mollentz: I'm considering this. However children need interaction with others and I'm not sure how to provide that in a home schooling setting

How do I go about home schooling in South Africa?

Ginney May: Find a correspondence college such as Intec or Damelin, or you can find online schools – these are too numerous to list. You may want to cross-reference them with the Department of Education.

Sharon Parkinson: You need to send a letter of motivation to the nearest and appropriate, officer of Education in the Department of Education. The officer will then decide whether home schooling is appropriate and send you the forms to fill in.

Melanie Moore: Go to <http://www.grobler.co.za/wchsa/>

Des Borchers: Give The Dept of Education or local child welfare a ring, they can advise you.

Morgause and Aurelius: Contact the Department of Education for the pre-requisites as well as the necessary information to start.

How do I choose an appropriate school for my Pagan child?

Jacqui: It is my experience that government schools are more flexible and tolerant of children that are not Christian – they have to follow the South African government's policies and legislation on education and religion. Therefore, as parent, one has more control over what your child is taught. If for example, they sing Christian songs in assembly, legally, you have the power to speak and write to the principal and have this changed. Private schools tend to be a law unto themselves and if you are not happy with their policies, they have the right to insist that you remove your child.

It's very important, that **before** you enrol your child into the school that you:

- Inform the school that your family is Pagan (the principal and teachers) and,
- Inform the school (principal and teachers) that you do not wish for your child to receive religious instruction from the school

From their reactions to the above you will be able to gauge whether the school is appropriate for your Pagan child or not. It's imperative that once you have selected a school, you foster a good working relationship with your child's teacher and the principal. This will help, if issues do arise, to have open channels of communication.

Ginney May: Meet the headmaster/mistress. Interview them and explain clearly what your needs are for your child and what Paganism is and can the school handle that.

Raene Packery: I would investigate the schools in the area and examine their religious policies. I am not really in support of religious instruction at public schools been compulsory for all students. A school that would accept my Pagan child openly without discrimination and that takes all faiths into consideration would then be the appropriate school I guess.

Sharon Parkinson: Ask the principal about religion in the school and tell him/her your child has Pagan parents.

Melanie Moore: I was lucky to find a school in my area called 'Gaia Waldorf'. Based on a inter-relationship with the environment, the children are taught to respect all others, be they human, animal or the planet.

Candace Jane: Pagan children are no different from other children except for their beliefs

Therefore you give them the best education you can afford and give them the courage they need to stick up for themselves and their beliefs. By positive reinforcement and knowledge.

Des Borchers: The Waldorf and some Montessori schools are Pagan friendly. I teach at a Govt. school that is open-minded and fair.

Morgause and Aurelius: The school closest to your home that suits your pocket. Teach the child to respect authority, to openly discuss things with you especially if he is experiencing any difficulty due to your belief structure.

Colleene Molentz: A school where diversity and tolerance form part of their core values would be a good start. I'm guessing that self-professed Christian schools may not be best :) Find out as much as you can both from personnel but also from parents - if you can.

How do I deal with religious discrimination at school?

Jacqui: When issues arise, they must be dealt with immediately. Meet with the teacher and the Principal and then after the meeting, send them an email or letter summarizing the meeting and your concerns in writing. Government schools are not allowed to discriminate on the basis of religion, it is unconstitutional and contrary to the Employment of Educators Act, which states the following: *"the Employment of Educators Act. 1998, is hereby amended by the substitution for sections 18 to 24 of the following section:*

"Misconduct 40

18. (1) Misconduct refers to a breakdown in the employment relationship and an educator commits misconduct if he or she—

(k) unfairly discriminates against other persons on the basis of race, gender, disability, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic and social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, family responsibility, HIV status, political opinion or other grounds prohibited by the Constitution."

Ref: Education Laws Amendment Act (No 53 Of 2000)
<http://www.info.gov.za/gazette/acts/2000/a53-00.pdf>

I have found that it's a good idea to quote this Act and the Constitution, right at the beginning of discussions as these are your rights as a Pagan parent. Your child is protected, under the law of South Africa, from any forms of discrimination. The school must be made aware of the fact that you know your rights. If you use this, there is no need for aggression. You can be assertive and always be polite, no matter how angry you are – "you catch more flies with honey" and it is far more effective. In this way, it makes it possible to provide them with some knowledge on Paganism, which breaks down the barriers as people tend to fear what they do not know.

I am currently involved in resolving an issue at my daughter's government school, where they insist on singing Christian songs in assembly. I have made my rights known to the principal and my daughter's teacher and offered to purchase

generic, non-religious children's music books for the school. It looks like it may be resolved amicably. Below is the initial letter I have sent to the school regarding the issue:

"Dear XXXX

I apologise for having to bring this to your attention as I am aware that you are very busy, however I was quite disturbed today, upon fetching Bianca from school, to be informed by Mrs XXX that Bianca had got into trouble today for refusing to sing during music class in preparation for assembly. The reason that she was not singing is because, according to Bianca, the children were told to sing a song about "the Lord" and Bianca has told me that they often sing Christian songs - in reference to god and Jesus during school in music class. Please correct me if I am wrong, but I was lead to believe that ZZZZZ Primary School is NOT a so-called Christian school (such as De la Salle) and as such, cater to children of all religious/belief/cultural backgrounds. I am aware that Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Pagan children attend ZZZZZ Primary.

I informed you, when you wonderfully and graciously accepted Bianca into ZZZZZ Primary in the middle of last year, that we are a Pagan family - which is why I selected a Government school for Bianca. As Pagans, we are protected under the constitution and various other forms of legislation, from discrimination and from being forced to participate in Christian singing at the whim of a teacher. Bianca does not have to sing Christian songs - referring to god, Jesus or the Lord or any reasonably accepted Christian song, such as "He has the whole world in his hands". The Hindu's do not refer to their deity as God, nor do the Muslims, the Jews do, but these are not recognised Jewish songs. Bianca was not singing, as these songs are contrary to her belief - that she is a child of the Goddess.

Mrs XXX (who, by the way, is wonderful) has said that it's fine if Bianca sits out while they sing, but I find this unacceptable and discriminatory. Why should she miss out because the music teacher cannot be imaginative enough to teach the children generic children's songs. You may think that I'm overreacting, but in essence, I see this as a refusal to teach my child because she refuses to sing songs about this teacher's god - ridiculous! As a Principal of a highly respected school, I'm sure you're aware of the following piece of legislation below:

"the Employment of Educators Act. 1998, is hereby amended by the substitution for sections 18 to 24 of the following section:

"Misconduct 40

*18. (1) Misconduct refers to a breakdown in the employment relationship and **an educator commits misconduct if he or she—***

*(k) **unfairly discriminates against other persons on the basis of** race, gender, disability, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic and social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, **religion, conscience, belief,** culture, language, birth, family responsibility, HIV status, political opinion or other grounds prohibited by the Constitution."*

Ref: Education Laws Amendment Act (No 53 Of 2000)
<http://www.info.gov.za/gazette/acts/2000/a53-00.pdf>

I am more than willing to purchase non-religious children's music books for the music teacher and donate them to the school, in effort to enable my daughter to fully participate in music class, in preparation for assemblies on Fridays and not be discriminated against. As is her right.

I would also like to thank you for placing Bianca with Mrs. XXX. She is a wonderful person and excellent teacher. She has a wonderful relationship with Bianca and Bianca is doing so well. This is why the issue I have highlighted above has disappointed me so.

In love and light

Jacqui Curtiss"

Ginney May: By directly confronting the teacher with the issue. You have to be able to communicate with the teachers of any school your child is in regardless of religion.

Raene Packery: Approach the matter calmly and directly and attempt to educate the school where possible. If the discrimination continues, take it further if need be. Do not accept it under any circumstances.

Sharon Parkinson: Speak to the school authorities. If you get no positive response take it to the education department.

Melanie Moore: Same why I dealt with it, talk to the child then the teacher then the class.

Candace Jane: With extreme difficulty! However I remain calm and firm in my beliefs and have already given a class in Wicca, Last year to the grade 0's and had the pagan symbol placed on the wall with the other symbols so the children could identify with said symbol

Des Borcherds: Stand up for your rights (diplomatically). Mention the common aspects of most religions; quest for good etc.

Morgause and Aurelius: You tackle them personally and are at all times supportive of the child and his psychological needs. Under no circumstances give in to their pressure. Make use of your Constitutional rights to restore balance in your child's life.

How do I communicate Paganism to my child's teacher?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Tell the teacher (at the beginning of term or as soon as possible) that you are a Pagan family and you do not wish for your child to receive any religious instruction. If he or she asks questions about paganism, answer them as succinctly as possible, ask if he/she would require further information and if so, provide it. There is no need to go into the ins and outs unless you are requested to do so.

Ginney May: Talk about it openly and honestly and it also helps to have a two or three page document with some brief information telling them what it is to take home and read. Once they realize that it's not what they perceive to be Satanism – they are normally quite interested and open-minded about it. If they are narrow minded, they are not the type of person you would like your child to learn anything from anyway.

Raene Packery: I would invite the teacher for coffee and give him or her the opportunity to learn the basis of Paganism. I would discuss it with him or her openly and directly and send an email or note when necessary after that.

Sharon Parkinson: Print out a copy of the Paganism FAQ on SAPRA's website www.paganrights.org and go through it with her.

Melanie Moore: over a cup of tea, with a lot of time for questions. There are many online resources about this issue, to help parents.

Candace Jane: You need to find an enlightened one or your case is hopeless
I out right tell them that I am a healer and an esoteric and that my child is a pagan
The response is generally one of interest and scepticism.

Des Borcherds: As above. Stress the love of nature and reverence for beauty and all living things.

Morgause and Aurelius: You can tell the teacher that you are not Christians at home. Through the gauging of her reaction you may decided to elaborate or not. Remember that they are not allowed to discriminate against a child, or even worse be biased towards it, on grounds of its parents' belief structure. It is not a good idea to make a big thing of it or emphasize your Paganism, or to make your child stand out as some sort of "rarity" at the school. Given the opportunity and the correct disposition, you may "educate" those willing to listen without becoming biased. This takes a lot of insight

What do I do if my child's teacher victimizes my child?

Jacqui: The same as above but take this directly to the Principal and / or governing body. Your issues will carry more weight if it is a Government school as Government Policies, legislation and the constitution bind them and these are designed to prevent discrimination and victimization in schools. The solution may be to move the child to another teacher, or depending on the school's attitude, you may prefer to remove your child from the school entirely. This is why it's important, right at the beginning, before you enrol your child into the school, to inform them that you are a Pagan family. If their reaction is negative then don't enrol your child, as you will encounter constant resistance.

If a teacher victimizes your child, it's very important to reassure your child and make sure that they understand that the teacher is at fault and that in life, we are bound to come in contact with people that disagree with our views and us. It's OK to be different; can you imagine if everyone and everything in the world was the same? What a boring place it would be. It is the teacher's responsibility to reach out to the children and accept the differences among them, not victimise them for it.

Ginney May: Speak to the headmaster/mistress immediately. If it persists you should remove your child or force them to remove the teacher – depending on how bad the situation is.

Raene Packery: Approach him or her directly and take the matter further.

Sharon Parkinson: Then you need to go to a higher authority.

Melanie Moore: After showing your love for the child, take it to the principle immediately. There is nothing worse than those who abuse their power over a weaker person.

Candace Jane: Go in for a battle and keep on the battle. My older son was victimized but he was more than up to the task of standing up for himself as he is extremely clever and a great arguer.

Des Borchers: Immediately schedule a meeting with the Headmaster /mistress. If you have no joy, seek legal assistance.

Morgause and Aurelius: You arrange a meeting with the teacher and the headmaster. If the meeting does not resolve the situation you bring in the School Inspectorate.

How do I deal with discrimination from my child's peers and their parents?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: Children can sometimes be very cruel towards each other and discriminate for many reasons such as buckteeth, acne, wearing braces or glasses and sometimes, they learn to be discriminatory from their parents. Your child will encounter discrimination for various reasons and from various people in their lives. This is all part of learning that we are not all the same, in fact everyone is different. These differences do not make one person better than another, they are just differences that make us unique and special. Religious discrimination is the same. It's important to try to make your child understand that we must always respect and embrace these differences even when others don't and that it is sometimes, people's ignorance that makes them unable to respect the differences in others. Being ignorant is an awful thing, we need to understand that these types of people have problems that are not easily overcome and we should feel sympathy for them, not anger. I have told my daughter that these types of people are missing out on an opportunity to get to know a wonderful person, someone that they could have a great friendship with and learn something from and it's silly to miss out on something good! I have also told her that in life there are some people that we will never see eye to eye with and that's fine, perhaps we are not meant to be friends with people that are so different from us, but we must still respect their right to be different.

Ginney May: Invite them to coffee and have an open discussion with them. Often a good idea to have something printed for them to take home to read. Fear of the unknown is often the most predominant type of prejudice and educating is the only way to dispel this.

Raene Packery: Offer them the opportunity to learn about Paganism over coffee or at a formal meeting and if they show no interest then perhaps approach the school board to assist in the matter – especially if they know your child is Pagan.

Sharon Parkinson: EXPLAIN. Educate these people. Most only do this because they do not understand. Ask the principal if you can do a talk at the school, or if someone you know can.

Melanie Moore: Talk to the child and talk to the parents. The peers only mimic their influences. Ultimately there is nothing that can be done to force the adults to your way of thinking. I would do everything in my power to gain a reputation as a decent human being. It is better for people to say: "she might be going to hell, but she is a decent person." than "what a bitch, I'm glad she's going to hell"

Karin Burness: This is why we should not teach our children to verbalise everything they are taught, but to listen to others and understand where they are coming from. To come home and discuss with us what they have been told and

what they have learnt, and to reinforce in them their worth and their belief system. This is also why a Coven is a wonderful place to involve your child. They get to deal with children who are likeminded and in their faith, they have adults and elders who can assist and guide them. It is your choice ultimately what school you choose and what you are willing to tell their teacher or friend or friends parents. Silence is golden (keep it that way).

Candace Jane: Explain to them in plain words what you stand for and how ignorant and narrow minded they are

I have come up against some real nasty people and quite frankly I say my piece and ignore the worst parts and explain to my child not to ever be like that and to ignore the name calling and find their own soul group or friend who will understand This sounds glib and I have to say that it is very hurtful and debilitating for both parent and child

Des Borchers: Be nice but firm. Inform them of your beliefs. Tell them that you respect their right to follow their religion, and that you have the same rights. If they are fundamental zealots lay criminal charges or turn them into toads. (lol)

Morgause and Aurelius: If the child is taught to use the occult knowledge he has been raised with, he will be able to avoid the greater part of these situations.

Would it be beneficial to allow my child to learn other religions besides my own?

Jacqui Curtiss: Yes! I think children need to know about all religions, but again, the information provided must be age appropriate and based on the questions they ask. If they need to know more about a particular religion, and they are old enough, let them research it. If they have questions, find out the answers together. Paganism involves constant seeking for answers. This is how they will develop their own spiritual identity and opinions, which should be uniquely theirs.

Ginney May: I think children should at least get a broad outline of other religions. It is unfair to indoctrinate them in a biased manner what ever your religion is. To be aware of other people's religions allows the child to grow up more tolerant and open minded. If it is taught in a non-emotional manner, but quite honestly, I would not like my child to learn Christianity because to me it seems to be based on fear rather than love and has the "this is the only way" attitude. But I would like my child to have a rough knowledge of it. Such as in Religion for Dummies or Webster's Encyclopaedia of Religions.

Raene Packery: Yes it would but it might also be confusing for the child so I would suggest introducing it to the child slowly and without force.

Sharon Parkinson: Yes. It will teach your child to respect other religions and others individual choices of religion as well as help her make up her own mind as to what religion she prefers.

Melanie Moore: Yes, yes, yes!

Morgause and Aurelius: Yes, knowledge is empowerment and restricting a child to your faith will only impede his spiritual development. Be firm about what is viewed as your way in the household and what is requested of him. Let him visit church, temple, fellowship circles, etc.

Colleene Molentz: I think learning about other religions is a good thing. However being forced to participate in other religious activities could be confusing and upsetting for a child

Should my child hide his/her identity at school to avoid any discrimination?

Jacqui: This is not healthy at all. As Pagans, why should we hide? We need to deal with discrimination if it occurs. This is also a good lesson for your child, discrimination takes many forms and it is the nature of humans, that your child will face some form of discrimination in his / her life at some time. Teach them how to deal with it, rather than hide from it. It's important to teach Pagan children to be "Proudly Pagan" as this is certainly nothing to be ashamed of!

Ginney May: I don't think you should hide what you are - that implies it is something to be ashamed of. Instead encourage your child to educate his peers to be more open-minded. Fear is caused by ignorance. You can't hide who you are. If you do you will never be at peace with yourself. This applies to adults as well as children. However, it's not a good idea to dress Gothic and have a king sized pentagram that is rammed into other people's faces. We do not like it when Jehovah's witnesses push religion in our faces – we should not do that to others.

Raene Packery: No. I am teaching my child to never be ashamed of who she is or what she believes in.

Sharon Parkinson: No. The people need to be educated. Psychologically, telling the child to hide her religion would also tell her that there is something wrong with that religion and confuse the child.

Melanie Moore: Ideally no, but it is up to the child.

Morgause and Aurelius: Children are not emotionally equipped to deal with rejection and confrontation, especially when it comes coupled with labels such as "evil" and "Satanist", or with "I am not allowed to be your friend anymore". I don't like the word "hide" that implies that it is wrong. I would use the word "secrecy" which lends to the concept the importance it really has. If the child believes that he is special and that his belief is special, if he understands his part in the Universe and the interconnectedness of everything he will not suffer the "secrecy". Raise your child believing in the Law of Attraction. This will enable him to attract to him children who (along with their parents) will be sympathetic to your own religious convictions and repel those situations which could cause him heartache and difficulty.

How will teaching a child good ethics & morals, help him/her during her life journey (or something on ethics - I think many people forget about ethics)?

Ginney May: by teaching good morals and ethics you set the stage for what type of child you are bringing up. No ethics is the way to breed thieves and murderers because they won't know that it is wrong to do these things. Face it - if your dad was a mercenary and says its a great way to make cash - your kid would be after a gun as soon as he could hold one.

Raene Packery: With good ethics and morals a child will grow to be comfortable and confident in him or herself, be a stable and compassionate human being - in always been considerate of others and he or she will more than likely also have a spiritual awareness to base his or her morals and ethics on. Children also learn to lead by example so having good morals and ethics as a parent and making your child aware of this would also be important.

Sharon Parkinson: She will become well integrated socially and a decent and moral person herself. As well as a good symbol to Paganism.

Melanie Moore: Ethics are based on society. Many people forget ethics because they focus on morals. We must teach our children to think of the whole before themselves. e.g.: Speeding is dangerous for the other people on the road more than the speeder, yet how many people get tickets every day. I have heard people telling others how to avoid tickets. I always tell them my foolproof method: Don't Speed.

Morgause and Aurelius: Pagan ethics are not in contrast with those of society at large. Be a good example to your children. Kids follow examples. We do not drink alcohol, smoke or do drugs. We do our best to live exemplary lives – a living instruction that goes beyond words. Our word is gold and we never lie to our child – truth is paramount.

Colleene Mollentz: I think good morals and ethics, based on love, tolerance and respect for others, are the most important tools you can give your child to deal with life. You will not always be around to guide your child but internalised moral guidelines will.

If a school (pre-primary, primary, high school) is a private school, may they still preach only Christianity?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: At a private school, their manifesto is set by their governing body. If this involves teaching Christianity or any other specified religion, then they will teach it and you have very little control over this. If you are considering a private school for your child, find out what their policy on religion is beforehand, as this is very difficult to change if you are not happy about it later.

Raene Packery: Well most private schools generally have Christianity in their mission so I think it would be their right to teach or preach only Christianity. I just won't send my child there if I know that is the only religious education that she will be getting.

Melanie Moore: Preach: no but teach: yes.

Morgause and Aurelius: I don't know what they may and may not do. What is important is that they do not infringe of your child's rights to believe differently. Religious instruction can be approached as an academic subject ... or you may be open with the school and demand that your child sit out. We have never done that. We believe that it is important for the child's development to experience everything. Your input in the matter is also important. You have to counterbalance it at home with other facets of the truth, so that the child can grasp the global picture and make a comfortable choice. It is our experience that the child ultimately follows the path he was born to – we are lucky that ours has decided that he likes what he sees in our Path.

If a school is a state school, and they have Christianity in their mission or vision, may they require everyone to take bible classes?

Jacqui and Julian Curtiss: No, they may not and if they do insist, you have the right to lay a complaint with the principal of the school and with the Department of Education.

Raene Packery: If a school is a state school, and they have Christianity in their mission or vision, may they require everyone to take bible classes? Here I honestly feel that bible classes should not be compulsory to people outside the Christian faith.

Melanie Moore: No.

Morgause and Aurelius: Same answer as above applies. Nothing can prevent you from guiding your child through life. Teach him that your reality is not the entire reality and allow him to discover what the Universal Truths are. We have never encouraged our child to abstain from Bible classes or religious instruction, from early pre-primary right through into high school – he has participated. However, he was raised in a household of Pagan ritual; he has always known he was different. This has never stopped him participating in all school events, he participates in a detached manner, and he does not buy into any dogma whatsoever. Now he looks on and smiles, he knows the truth lies within. He is a mere witness. He knows that the only way to conquer truth is to conquer yourself. The rest are details. In answer, no school may force your child to take any form of religious instruction. However, be mindful that children victimize the “different” and schools are patriarchal machines designed to churn out slaves and robots – standing out too much can be hazardous and difficult for the child’s emotional well being. Our child has done very well by being invisible, not speaking of the mysteries to those that are not ready to understand. He appreciates his differences and respects those of others.

Ginney May says:

“I honestly think that Pagan parenting and normal parenting are exactly the same thing. The same principals apply. The only difference is that we teach religious tolerance instead of intolerance. The choices of school, home schooling etc are a choice all parents have to make. Discipline is the same for every child - well within reason - some things work better than other things depending on the individual child - but I don't think this is a Pagan question really. And if you are going to say the Goddess will punish you if you don't behave then you are setting yourself up for a kid who views Paganism with fear and may as well be Christian. Well that's my ten cents worth :)”

A Word of Thanks

The SAPC wishes to thank all the parents and little people who have made this manual a possibility! Thank you for your precious contribution and invaluable insight. A special thanks to Jacqui Curtiss for collating the interviews and Ginney May for the fabulous home-grown children's stories.

Goddess Blessings!

