



### **On Children, Family Life and Future**

Poet, Kahlil Gibran writes in his work, *The Prophet*, “You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.”

Arrows, sent forth by bow, have a trajectory, a path forward, made predictable by knowing the starting point. The starting point of the child is the family. As a child learns and develops in his or her family, the likelihood of his or her path is made clear.

A child whose starting point includes neglect, violence and poverty is shown to be at risk of similar fate come his or her adulthood. A child whose starting point includes love, caring and reasonable relationships is also likely to show similar fate come adulthood. A child whose launch may include false starts, multiple separations and abandonment, may also fall upon this fate come adulthood. Social science research bears out the message of the poet.

The challenge of correcting a poor launch is in the ability to nudge the arrow mid-flight. With a nudge, the arrow may find a better trajectory, correcting its path along the way. The nudge may come from the parent, bettering him or herself. The nudge may also come from a member of the Clergy or a teacher or another kindly adult. The nudge may also come from therapeutic intervention by a social worker with parent(s), family or child alone.

While some may strive to not just nudge the arrow, but fully alter its path, it is important to know that even a slight course correction can result in a radically different destination. What may seem like an inconsequential shift now, say even two degrees of difference, can result in the arrow reaching a vastly different place, given time. One need only trace the new trajectory out long and far enough, given patience.

Ask adults whose childhood was fraught with family pain and suffering, “Who in their lives left a positive mark that helped them survive or thrive?” Their answers are often remarkable as they recount the kindness of words from another that helped them pass through troubled times. Very often the kindness or influence went unnoticed by the doer of the good deed, but nonetheless has left an indelible mark on the arrow and course of the trajectory.

As adults, we all have a responsibility to the care of the young and tender. While parents hold the greatest responsibility, other adults remain influential and we are all in the category of other adults to every child but our own.

As these arrows shoot past us and if their trajectory is uncertain or risky, take but a moment to offer a kind word, lend a hand or offer a safe place. Although seemingly a fleeting moment, the mere nudge can alter a child’s trajectory, far beyond yours or even the child’s awareness in the present.

The social science literature bears out what the poets have told us. Again, as per Kahlil Gibran, “You are good when you strive to give of yourself.” And with that, you nudge the arrow towards goodness. Your input gives the child yet another experience of something decent upon which to model and build. No nudge too small.

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