

It's Important To Give Children Roots and Wings by Valarie Bostic

My sister and I were having an interesting conversation concerning our young grown up children. We were discussing some of the choices they make, and how we don't always feel that they think these decisions through carefully. "I can't believe some of the things they do," I told her. "I know what you mean," she answered "It's like they don't realize what could happen and they don't think things through."

If you have children who have already left the nest, you will probably understand what I am talking about. As much as you want your children to be independent, there are times when you just shake your head at what they do.

My mother, who was listening to the conversation, sighed. "I remember a time..." she began. Oh, no, I thought. Here we go. She's going to dredge up every little thing my sister or I ever did and tell us that now we are reaping our just rewards. But my Mother surprised me. "I remember," she continued, "When your father and I were young, some of the foolish things we did." "Like what?" I asked out of curiosity. Yeah, right. My Mother pulling some wild, youthful, foolish stunt. Not in this lifetime. "Well," she went on, "There was the time when we got caught in that bad snowstorm and landed the car in the snowbank. We knew the roads were bad, but we didn't care. We went out in the storm anyway. Then, there were the times when we would go and visit your Dad's parents, and we would have to ask for gas money to get home. We were dead broke but we went anyway not knowing if we could get home." I looked at her. Who was this woman? Where was the woman who always said to keep a dime in your shoe (Okay, so now it's a dollar), so you could make a phone call in an emergency? Where was the woman who always warned us about not locking our keys in the car and about being safe? "What I'm trying to tell you," she said interrupting my thoughts, "Is that your kids are just being young. When you are young, things don't look so scary and you never think anything is going to happen. You do silly things. But you can't live their lives for them. You just have to pray and accept their choices as theirs."

Her words of wisdom made me think. Maybe I don't always understand the things my oldest son does, but I know that deep down, he's been raised right, and that he has to learn his own lessons in his own way.

I once heard someone say that there are two things in life that we need to pass on to our children. These things are roots and wings. We give our

children roots, or a solid foundation, so when the world gets big and scary, they will always have a safe place within themselves where they will feel secure. Our roots tell us where we came from and what we are made of. Our roots tell us that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves.

When we give a child wings, we allow them to be who they really are, to be independent and to grow. We give them the opportunity to succeed, to fail if necessary, and to learn from their own experiences.

When I was young, I thought my Mother didn't understand a lot of things. She didn't understand what it was like to want to see the world, or to experience life to its fullest. I thought her life was all straight and narrow and that she never made any choices that weren't well thought out. But I do know that she gave each of her children wings and told us that it was okay to fly. It was after we had circled the world a few times, that each of us reached inside ourselves for the roots we knew were within- roots that were established through a Mother's love. I hope that I have given these same roots and wings to my own children and that they in turn, will pass them on to theirs.