

Balancing Parenting with Medicine

Category: Finding Balance

written by Tim Sanborn | March 12, 2023

I still recall fond memories of when I, a busy, young cardiologist, was invited to teach my daughter's kindergarten class. These eager, young learners were enthralled when they first heard their own hearts go "lub-dub" using my stethoscope. It was also heartwarming to see the excitement in their eyes as they watched a portable blood pressure gauge pulsating with each heartbeat as I demonstrated how to check a blood pressure.

Fast forward thirty years, and I found myself back in my daughter's classroom. This time, my daughter, Meredith, was the teacher. As part of her lesson plan to introduce students to roles of various "community helpers" such as police, firefighters and doctors, I once again volunteered. Meredith and I even coined the term *Kindergarten Cardiology* for the class.

What was special for me was that my granddaughter, Reagan, was now in the classroom. I still remember her big, warm smile as she stood in her grey, pinstripe jumper and a navy-blue bow in her hair as she heard, for the first time, her own heartbeat with my stethoscope. As others joined in the excitement, here was another generation of potential doctors and nurses learning how to hear heart valves opening and closing to the gentle rhythm of their hearts.

Then, demonstrating the arteries, veins and valves on a plastic heart model, I still recall one memorable question from a curious little boy who held the heart model in his hands and asked, "Where is the soul?" How am I to respond to this five-year old? I asked myself.

"Well Martin, that is a question philosophers and scientists have asked for thousands of years. Your heart is a muscle. It's like an engine that pumps blood throughout your body. Your soul is probably here in your thoughts," I said patting him on his neatly combed blond hair.

After class, I asked Meredith about this precocious young boy. "As you see, Martin has a great deal of self-confidence. He comes from a very caring family with nurturing parents. Several years later, Meredith learned that Martin was excelling in science in high school. Like another Martin, Dr. Martin Luther King, he was also active in the high school's diversity inclusion club.

For me, this voluntary participation in my daughter's kindergarten activities was both a rewarding and fulfilling balance of parenting and medicine.

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