



INSTITUTE FOR
HUMANE EDUCATION

Raising a Humane Child

A month-long distance learning course for parents who wish to bring the principles and practices of humane education to their child-rearing and family life.

Sample Exercises

What previously unexamined values have you absorbed through your culture, community, and media that do not represent the core of who you are?

Many of us live in ways that represent certain norms in our culture and community, whether or not these represent our true values. For example, many become consumers of a variety of goods that don't necessarily represent their values, while others may feel pressured to alter their appearance or choices to "fit in," even if those changes don't come from within. In what ways have you adopted cultural and communal norms without examining whether they are fully aligned with your values? What happens when you identify these and realize their origin?

Conduct a home inventory (with your child if possible)

In order to make choices that create a better life and world, we must become adept at bringing our inquiry to our lives. Begin today by watching the short film *The Story of Stuff* (www.storyofstuff.com). Then take a tour of your home and note what you see, from the toys in your child's room, to the food in the kitchen, to the items in the bathroom, to the clothes in the closet, to the furniture, electronics, knick-knacks, vehicles, and other stuff that you own. Allow your gaze to be soft, open, and non-judgmental at the same time as you bring your attention, awareness, and commitment to the goal of gaining new knowledge. After wandering through your home, choose one item to inquire about deeply. If your child is old enough do this together. Do an internet search to discover the effects of this item on yourself, other people, animals, and the environment. You will find websites to visit at www.HumaneEducation.org/weblinks and you may also wish to visit www.responsibleshopper.org to get started. This activity can take a long time to do thoroughly, so choose to spend as much time as you can today knowing that you have the opportunity to bring your inquiry to this and other items in the future. What did you, and your child, if appropriate, learn from this exercise?

Write a letter to your adult child

Cultivate inner support for your parenting journey. Imagine that your child has just turned eighteen. What will you be happy to have achieved as a parent? What might you regret? What do you want to be sure that you did? What do you want to be sure that you didn't do? Write a letter to your child (but not necessarily for your child to read) that expresses your most heartfelt hopes and goals as a parent and shares everything that you tried to give your child through those eighteen years. Also acknowledge the ways in which you may have failed to live up to those goals all the time. Use the power of your imagination to be specific rather than vague. Then re-read your letter and create a page-long list or plan that expresses your primary goals as a parent and put it in a place where you can refer to it regularly.