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Lessons From the Past Hold True in the Present

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A hero is a person that will continue to be there for you and who is spiritual, dedicated, trustworthy, dependable and most of all positive. My grandmother comes to mind when thinking of the qualifications of a hero. She is one of my heroes because of all the courage and strength that came from her example that I follow still today. I attended my grandmother's ninetieth birthday reception in early January and as I watched her children and grandchildren, I realized that some of the most valuable lessons I have learned were from this amazing woman. In my reflection, I realized that the things she did as a single mother raising her children (my grandfather passed away at a fairly young age) are the reasons that we all continue to treat her with the utmost love and respect. She never gave up but instead showed the strength necessary to go on and raise her children as a single parent. My grandmother had the courage to be the parent and make tough decisions in order to provide for her children's education, well-being and be hopeful for future success. She taught them many parenting lessons that they have used to raise their children.

As family members paid their respects to her on her birthday, it was clear that while her children were raised with firmness and expectations, everyone present was there out of love. She may not always have been a perfect parent, but the things she did were to give her children life skills for the real world and those lessons are pertinent today. There were clear messages and guidelines for house rules, chores, and expectations. Children were expected to do their part to make the house and family function as a unit, but each was allowed their individuality. They were taught responsibility for themselves and for others and disrespect and dishonest behavior were dealt with appropriately. While there may have been times, they did not agree with the rules and expectations, my grandmother was always the parent and her rules were followed or there were consequences. I am sure there were many times at the end of a long workday she was tired and dealing with homework, chores, and parenting alone was the last thing she wanted to do, but she did it and it was her priority.

Many single mothers that I work with today have received the benefit of the lessons I learned from this great woman. She is the model I use to train parents. While many things have changed over the years, the goal of parenting remains the same—to give your child the skills and knowledge necessary to be a successful adult and those skills are still grounded in the same principles that women believed years ago. Parenting is a tough job but with strength and courage, it can be a very gratifying and rewarding experience.