



## **USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Good Models for Kids**

*This brief Parent Tip is provided at no cost by United Services for Effective Parenting-Ohio, Inc. as a tool to assist parents, teachers, grandparents and all who help care for and raise our children. For more information on this and other tools from USEP-OHIO refer to the conclusion of this Parent Tip.*

My Uncle Ed died last month. He was my Mom's younger brother, and my Godparent. He held me when I was baptized, and he never let me forget that he loved me. Like my Granddad that he resembled so much, he was a good man, a thoughtful husband and father, recognized for his heroism in WWII, and a patient and caring friend to others. He helped me to feel loved, and full of promise. Uncle Ed commented on how proud he was of me from the time I was a child, throughout my life, right up to last month. I was accepted for who I am and for whatever I felt. I knew he cherished me, and that I held a unique place in his life and heart. When I came into the room, his eyes would light up. He would sort of gently shake his head and say, "You're really something!" I could always trust Uncle Ed to be glad to see me, and surprised and happy at the wonderful things I learned about or achieved, from my school accomplishments - to the milestones in the lives of my children. Uncle Ed had four great kids of his own, a number of grandchildren and even a great grandchild. But he was always happy to hear from me. He gently took time to listen attentively and let me know it was so special that I called him or visited. I was still a special niece, and he let me know he had time to hear about me and my family. What a gift.

**When I looked at my Uncle I saw the reflection of myself in his eyes as purposeful, joyful, with a lot of faith in myself and in the future. He offered me the opportunity to have a consistent positive view of**

**myself all through the awkward years, the adolescent years, and even when my parents were completely exasperated with me. He helped to offer balance and humor at moments when my parents were struggling to keep a positive attitude.**

Every child needs the consistency of positive, caring adults who are good models to *be like* in the future. But the other wonderful outcome is that the kids recognize that even when they have been a disappointment to themselves or their parents or their teachers – there is still someone in their world who says, “You’re really something special!”

When teaching preschoolers, I made home visits before the school year began. I always asked, “Are there grandparents, friends or neighbors who are special to your child?” I particularly remember when Gloria, mother of 4 year old David purposely replied, “We just moved here from Virginia. So we created *substitute* family ties! We share holidays, school and family activities with special neighbors and friends near us, so we all help to be family for one another’s kids.” **Help your children experience the joy of positive interactions with other trustworthy adults. Choose that special teacher, neighbor or friend, who is a good model and believes in your child. Who knows, you may even help them create substitute family ties!**