

Sue Thompson's

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THE SET FREE LIFE

Family Values

I love the television show "Medium," in which Patricia Arquette plays Allison Dubois, a woman gifted with a supernatural insight into heinous crimes. I don't for a moment believe there is someone out there with such a clear, starkly visual sense as the series depicts; it's very good television, though, and the writers are absolutely brilliant with their plots and characterizations.

What I particularly enjoy is the whole "normal family" portrayals of each episode. Arquette looks the part of a busy mother and working woman. She gets flustered and even occasionally irrational, like a real person. Jake Weber, who plays her husband, Joe, is a man who obviously loves his family and plays the struggles of being a parent and a husband and man who has been out of work, started his own company, lost it and found work again (all with a wonderful sense of humor) so convincingly. I tune in to experience this family. On one of my frequent visits to Los Angeles, I ran into the young actress who plays Bridgette Dubois, Allison's and Joe's middle daughter. I stepped onto an elevator at my hotel with Maria Lark ("Medium" is filmed at nearby studios). She is a wonderful performer and I told her how much I enjoy her work.

What strikes me about the way the actors inhabit their characters is they portray regular people who care about others and have a confidence they can contribute something to another person's life. Joe encounters the unique difficulties of dealing with a wife who has a unique but often frustrating gift and daughters who exhibit the same penchant for receiving information not available to the average person, but he plows forward with a good heart and a logical head and provides a stabilizing influence in the house. Allison has embraced her strangeness and is willing to follow through with the most outrageous actions because she knows how this thing she carries deals with her.

Sure, they have some self-doubt. They flip over into occasional guilt or once-in-a-while resentment and complaint. They're human. But they are convinced of their abilities to do what is right based on the best of their values, such as courage and prudence and love and wisdom, and they go with them. (They're

always well-mannered, too—it's not lost on me that Allison consistently, respectfully refers to her boss as "Mr. District Attorney").

I appreciate that the children don't respond to their parents as though they are boring, disgusting simpletons with absolutely no wisdom to be dispensed. They have disagreements and arguments just like anyone, but they actually seem to like one another. The weird talent of the women could almost be a family member—it's there, it provides a lot of drama, but it's not the whole story. I read an interview with Jake Weber where my take on the show was confirmed—he said, "This is about family." A functioning, healthy family at that.

I appreciate that the lovely young woman who plays Ariel, the oldest daughter in "Medium" (Sofia Vassilieva), is kind to people, and cares about her grades, and loves her parents, and doesn't want to hurt others' feelings. I didn't want to hurt people's feelings when I was in high school, so I don't understand why it seems all we see on TV is the unkind, the hateful, the self-absorbed teenager. Have we changed so much since I was 16? I once refused to participate in a prank on my English teacher, who was suffering the beginnings of Parkinson's. The whole class walked out at a given time so they could look in the windows and watch her tremors and confusion. I sat there, and as soon as they were all outside I told her about the prank and apologized for them. She thanked me and said I could leave since everyone else was gone. I walked through the nasty little huddle of classmates, angry that I'd blown their fun. "You're all cruel," I said to them. I know young people can be like this. But I know they can be wonderful, too, and I think there are more of them than the other kind, even today.

I think it helps to see images of young people who are not rude and backwards, who do not act like oversexualized twits (does Katie Couric actually believe "Glee" is a *family* show?) with foul mouths, who respond to their parents and



Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her consulting skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

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Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com
www.SetFreeLifeSeminars.com
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elders in really normal, respectful ways, because I believe there is a healthy contingent of young people who behave well because it is simply the right thing to do, because they have parents who model great behavior and demand it of their children (single parents, too). I believe there is a healthy contingent of families who are not dysfunctional, seething messes. And guess what? Mine *was* a seething mess, but I still got the right home training about how to be a good human being. I think today we're inundated with the message that a family like the one in "Medium" is a throwback, or it's a fantasy, or it's not possible. It *is* possible, and I'm glad that a drama like it is on the tube. It gives me hope that we're not sinking into an alternate universe, that we're not rearing hoards of "Jersey Shore"-like ignoramuses. I hope it has a nice, long run. ☺

Sierra on The Excellent Life

Wow, I didn't think I'd EVER get to write another article!! I have something SUPER-EXCITING to tell you about, and I can barely hold it in!! It's about how to MAKE PEOPLE LIKE YOU. Well, maybe not MAKE them like you, but they won't be able to restrain themselves from liking you (MOST of the time). All because of my #1 best secret in all the world, which I am revealing here, RIGHT NOW: *people will like you when you expect them to!!* Really! They WILL!!

It works for me all the time, and I'm SURE it will work for you: just EXPECT people to want to know you!! Put on your sunniest, happiest disposition, smile a LOT, and act as though the people you're meeting are THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE WORLD. Anticipate their pleasure at getting to know you! Be super-friendly and pay 100% attention to them and ONLY them! THEY WILL LOVE YOU!!!!

Humans want to know those who WANT to know THEM. If you put on your best face and are sincerely INTERESTED in people, they want to know you back—they just can't help themselves! I always expect people will WANT to know me. I approach them with the expectation that they'll see what a fantastically fun and happy pup I am and will find me IRRESISTABLE. And they DO!!! Most of the time.

It's true, sometimes there are the rare humans who DO NOT find me irresistible, but it's THEIR LOSS!! I am a fun, caring, generous critter and they should see that, but if they don't, so what? The next person will be REALLY, REALLY glad to see me!! Just this past weekend, a bunch

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Sue Thompson

877.231.6993

Sue@SetFreeLifeSeminars.com

www.setfreelifeseminars.com



of people lit up when they saw me and asked, "Is that a Bedlington Terrier?" I practically jumped up and down!! In fact, I DID jump up and down!! One man said his mother had raised Bedlings, "and that was 60 years ago!" Another lady said, "My 5th grade teacher had a Bedlington!" SEE????? I expect that I will be a happy encounter for people, and these people had good memories BECAUSE I SHOWED UP!! I don't even care if they mistake me for a poodle!!!! Haha!!! ME, a poodle!! Ha ha ha ha!!!!

Someone is ALWAYS happy to see me! If I run into someone who isn't, I just move on to the next person, EXPECTING they will be thrilled to make my acquaintance!! The people who don't want to know me just drop off my radar INSTANTLY, because there are lots more people who WILL like me and I don't have to go far to find a new best friend!! I only remember the ones who like me, and when I see them again, I wag my tail and do a little dance and let them know how GREAT it is to see them again, and how great it is for THEM to see ME again!!! And another thing: I agree with them about something they say. They say, "What a cute little dog," and I try to let them know I'm saying, "YES! I really AM a CUTE LITTLE DOG!! I agree!!!!"

TRY IT!! Expect people to like you and if you meet someone who doesn't, MOVE ON and expect the NEXT person to like you!! IT REALLY WORKS!!! 🐾

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No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace
As I have seen in one autumnal face.

John Donne