



RAISING A DISCIPLINED CHILD

Dr. John Odero Ong'ech is the chief medical specialist of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Kenyatta National Hospital. He is also the Deputy Director surgical services. His daughter, Grace, was among top 150 students in last year's KCSE. He talked to us about his efforts to raise Grace and what he believes good parenting entails and how he himself went about raising a bright daughter.

How has parenting been thus far?

Not easy, especially in this day and age.

How did you handle the transition through puberty?

I learnt to allow her some space because there were moments she got moody and just wanted to be by herself. I took the initiative to talk to her. We have an open relationship. She is

honest with me about what is happening to her body. And whenever I felt that there was something I couldn't handle I would ask my female gynaecologist friends to talk and attend to her.

What do you believe you imparted most on your daughter?

Self-discipline. Honesty. Belief in oneself. The understanding that nothing comes cheap. Faith in God. And much more.

Which mistake did you avoid at all costs?

Absence in her life. Let me explain; it is not enough to provide financially to a child's needs, parents ought to be present in their child's life. I was class representative (for parents) in her class from Form 1 to 4. I was in constant communication with her teachers to know her progress in school. I visited (sometimes impromptu) to check

on her. A parent's presence is paramount in a child's life.

What do you think makes an A student?

Of course not all students get As. Some will get As even when subjected to disadvantaged upbringing. There is no one factor that determines an A student. Mostly, such students have to have the drive to learn and understand. As for my daughter, my responsibility was to make sure that I had provided her with a life that will allow her to realise her full potential.

Did you spank her as a child?

Yes. I did so up to the time I felt she had changed for the better. Sometimes it is necessary for a child to get a firm understanding of what is expected of them.