

THE PARENT'S GUIDE



*Child-Raising Instructions You
Always Wanted*

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The Parent's Guide

“Child-Raising Instructions You Always Wanted”

Do you wish your children came with an instruction book?
Here are the child-raising instructions you always wanted!

- **Part One: Valuable Information About How to Raise a Successful Child** (I would've given *anything* for this information when I was raising my seven children!)
- **Part Two: Life-changing Strategies That Produce Immediate Results** (This advice can strengthen every relationship in your life)
- **Part Three: Insightful Articles From Parenting Experts** (I know you'll agree that their amazing strategies can help you raise happy, successful children)

PART ONE

VALUABLE INFORMATION
ABOUT HOW TO RAISE
HAPPY, SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN



PART ONE
Valuable Information About How to Raise
Happy, Successful Children

To raise happy, successful children we first need to know what the qualities of a successful child are.

10 Characteristics of a Happy, Successful Child

They:

1. Feel loved and appreciated, and they show love and appreciation to others.
2. Have a joyful, positive attitude.
3. Are kind, obedient, respectful, responsible, and compassionate.
4. Communicate well.
5. Maintain close relationships with family.
6. Make wise and moral choices.
7. Have healthy habits.
8. Enjoy learning.
9. Are self-confident.
10. Have physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual well-being.

I believe that the first characteristic of a successful child (see #1) is the foundation for the other nine. Think about it. When you feel loved and appreciated, isn't it easier to be joyful, obedient, show kindness, communicate well, and all the rest? Absolutely! In just a moment we'll talk about ways you can help your children feel loved and appreciated. But first let me caution you: If you haven't done some of these things very well, don't be upset and discouraged or wallow in guilt. *Go forward from where you are.* Think, "I made the best decision I could with the information I had at the time." Then you can say, "I have more information now, and I'll make better choices, starting today."

WAYS TO RAISE LOVING AND APPRECIATIVE CHILDREN AND TO HELP THEM FEEL LOVED



Ways to Raise Loving and Appreciative Children and to Help Them Feel Loved

1. BOND WITH YOUR BABY

- ❖ Stay physically close to your infants, especially during the first 8 to 10 weeks of life. Hold them a lot and wear them in a carrier when possible.
- ❖ Respond quickly to baby's cries. Babies cry to communicate, not to manipulate. There is no such thing as "spoiling" infants. They're learning to trust you and they need to know that you love them enough to meet their needs.
- ❖ Breastfeed if at all possible. Breast milk gives babies superior nutrition, protects against disease, and contains brain-developing nutrients that can't be manufactured. Also, breastfeeding mothers produce hormones that help them feel calm. However, if you can't breastfeed, don't be sad ~ we adopted our seventh child and he's perfectly well-adjusted and happy....without being breastfed! ☺
- ❖ Beware of parenting advice that tells you to watch a clock or a schedule to the extreme instead of your baby. Bonding with your baby by reasonably responding to her signals connects you to your child; baby "training" focuses on controlling your child. However, you DO need to create a schedule that works for both of you. I highly recommend reading books by experts who teach parents how to help their children sleep better. Learning this will save you years of frustration. Generally, children who sleep well are healthier and happier, and so are their parents! Please know this: experts may offer good advice, but as with all information, your "intuition" is best. Do what works best for your children after educating yourself with the best parenting research and information.
- ❖ Create balance in your life. Although you'll be lop-sided while your baby is an infant (during that time you devote an extraordinary amount of time to your baby and to birth recovery), after about 10 weeks you should be able to get back into a more normal routine and more effectively meet your own personal needs and the needs of your spouse. This is important: You can give love better when your own cup is filled, so don't neglect yourself or your sweetheart; find a balance.

2. CONNECT WITH YOUR CHILDREN

- ❖ Connect by hugging, kissing, holding, smiling, winking – the list is endless. Tell your children – OFTEN – that you love them. Tell them you're so happy to be their mom or dad. Tell them that of all the children in the world, they are

the perfect ones for you and your family. Talk about how strong they are – tell them how kind they are – praise them and love them with all of your heart.

- ❖ Spend TIME with your children. There is no substitute for unhurried time with our loved ones. Give them quality AND quantity time. Be there when they fall down; be there when they need you...and be kind. Be interested in what they're interested in, and show them by helping with their projects and hobbies. Children don't thrive on left-over time, they thrive on prime time. What are you giving your life to that's more important than your children?

3. ALWAYS APPRECIATE

- ❖ Tell your children – and *show* them – how much you appreciate them. Shower them with praise; exclaim over their smallest accomplishment. They will learn to show appreciation to others exactly the way you show appreciation to them. Example is the best teacher.
- ❖ Talk to them about the many things we should appreciate in lives ~ our loving families, good teachers, good health, beautiful weather, etc. As you notice things to appreciate, they will do the same.

4. LET THEM FEEL NEEDED

- ❖ Give them household responsibilities. Even the youngest child can put his clothes away or stand on a chair and empty the silverware into the drawer. Who cares if the spoons get mixed up with the forks? You're raising children who will feel competent and confident if you give them opportunities to help, show them how to do it right, and then praise their efforts. Provide your children with many opportunities to serve and to excel.

5. DISCIPLINE WITH LOVE

- ❖ Disciplining with kindness, firmness and consistency is highly important. You must be loving and kind – speak with a gentle tone of voice and respond to their needs kindly. But setting firm, simple-to-understand rules is of paramount importance. What children learn when they're young – beginning during their toddler years - creates a pattern for either obedience and respect or disobedience and disrespect throughout their lives. When you are strongly connected with your children, they'll more likely accept your limits and trust your guidance throughout their entire lives.
- ❖ TODDLERS: Try to minimize the discipline by baby-proofing your house. Also, use distraction when they get upset - this is your BEST TOOL during the toddler years. When they're upset offer them another toy, or a treat, or take them outside, or tell them a story with excitement in your voice. They can be swayed easily if the distraction is good.

- ❖ **TODDLERS:** A discipline technique that really works with toddlers: Count. For example, if your child is banging on the table and won't stop, you say, (with a firm tone of voice and with the 'look' on) "Fred, stop banging on the table." He doesn't stop...he's just looking at you with a smile on his face...testing you. Say, "Fred, stop banging on the table right NOW. 1.....2....." and if he doesn't stop you say "3." Then you take the banging tool out of his hand, stand him up (he's standing on the floor) and kneel right in front of him so you're eye-to-eye. Then say (firmly), "You *always* obey Mama. What did I tell you to do?" He mumbles, "Stop banging." Say, "Did you stop banging?" Your son, "No..." You: "What happens when you don't obey Mama or Daddy?" Your son, (he answers whatever consequence you and your husband decided on). In my house my son would've said, "Spank." And I'd say, "That's right. I'm sorry YOU chose the wrong." Then I'd turn him around and give him one firm pop on the bottom. **ONLY SPANK IF YOU ARE IN TOTAL CONTROL, AND WHEN CHILDREN DEFIANTLY DISOBEY YOU.** I only had to spank my children (very sparingly) until they were about 5 years old. Then they didn't need it because they had learned to obey, and obedience was their comfort zone. Also, they really disliked seeing me in my "Wicked Witch of the West" mode...their "comfort zone" was living with Mary Poppins.

- ❖ **YOUNG CHILDREN:** Minimize the number of "no's" in their lives. I did a short piece on the air, when I had my radio show, on this issue. I'd like to share with you now:

Parents, does this sound familiar?

"Can I have some ice cream?"

"Can I go to the park – for just a *little* while – with my friends?"

"Can I have a scooter?"

"Can I have a sleep-over?"

It seems like there are so MANY 'no's' in a child's life, doesn't it? We, as parents,

don't WANT to always be disappointing our children with constant no's.

Some children interpret a 'no' as a direct attack on their autonomy. They immediately try to counter attack! They have tantrums, call names or get sullen. Almost immediately we hear, "Why NOT?"

It's exhausting for even the most patient of parents. So what can we do?

I would like to suggest that the solution is to say 'yes' to children as much as possible. Now, stay with me on this! It's something I learned after many years of saying, "No, you can't do this – no, you can't do that."

When your child says, one hour before dinner, "Can I have some ice cream?" You say "Yes! Right after dinner – after you've eaten all of your vegetables, and everything on your plate, you can have some ice cream."

When your child says, “Can I go over to my friend’s house?” You say, “Yes! Right after you’ve finished your homework and your room is clean, you may go to your friend’s house until 15 minutes before dinner.”

Sometimes ‘no’ is so easy – we just say it automatically. I’d like to suggest that parents say ‘yes’ as often as possible – just be sure you’re saying ‘yes’ on your own terms.

Oh, by the way – I’m so against teenage sleep-overs that when my children ask, “Can I have a sleep-over?” I say, “Yes! Just as soon as you’re an adult and married...you can have all the sleep-overs you want!” Funny, how that question never comes up anymore...

When you need to discipline, be firm. Think about this: Most of the time you’re pleasant and cheerful. You praise and encourage with kindness. But when children disobey, you are no longer “Mary Poppins”. Your face gets stern and you look them right in their eyes, speaking firmly...not angrily. Your children see, *and feel*, a change in you. They don’t like it. They want Cheerful Mama back. When they apologize and “fix” the wrong, she returns...you’re back to your cheerful self and you show increased love to your children at that moment...right after the conflict is resolved. Their “comfort zone” will become obedience. They’ll always want to return to their comfort zone and they’ll want to please you IF you are a loving, kind parent.

YOUNG AND OLDER CHILDREN: Give them choices. Children want to feel like they are important parts of the family team. Let them participate in creating the family rules, and consequences for disobeying the rules. Then, when they disobey, you can say, “Gee, I’m sure sorry you chose to disobey your own rule. And now you have to (the consequence)...I’m sorry. I’m sure that next time you’ll make a better choice.” You see, this way parents aren’t imposing punishment on the child. These are decisions the child made, and he must abide by the consequences he devised. I talk lots more about this and other disciplining techniques in my 55 minute parenting DVD “**Creating A Successful Family**”. You can order this award-winning DVD at www.SolutionsForFamilies.com.

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO HAVE A JOYFUL, POSITIVE ATTITUDE



Teach Your Child to Have A Joyful, Positive Attitude

1. The absolute best way to teach your children to be joyful is to be joyful. It's true! Humanitarian Albert Schweitzer said, "There are only three ways to teach a child. The first is by example, the second is by example, and the third is by example."
2. Recognize and talk about the many things you have to be thankful for. Point out (to your children) the blessings of health, sight, hearing, etc. Talk about how grateful we are to the farmers who milk the cows so we can have milk on our cereal, or the mailman who delivers the mail even in the rain and snow. By doing this you teach your children to be aware of the good things in their lives and to have a positive attitude.
3. Play uplifting music in the home.
4. Sing or hum while you work.
5. Keep a (fairly) clean home. (Mess and clutter drag on people's optimism)
6. Speak with a kind tone of voice.
7. Don't be sarcastic or critical.
8. Turn negatives into positives. For example, if your child complains that he's too short, talk to him about all the things short people can do that tall people can't (airplane and helicopter pilots have a height limitation, for example). If he complains that he's too tall, site the advantages of tall people. If he complains about the winter weather, talk about the fun things to do in winter that can't be done in the summer. When your children hear you do this, they'll do the same. They'll look on the bright side of things, seeing the glass half full instead of half empty, and the blossom on the rose instead of the thorn.

TEACH KINDNESS, OBEDIENCE, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, AND COMPASSION



Teach Kindness, Obedience, Respect, Responsibility, and Compassion

The best way we can teach these values is by living them. Our children will emulate us, for good or for bad. It's our stewardship as parents to teach them well.

1. **Kindness:** There are four parts to kindness: kind thoughts, kind words, kind tone of voice and kind actions. These are the first four lessons in the book **Solutions For Families: 24 Lessons To Strengthen Relationships At Home**. For a detailed explanation, you may read about that book at www.SolutionsForFamilies.com.

For this **Parent's Guide** I'll summarize a few points:

Kind Thoughts: If we want to become kinder people, the first step is to recognize that kindness, and unkindness, begin in our own minds. We can choose to think good thoughts, no matter what is happening around us. If we're aware of our thoughts, we can better control our words and actions. We *need* to be aware of what we're thinking, and try to catch ourselves in the act of thinking unkind thoughts. When we notice that our thoughts are unkind, we can say to ourselves, "That wasn't kind." Then replace it with a positive one. If unkind thoughts about other people creep into our minds, we can try to *imagine what it would be like to be him, with his life, his needs and desires*. We should then think about that person in the same kind way we'd want him to think about us.

One way to teach your children how to think kind thoughts is by doing this: instead of merely asking your child about what he did at school, or with his friends, ask him about his *thoughts* – like this: "Honey, today after recess, what did you do?" Child: "Our class listened to the teacher read a story...but the boy behind me was really sweaty and he smelled...it was gross." You: "When you smelled him, what did you think?" Child: "I thought how stinky and gross he was." You: "Do you think the boy behind you can do anything about sweating and smelling?" Child: "I don't know...I guess not...it was really hot outside." You: "We always want to think kind thoughts about other people, honey. If you were sweaty and smelly wouldn't you want the person in front of you to have kind thought about you?" Child: "Yeah." You: "I appreciate how kind you are, (name), and I love you with all of my heart."

Kind Words: Kind words have the power to heal and to lift. An unkind remark to another person can range from seemingly harmless to truly hurtful. The truth is, however, whether we're being simply sarcastic or intently cruel, the effects are similar. Both types of remarks leave the giver and the receiver feeling negative and critical. The reverse is also true. When we speak kindly of others it focuses our attention on their goodness. When we speak kindly of our circumstances it turns our thoughts toward gratitude for what we have. Mother Teresa said, "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

Kind Tone of Voice: Many times it isn't what is said, but rather how it's said that makes people happy or unhappy. Our voices carry a great deal of power and send

messages to those around us. When we speak loudly and harshly, people around us often feel upset. On the other hand, when we speak kindly it encourages feelings of love, calmness and respect.

As parents speak with gentle tones, they'll discover improved feelings in the family, and they'll be helping to create the loving atmosphere we all want in our homes. Additionally, when our voice is controlled, we feel better about ourselves than when we lose control. Because we teach best through our example, those who speak with kind tones of voice will be pleased to hear others speak that way, too. Calm voices contribute to good behavior.

Kind Actions: Kind actions show concern and caring. When we show kindness to our children we're helping them feel loved. When children feel loved, they can more easily show kindness to others. At the end of each day parents should think, "How closely did my actions today match my good intentions to be kind?" Being aware of our actions will help us improve them.

2. **Obedience:** I talked a little about teaching our children obedience when I discussed discipline. From the time children are tiny, they need boundaries. I'm sure you know that limits are good for children. They feel secure and cared for when they are kindly and firmly disciplined for misbehavior. It is highly important that you know this: Children need to learn obedience. They need to know, from when they are toddlers, that disobedience is unacceptable.

There are five keys to teaching obedience:

- Example: Parents must keep the laws of the land, and respect those in authority. They must obey rules which apply to them. Children are watching.
- Kindness, firmness and consistency: Teach the rules with kindness, but be firm when rules are broken (examples above). Be consistent and follow through. Broken promises are a lie to children, and they're confused when sometimes misbehavior is OK and other times they're punished.
- Reasonable expectations: Know what to expect during each stage in your child's life. Don't have unrealistic expectations for your children. For example, don't give your 5 year old the job of taking out the heavy garbage. And don't expect your 17 year old to be home at 10 pm on Saturday night.
- Participation/Ownership: Allow children to participate in creating the family rules and consequences for breaking the rules. Then they are "his/her" rules and it isn't you, the parents, imposing punishment upon them...they choose to obey or disobey their own rules.
- Positive Reinforcement: How do all animals learn best? That's right, through positive reinforcement. Watch any animal trainer and you'll learn this is true. The same goes for children. Whatever behavior we reinforce, they will learn. This

means that if they only get our attention when they're misbehaving, that's what they'll do. Misbehaving will become their "comfort zone" and they'll return to it again and again. On the other hand, the reverse is also true. If good behavior is reinforced (if they get our attention when they're being good) then good behavior is what they'll continue... it will be what they're comfortable doing.

This is huge. Parents, TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO "CATCH" YOUR CHILDREN MAKING GOOD CHOICES!

I know that we have to be creative at times: "Honey, you're breathing so well!" Just kidding. But do you get it? Whenever children are doing something right, mention it – pay attention to them with your praise and words of appreciation. "Janet and Steve, I like the way you're playing so nicely together...it's just like you to share your toys because you're such sharing children!" Or, "Thanks for being so patient while Mom finishes this, Jared. I sure appreciate it!" Or, "Kathy, you're doing such a good job cleaning your room – and without Mom even asking! Wow! I'm going to tell the whole family about what you did!"

6. **Respect:** Teaching respect should begin very early in children's lives. For example, when you're playing pat-a-cake with your toddler and she reaches up and hits you on the face, you stop smiling. Look her right in the eyes and say (seriously but not angrily) "No. We never hit. Hands are for loving." Then you put her little hands around your neck and hug, then go on playing. If she tries it again (and toddlers probably will because they 'test' us) then do the exact same thing - except after you say "hands are for loving" you say, "I'm sorry you chose to hit Mama again. Our game is over. We'll play again when you're kind." And get up.

Do not ever allow your children to treat you disrespectfully. When they speak to you rudely THE FIRST TIME (this is when they're very young) teach them RIGHT THEN how to use a kind tone of voice and speak to you nicely. If you didn't do this when children were very young, it's certainly not too late to start. Again, don't beat yourself up – start teaching today!

Here's what to do:

If your child is older and he speaks disrespectfully, talk to him privately WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT. You know that some times are better than others to talk to our older children...there are times when their hearts are more open and soft than at other times.

When the time is right, say something like: "Honey, I've learned some ways to parent that I didn't know before. I understand that I've made some parenting mistakes, and I've let you do things that I shouldn't have... things that are unacceptable to me now.

I've decided that I need to make some changes in our family so we can have more harmony and peace in our home....more good times. Would you like that? ("Yeah...") So would I. And you know, one of the things I learned about is tone of voice. I really think I

haven't taught you how to respect me very well, because I've let you get into the habit of sometimes speaking to me unkindly...with a rude tone of voice. So, to help you break the habit, from now on whenever you speak rudely I'm going to have you repeat it in a nicer way. That's all...it's easy. I've learned that when we repeat things the right way - immediately after doing it the wrong way - we can break our bad habits... and I'll be a happier Mom when you speak to me kindly. That's all I wanted to say – I just wanted to let you know what's up. I love you, honey!"

Another thought on teaching boys respect for women: From the time they can first open a door, allow them to open doors for Mom. They learn respect and courtesy.

One last important thought: Your children will respect you in the same way you respect them. Show your children respect. Listen to them; help them; apologize when you're wrong; forgive their mistakes. Show them the same kind of respect you show your friends. And teach them to respect their elders. Tell them, in detail, of the sacrifices made for them. Explain why they should respect their elders. Don't allow your children to watch television sitcoms that teach them to disrespect their elders and other authority figures (teachers, policemen, etc). Unfortunately, we have a generation of children who are subtly being taught disrespect for authority figures, and it is evidenced in classrooms and homes across the nation.

4. **Responsibility:** One of the most important things we can learn in this life is to take responsibility for our thoughts, words and actions – and to learn how to be responsible for things.

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one can offend me without my permission." This means that we can CHOOSE our responses to life – we can choose to be happy or sad, forgiving or unforgiving, upset or calm...no matter what is happening around us. When we take responsibility for our thoughts, words and actions, we don't let other people make us angry. We wouldn't say "You make me angry!" because we understand that we can choose to be in control of our emotions. When we understand this, we no longer blame others, the weather or our memory for our troubles. It's a marvelous principle that we need to teach our children (and learn/live ourselves!). For example, if something goes wrong, we wouldn't say things like, "It's not my fault, I forgot!" If something goes wrong, we can explain, but we make no excuses. If we make a mistake, we take responsibility for it; we admit when we're wrong. Parents need to teach this principle to their children.

Additionally, children learn responsibility by doing as much as possible for themselves. As children accomplish even the smallest things parents should praise them and their ability to do things for themselves. Parents, the fewer things we do FOR our children, the more time we'll have to do things WITH them. As children grow, give them more and more responsibility. Also, provide them with lots of opportunity to make choices. (We'll talk more about that when we discuss the Sixth Characteristic of a Happy, Successful Child)

5. Compassion: Again, children learn this value best by watching their parents. For example, when you're stopped at a stop light and you see someone walking across the street with great difficulty, you can mention to your child how challenging being crippled must be. You can talk about how grateful he should be for his strong body. If you were crossing the street, you'd offer to help the cripple. Your child will watch and do the same thing when he matures. To teach compassion, take meals to sick people, and bring your children with you to share in the joy of service. Additionally, wait patiently in lines; be the first one to run to the aid of someone who needs help, and your child will emulate you at school and play. Take every opportunity to serve others, and do it gladly.

We learn compassion by being compassionate. Our children learn unselfishness by being unselfish. And we are always rewarded with inner feelings of goodness and gratitude. Then, as our children grow we're rewarded as we watch them follow in our footsteps.

TEACH CHILDREN TO COMMUNICATE WELL



Teach Children to Communicate Well

Before we can teach our children to communicate well, we have to learn how to do it. Let's begin with a story on communication:

A construction worker approached the reception desk in a doctor's office. The receptionist asked him why he was there. "I have shingles," he said. She took down his name, address, medical insurance number, and told him to have a seat.

Fifteen minutes later a nurse came out and asked him what he had. "Shingles," he replied. She took down his height, weight, and a complete medical history and told him to wait in the examining room.

A half hour later, a nurse came in and asked him what he had. "Shingles," he replied again. She took his blood pressure and temperature, then told him to take off his clothes and wait for the doctor.

An hour later, the doctor came in and asked him what he had. He said, "Shingles."

The doctor asked, "Where?"

He said, "Outside in the truck. Where do you want me to put 'em?"

Let's talk about communicating positively. In the book *Secrets of a Strong Families*, it says: "Good communication isn't something that just happens among strong families. They MAKE it happen."

Family members who communicate well also know how to laugh together. They enjoy a sense of humor. They're able to openly express their feelings, differences, similarities and hopes for the future. When family members listen carefully to each other they communicate an unspoken but powerful message: "I care about you enough to listen to what you have to say."

Learning and strengthening communication skills doesn't mean an END to all problems; it doesn't mean that strong families don't have conflict. They do. Family members get angry with each other, misunderstand one another and sometimes just disagree. But when they communicate they're able to get their differences out in the open where they can talk about them, discuss the problem and come to a satisfactory solution which is agreeable for everyone. That doesn't mean that the solution will give all involved exactly what they want, it just means they've reached a common ground upon which they can agree.

Here are **Five Keys To Great Communication**:

1. **Use Good Self-talk and Positive Self-fulfilling Prophecies.**

Usually when we think about communicating, we think about how we talk to others. How about the way we talk to ourselves?

How we're spoken to often determines how we feel about ourselves. Those feelings, either good or bad, help determine our self-talk. An example of negative self-talk is, "I'm so stupid!" An example of good self-talk is to think, "That's not like me...I usually don't make mistakes like that!"

Children who are spoken to kindly, hearing praise and positive comments usually have good self-talk. Conversely, children who speak to themselves negatively, many times have been spoken to unkindly. The good news is that children can adapt and change fairly quickly. It's been my experience that when parents learn how to speak kindly and communicate positively with their children, those kids quickly respond to the new words of love, and their self talk improves dramatically.

Self-fulfilling prophecies are things people say to us that sometimes affect the way we act. For example, if a child is told, "You'll never be a good athlete!" he may believe it and never improve his athletic skills. On the other hand, positive comments work wonders. Example: "You are a very obedient boy!" This type of comment encourages obedience by helping the child believe he always obeys. It is so important to speak positively, because people usually become what they are told they are.

Listen to some negative and positive comments which can help determine behavior and character: I'll give the wrong way first each time.

"You'll probably fight over this new toy."

"I know you're going to share this new toy because you are such sharing children."

"You never obey me!"

"I'm sure you'll obey right away next time because you usually obey me."

"You kids are always quarreling!"

"It's not like you to quarrel. You usually get along so well."

From their earliest years, children can be cautioned when they begin to use negative self-talk. When they speak negatively, we can teach them how to think and talk positively. Here are a few examples:

When your child says, "I can't do this."

You would teach them to re-state their feelings to say, "I'm having trouble with this. I'll try it again."

Or when they say: "I'm ugly." You can teach them an alternative:

"I want to look better. How about if I...change my hairdo?" Teach them to try and focus on possible solutions to their problems rather than just defining the problem.

Here's another one: "Our family just can't do math."

"Math isn't what we're best at, but look at all the problems I did right!"

2. Try To Understand Before You Try To Be Understood.

Trying to understand BEFORE being understood means that we're more interested in others than in ourselves.

We can understand in 3 ways:

1. Think about being that person for a moment...with their life experiences, their needs and desires.
2. Watch their body language for clues which tell how they're feeling.
3. Listen very carefully - focus on their words - not on what you'll say next.

Sometimes the root of our problem is that we speak in a way that isn't clearly understood, or we say things in a way that puts people on the defense.

3. Use **"I MESSAGES."** This is how it works:

Start with the word "I"	"I...
Add what you're thinking, feeling or needing.	...need some help
	getting
	these dishes done...
Explain why	...because I have to leave for work."

Here's another example: "I'm feeling upset when you're late, because we all agreed to be home for dinner at 6:30 each night."

"I feel sad when you disobey, because you helped make our family rules, and you know better."

You know, it's not always WHAT is said, but HOW it's said that creates happiness or unhappiness. Before we speak it would do us well to remember the Golden Rule and speak in a way that we'd like to be spoken to.

Here's the right way:

And the wrong way:

"I've noticed that sometimes you..."

"You always or you never..." (Absolutes are trouble)

"I feel upset when you..."

"You make me angry when you..."

"Help me understand what you're thinking..." "WHY do you..."

HOW we say things makes such a huge difference. At first, using these ideas - speaking in a way that doesn't always come naturally, will be challenging. My children were little when I started saying things like, "It's just like you to obey the first time, because you always do!" But many people make a change to speak more positively when their children are older - and it IS awkward at first - for everyone! But as you continue speaking that way it WILL become natural, and everyone will enjoy the rewards.

The difficulty of changing the way we do things reminds me of the old story about THE EASTER HAM:

“Every year a family carefully chose a large ham for their holiday dinner, but the mother always cut off the end before she baked it. One year the daughter hosted the meal and her new husband asked why she cut off the end of the ham before she cooked it. “Because that’s the way my mother always did it,” she said.

I don’t know why either,” her mother replied when they asked her. “But that’s the way my mother always did it.” Everybody at this point was curious enough to call the grandmother to ask her why she cut the end of the ham off before cooking it.

“Simple,” she responded. “I never had a baking pan big enough to hold the whole ham!”

If there is a better way, we don’t have to use the same parenting skills our parents did. It’s a special challenge to change our way of speaking after years of habit, and years of hearing things said to us in sometimes less-than-positive ways. The key is to have a willingness to do whatever it takes to communicate in positive ways.

We could say that communication is a two-way street with lots of traffic signs and billboards. To really communicate we have to be able to read the signs as we drive and watch for oncoming traffic. Let’s view those two sentences from three angles. First, “Communication is a two-way street.” Two or more people need to participate for real communication to exist. If we, as parents, are the only ones talking, and our children aren’t listening, we’re not communicating. There’s a saying, “I don’t care how much you know until I know how much you care.” We need to be sure our children know without a doubt that we love them, and that we truly care about their well-being. Then, with confidence in our love and concern for them, usually our children will more readily listen to us.

Second, I believe that as we communicate with our children they give us “lots of signs and billboards” to both direct us and distract us. What our children say doesn’t always reflect their honest, heart-felt feelings. As parents we need to be constantly “reading the signs” of our children’s body language, the expressions on their faces and their tones of voice. Sometimes we need to listen “between the lines” and try to hear what they’re really saying, try to understand how they’re honestly feeling. Parenting expert Peter Drucker once said, “The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn’t being said.”

Third, “We will have to watch for oncoming traffic” could mean that as we talk to our children we should expect occasional negative or hurtful words (oncoming traffic) which they don’t really mean, or which they unintentionally communicate badly. Again, we have choices. Three wrong ways we could react to unkind words are to be offended, to “get even” by retaliating, or to stop talking. As parents we have the responsibility to teach our children productive behavior by our example. When the oncoming traffic is heavy and harmful, we should choose to use a communication skill that will prevent a collision, and steer the conversation onto smooth roads

A key to communicating well with our children is to try to remember what it was like to be a child or young adult. Whether the one you’re talking to is 3, 13 or 23 years old, try to be

that age in your imagination while you're communicating. Try to "walk a mile in their shoes" and think about being them, with their life experiences, their needs and desires. Then you'll be able to use the understanding from that perspective, and add it to the wisdom of your adulthood. The result will be a wonderful place from which you can communicate with empathy and discernment.

7. Listen

Another key to communicating well with our children, and to teaching them how to communicate well, is to learn how to listen.

Listening is more than just hearing words. It's trying to understand people's message and feelings. Teach your children that to listen well they (and we parents) need to do six things:

- Show you're listening. Face the person, maintain eye contact, and have an interested facial expression.
- Be interested in what the person is saying and concentrate on the words.
- Never interrupt.
- Watch the speaker's body language. We all communicate much through our facial expressions, posture, etc.
- Actively listen. We should check if we understand by occasionally paraphrasing or repeating what the speaker says. This lets the person know we're listening and interested.
- Respond kindly. When the time is right, we should use empathy as we share our feelings about what has been said, in a way that will help the person.

Listening well is a virtue that both children and adults should seek to develop. As we listen with open hearts and minds we learn much, and we discover how to best contribute to the happiness of others.

8. Communicate Openly, Frequently and Honestly

One characteristic of a strong family is communication that is kind, open, frequent and honest. Sometimes we expect others to know exactly what we want, or need, even when we say little or nothing at all. Perhaps unkind remarks by others keep us from being open and honest – we're afraid of being hurt or embarrassed. It's very important that family members say only kind, supportive things when someone is sharing their feelings. We should never laugh, or criticize in any way. Instead we should try to understand how the person is feeling, and listen with the intent to help.

When we can say what we really think to supportive family members, good things usually happen:

- We know our family cares about us.
- We believe our opinions and concerns are important.
- Problems are prevented because they are discussed in advance.
- Several people can help find solutions to problems.
- Families are closer and stronger because they help one another.

In our efforts to be open and honest, we should always remember to be kind. In the name of “honesty” sometimes we can easily hurt feelings, and weaken relationships. In the Disney movie “Bambi,” the rabbit Thumper gives wonderful advice: “If you can’t say somethin’ nice, don’t say nothin’ at all.”

HELP CHILDREN MAINTAIN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY



Help Children Maintain Close Relationships with Family

This begins with the first day in a child's life and continues throughout the years. Helping children have close relationships begins with bonding with your baby and connecting with your kids. It is all about being there when your children need you – from their infant years through adulthood. I discuss bonding and connecting in Characteristic Number One. In a nutshell? Love begets love. When children feel loved and appreciated they will better love and appreciate those around them.

Additionally, there are several other things parents can do to help children maintain close family relationships:

- Give children many opportunities to serve (help) family members. For example, we have four daughters. As they were growing up they had long hair and enjoyed occasionally wearing “French braids.” I purposely didn't ever learn how to French braid so that they'd rely on one another to fix their hair. Many a morning I enjoyed hearing my daughter's laughter as they'd visit while braiding one another's hair. In families there are a myriad of ways children can be encouraged to help one another.
- Have lots and lots of traditions. Experiences and memories shared create bonded, close relationships. Some examples: “Pizza-and-Movie Night” once a week; homemade waffles every Sunday; raking a neighbor's yard all together every fall; winter trips to the mountains to sled and have chili; mom tucking children into bed each night with a story and a song. Healthy relationships are built on time spent together. As we join together and participate in a tradition, we share our lives in special ways that are unique to our family. Usually, the more we share our lives, the more we care for one another.
- Create a family flag, and a family song. Need ideas? Our family flag has symbols for three things we love: Music - a treble clef with a melody from a favorite song; Sports – a volleyball; God – a drawing of the scriptures with a favorite verse written next to it. Our family song's lyrics go to the familiar melody “It's A Great Big Wonderful World We Live In.” The song includes each family member's name.
- Support one another in your hobbies and interests. As a family attend each person's events and special moments as often as you possibly can. From little flag football games to graduation, marriages and beyond, be there – as a family. This is huge.
- Take family vacations that you all plan together.
- Allow two (or more) children to make decisions together that will affect the whole family. For example, in your Weekly Family Meeting (see info in your **Solutions For Families** Manual) you can suggest that two (or more) children plan a family event together. You'll help them if needed, but those children will make the decisions and work out the details of a fun family activity.

- Limit electronic media time in your home and plan play time and fun activities to do together (picnics, hikes, trips to the library, sports, service to neighbors, practicing musical instruments, dance/sports/music/art lessons, etc).
- Share bedrooms. Children who sleep side by side share a special connection and bond in special ways that strengthen their relationship. The bedroom becomes a place for quiet conversation or uninhibited giggles. Also, when children share a bedroom they must learn how to resolve disagreements and make compromises. They learn how to respect each other's space and learn to live in harmony.
- Communicate deeply and openly with one another. There are many tips on this in your **Solutions For Families** book (www.SolutionsForFamilies.com), in the parenting video **Creating A Successful Family** and in this **Parent's Guide** under "Communicate Well."
- Don't ever compare your children with one another and don't try to be equal. Instead, explain how you love them for who they are...for their unique wonderfulness (and talk about how they are special – in great detail. They love it!).
- Encourage and help them excel in at least one thing that's different than their sibling's accomplishments. This helps prevent sibling rivalry. Don't praise one child more than another. (Privately praising individual children works better than gushing over one child in front of the others) Be careful with their tender feelings. Try to sensitively see things out of your children's eyes, and be aware of possible ways they'll interpret your words and actions.
- Even when they try your patience and wear you down emotionally, try and be the kind of parent you know you should be. Avoid creating adversarial relationships with your children at all costs. Our children are with us for such a short time...be cheerful, kind and loving. Have a sense of humor! Make your home a fun place to be and welcome their friends. They'll love you for it.

HELP CHILDREN MAKE WISE AND MORAL CHOICES



Help Children Make Wise and Moral Choices

Parents must first know clearly what their values are, and then teach them to their children. Our kids can't possibly make wise, moral choices if they haven't been taught correct principles. And if we don't teach them well they may learn erroneous, improper values from others.

Today many parents avoid declaring right from wrong. "After all," they reason, "everyone has the right to their own ideas, and who is to say that parents should impose their thinking on their children?" Parents may argue that they don't want to require a lot of "do's and don'ts." However, families who do not have a clear core of moral values deprive their children of a solid basis for approaching life. Children want and need boundaries. They need to be clearly taught that in life there are principles of truth which, if lived, will bring happiness. If those principles, or moral values, are not a part of your life, the consequence is unhappiness. People in strong families are not afraid to talk about values. They don't crumble if everyone doesn't agree with their point of view. They know where they stand, and they're willing to be recognized for it. Parents, we must not handicap our children by refusing to take a stand for that which is good and right. They need us to teach them – to show them - that there is a black and white. That honesty, for example, means to tell the truth, every time, no matter what the consequences are. Please teach your children to live moral lives and to make moral choices, so they can be powerful forces for good in the world. We all recognize how desperately this nation needs good, moral leaders.

Children who have been clearly taught how to live moral lives are able to move into society and do what they know is right, not just what others say they should. The more candid the discussion of values in the home, the better prepared family members are to act in harmony with their own standards. If decisions are made not just on the basis of what is easiest, cheapest, fastest, or what will "pay off," but what would be the right thing to do, children develop a higher sense of moral behavior. Such children wouldn't have the same fuzzy thinking a college student did who explained that he had stolen a bike because "it wasn't locked." To this student his behavior was the fault of someone else. When people behave according to a set of clear standards, their sense of self-worth and self-respect is elevated. We define ourselves by our values.

Of course, the most important way to teach good moral values is by the example set in the home. Our actions speak louder than our words. What parents do carries more weight than all the warnings and admonitions we can give.

One valuable way to help our children make wise and moral choices is to have them think through the situation in advance. We call this the "What If Game" at our house. This is how it works: You, the parent, ask your child questions which help them think through a possible situation, in advance, so that when a similar situation arises, your son or daughter will have thought it through and will (hopefully) choose more wisely. Here are some example questions:

- "What if you were at a party, and the kids started doing something which you know is wrong. What would you do?"
- "What if you told us that you'd be home at midnight, but the video you were watching at your friend's house wasn't over? What would you do?"

- “What if the student behind you in school asked for the answer to a test question. What would you do?”
- “What if you were at a store and your friend asked you to put something in your purse (or pocket) for her – to steal it for her. What would you do?”
-

Parents, do you see what a valuable tool this “game” is? It’s a marvelous opportunity to teach your children right from wrong.

Another thing parents can do to help their children make moral choices is to give them many opportunities – throughout their lives – to make decisions. Young people who haven’t made decisions about who they are and what they want to do in life are the most vulnerable to peer pressure. Inexperienced decision-makers are more likely to rely on others to make their decisions, and to define their values for them. On the other hand, those who make many decisions as they’re growing up are usually more capable of making choices that will result in their happiness and growth.

As children grow, they can be given more and more responsibility and greater opportunity to make their own decisions. Of course, the decisions will still be within parental limits. Choices about what clothes to wear, when to do homework, or how to spend allowance can be increasingly turned over to school-age children. It is important for parents to be supportive of their children’s efforts to make decisions. Doing so will increase a child’s confidence in his ability to make good decisions.

The Decision-Making Process:

1. Identify the problem.
2. List all possible solutions.
3. Think about each alternative – applying your knowledge, values, resources, and the ease or difficulty of the solution.
4. Discuss the issue with those who care about your welfare and happiness. For many people this will include God.
5. Choose the best solution.

I can’t pass up the opportunity to share this wonderful article – from USA Today, February 22, 2001:

A survey was conducted with 1,000 teenagers ages 12 to 17, by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. The survey concluded that “hands-off” parents double the risk that their teens will smoke, drink alcohol, and use illegal drugs. In the survey teens said that cigarettes are now more difficult to buy, but marijuana is easy to get. The survey found that 61% of children ages 12 to 16 are at moderate to high risk for substance abuse. More than 60% of high school teens say that drugs are in their school; 30% said that drugs could ruin your life and cause harm; 17% feel peer pressure to use drugs. For the survey a “hands on” household was defined as one in which parents took ten or more actions, ranging from monitoring what their teens watched on TV to knowing where their teens were after school and on weekends. “Hands off” parents consistently failed to set rules and monitor their teens’

behavior. They didn't always know where their teens were. The recommendation was that parents be parents, not pals, to their children and that they should counter negative media influences. The "hands on" parents took at least 10 of the following 12 actions: (This is a good chance to ask yourself, "Am I doing this?")

1. Monitor what your kids watch on TV.
2. Monitor your children's use of the Internet.
3. Put restrictions on CDs they buy.
4. Know where your kids are after school and on weekends.
5. Be told the truth about your teen's whereabouts.
6. Be aware of your teen's academic performance.
7. Impose a curfew.
8. Make it clear that you will be extremely upset if your teen uses drugs.
9. Eat dinner with your teen six or seven nights a week.
 10. Turn off the TV during dinner.
 11. Assign regular chores for your teen.
 12. Have an adult present when your teen comes home from school.

HELP YOUR CHILDREN CREATE HEALTHY HABITS



Help Your Children Create Healthy Habits

Keeping our bodies healthy is a key ingredient to overall success and happiness. We can all be more effective in other areas of our lives (mental, social, etc.) when our bodies are healthy. Families who have a healthy lifestyle try to:

1. Drink plenty of clean water.
2. Eat well-balanced meals, including fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
(Especially give your child a nourishing breakfast; it's needed to excel in school)
3. Avoid sugar overdose.
4. Exercise regularly.
5. Get adequate sleep.
6. Avoid harmful drugs, tobacco and excessive alcohol.

Being healthy affects the quality of our lives. Having a healthy body gives us the energy and ability to perform our daily activities, and our outlook on life is usually better. Additionally, when our physical needs are met, we can better reach out to meet the needs of others.

This is another one where parents' example is incredibly important. What are our habits like? Do we drink too much soda pop? Too much coffee or alcohol? Do we smoke and/or stay up too late? Do we watch too much TV? If so, perhaps we can set personal goals to change and be better examples. We can take our kids on walks, ride bikes with them, go swimming, hiking, read with them, etc. It's more challenging to live a healthy lifestyle, but a good example from Dad and Mom is a priceless gift and will help children excel.

Tip: The L.E.A.N. Program (lifestyle, exercise, attitude, and nutrition) was developed by Dr. William Sears. It is excellent. It was developed to help overweight and underfit children and parents. You can find information on a complete weight control and fitness program for every member of the family in these resources: www.leanprogram.com or www.leankids.com or "Trimming the Family Fat" in *The Family Nutrition Book* by William and Martha Sears (Boston: Little, Brown, 1999).

**HELP YOUR CHILDREN
ENJOY LEARNING**



Help Your Children Enjoy Learning

Ten ways to help your children enjoy learning:

1. From infancy on, provide a stimulating environment for your children. Provide your children with colorful playthings and interesting sounds, music, etc. when they're young, and good books, artwork, and plenty of resources with which to create things as they grow.
2. Talk to your children and teach them constantly. From the time they're young, ask questions and teach them. For example, when children are young say things like:
 - “Look at that beautiful sky! What color is it? What color are the clouds? If you were a bird and could fly in the sky, what kind of a bird would you be?”
 - “How many fingers do I have? What are some of the things I can do with my fingers?”

When children are older:

- “How do you think an airplane flies? What kind of schooling do you think you need to become a pilot? What do astronauts do? Would you like to be an astronaut?”
 - “If you were President of the United States, what changes would you try to make in our nation? What are some of the most difficult things about being President?”
3. Have dinner as a family every night (or as often as possible). At the dinner table, talk about each child's day; what they learned; what you learned that day; politics; religion; family business, etc. Children learn a ton this way. Eating dinner as a family contributes to family happiness and solidarity in many ways.
 4. Read, read, read! The United States Department of Education Commission on Reading explained: “Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for building knowledge and eventual success.” Children whose parents read to them do better in school than those who weren't read to at home. It's never too early or too late to read to your child. Older children, even those who read well on their own, enjoy sharing books with their parents.
 5. Play good music in your home. Music is a cerebral stimulant. Studies done in schools have shown that the attention and performance of students improves when they listen to classical music in the background. It has been suggested that music helps organize the brain, especially those areas associated with creative reasoning. Play good music,

- encourage and support your children's music lessons, and give them opportunities to participate in choral or instrumental groups in school.
6. Control the electrons in your home. From when children are young, closely monitor and limit time watching television, surfing the Internet and playing video games. Overuse of these media tools retards healthy intellectual growth and development. Unfortunately, too many parents allow their children to waste priceless hours in front of machines instead of encouraging them to develop their talents, learn, play with family and friends, and help others.
 7. Take advantage of opportunities to expand your child's understanding and knowledge. For example: go to the library often; visit museums; attend live concerts and plays; go to the observatory, etc.
 8. Travel when you can. Children learn valuable life lessons when they gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures and ways of life. Their mind is expanded and their healthy inquisitiveness is usually aroused when they get to know more about other people and their ways.
 9. Encourage creativity. Throughout their lives as children express their unique creativity, praise them. Encourage them to use and expand their imaginations and resourcefulness.
 10. Be involved in their lives. Find out what they're doing at school and be involved in every part of their learning experience. Actively support their teachers and schools. Set aside a special homework area for them in your home; be readily available to answer their questions and to help them; support them in their projects and interests. Encourage them to have hobbies and to develop their talents.

HELP YOUR CHILDREN BE SELF-CONFIDENT



Help Your Children Be Self-Confident

Seven Ways To Help Your Children Create Great Self-Confidence

1. LOVE – Teach Children That You Love Them

Children learn how valuable they are by the way they're treated. Studies show infant's tremendous need for love and touching. The love in their environment is like their emotional oxygen. You cannot give children too much love in their formative years.

A child who is raised with an abundance of love, affection and encouragement will tend to develop a positive, sweet personality early in life. A child who is raised with criticism and punishment will tend to grow up fearful and distrustful, with the potential for personality problems that appear later in life.

Family members need to show one another that the basis of their relationship is unconditional love, no strings attached, no matter what. We need to look in our children's, our parents', our brothers' and sisters' eyes and say, "I love you." Often. Children need to know that love for them does not depend on whether they win the game, get high grades or even if they behave well. This doesn't mean that we don't discipline our children when they misbehave, but it does mean that we should teach our children that we will love them no matter what happens.

Teach children to love others

We teach this best through our example. Learning how to love others, serving with no thought of reward, is a key ingredient to building our children's self-esteem. This principle is so cyclical: as we love, we are loved, which helps us love others more, and then we're loved more....

2. VISION - Teach children of their value; of their potential in life

Parents should spend time together discussing each child - his or her individual strengths and weaknesses. They should have a plan for their children from early in their marriage, and a master plan for their family.

From when children are very young, parents should share with their sons and daughters a vision of what they can be - like this: "Michael, you are seven years old now. Look how big you've grown! Look at your strong arms - wow! And look at your long legs! And you're such a kind boy! Mama wants you to know how happy it makes her that you choose the right so often. Michael, do you know that someday you'll be really tall like Dad? And you'll drive a car, and go to work each day... Honey, do you know that you can be anything you want to be when you grow up? You can be a school teacher, or sell houses, or be a doctor....anything you want! But do you know what? The most *important* thing is to be kind and loving...just like your Dad. Someday you can be a Dad - just like your Daddy! But no matter how big you get - I'll *always* love you!"

Talks like these boost children's self-esteem, and they teach.

On the other hand, unkind name-calling, sarcasm, criticism and put-downs kill self-esteem.

Teach children to set goals and encourage their progress

You'll help your children feel good about themselves when you teach them how to set attainable goals, encourage them in their progress, and celebrate their efforts.

3. APPRECIATION - Teach children that they're appreciated.

It's one of the most important things parents can do. Praise and appreciation are like sunshine for growing things.....they're needed every day. If we don't express appreciation for the good things our children do, they'll misbehave to get our attention in a negative way. By showing love and appreciation we PREVENT problems in their childhood and, later, unhappiness when they become adults. However, the appreciation we give our children needs to be merited and sincere.

Expressing praise doesn't need to be a big deal. Sometimes just little comments are very effective, especially with older children. Like this: "I like the way you thought that through, honey...I appreciate you sharing your opinion." Parents, how would you have felt if *your parents* would've talked to *you* like that?

Teach children to show appreciation to others.

This is part of teaching our children to be others-centered. We want our children to learn how to look out of windows - seeing the needs of others - instead of looking out of mirrors - seeing only their own needs. "All that you send into the lives of others comes back in to your own." As our children express their appreciation, they'll be appreciated. Again, a cycle of goodness which builds their self-esteem.

4. EXCELLENCE - Help children excel in some area that they enjoy

This doesn't mean that the child needs to be a prodigy....just being a little above-average in something helps a child's feelings of self-worth. Once children do well at one thing, they learn what it feels like to master a skill. They like this feeling and usually want to repeat it in other endeavors. People who are successful in one area tend to be successful in many others.

Give children opportunities/encouragement/support

Often children are passionate about something we not only don't care about but that we find distasteful. Like my sons and reptiles. However, our children are unique, and each one will gravitate toward something he enjoys. We need to give our children opportunities to find their passions. Then we need to encourage and support them. My oldest son, Danny, taught me a valuable lesson about agency this way. His path was commendable, but I struggled with his decision to become a Green Beret - a member of the National Guard's Special Forces. Encouraging my adult son to succeed with his life's passion has been immeasurably harder than years ago when I supported my little girls by driving them to dance lessons. Many parents with older children understand this concept: the struggle and challenge of watching our grown children exercise their agency is often difficult. But our stewardship is to continue loving them

and being there when they need us. And, along the way, we continue learning and expanding our understanding of what's really important in life, don't we?

5. OBEDIENCE - Teach children to obey

The principle of obedience is fundamental to good self-esteem. Our children simply feel better about themselves when they obey. We should make it easy for them. This requires that we set do-able rules, with their participation, and that we teach this law by our example.

Children know when they're misbehaving, and they'll feel better about themselves when they obey. That's one of the reasons why we need to teach them obedience and respect, then require no less. As they obey family rules, they'll see how it contributes to the peace and joy in the home.

6. CONTRIBUTION - Teach children to contribute to the good of the family

Household responsibilities successfully completed, participation in the creation of family rules, and an older child contributing to the family's financial well-being - these all help our sons and daughters feel valuable and good about themselves. Children need to believe that they're important parts of the whole. They can easily see Dad and Mom's contributions and they want to help. Make it easy for them by assigning them age-appropriate responsibilities, then shower them with praise and appreciation when they've done their best.

Teach older children to contribute to the well-being of their school, community and nation.

Teach your children about the world outside of your home. Young people should be taught that contributing to the school, community and nation is a responsibility. If we want good men and women to lead our nation tomorrow, we must teach those future leaders today.

7. SELFLESSNESS - The best, the ultimate key to good feelings of self-worth

Teach children that through their acts of unselfish service, lives are improved. Take them with you each time you serve - they'll see and *feel* how lives are blessed through service.

Teach children that service increases their capacity to love because we love those we serve

Give them many, many opportunities to serve. Those served return the child's love. And when a child is serving others with no thought of reward, he is living in harmony with what he knows in his heart is right. And that always increases a child's feelings of self-worth.

And now, I'd like to share with you some significant discoveries I made about self-esteem during the years that I taught over 3,000 students. These children unknowingly participated in my own personal (very unscientific) experiment with self-esteem. It was through this experiment that I learned about this ultimate key to good feelings of self-worth.

I have a degree in music, and for years I taught part-time in school districts and privately. Over the years I heard thousands of parents explain that they wanted their child to learn how to sing, play the piano, and perform in order to increase that child's self-esteem. I carefully watched these students through the years and I noticed that the boys and girls with the very BEST self-esteem weren't necessarily the ones with the most talent. They weren't the best singers, the best performers. The children with the very highest degree of self-esteem were the ones who could "rejoice when others rejoiced." They were happy when others excelled. They'd applaud sincerely when another child did well.

These same children were the first ones to rush to the aid of a less-fortunate student; someone who needed help. These students had genuine high-self-esteem....an inner strength and confidence. They were content to sit in the back and let other children shine in the spotlight. This intrigued me.

I learned that the children who had the POOREST self-esteem felt somehow threatened by the talents of others. They were the ones who clapped with insincerity while whispering to a friend, "I can do that better than she can." They were the ones who had to be constantly in the spotlight. They craved attention and applause. Those are symptoms of LOW self-esteem.

Teaching a child to excel in something, like music, CAN contribute to his feelings of self-worth, but it is only a piece....as are the other pieces we discussed earlier. And, as I learned, excelling certainly *isn't* the most *important* piece.

As a young mother I admit I was one of the ones who devoured anything I could find on child-raising. I wanted to be the best Mom on the planet. I asked myself, "Why should I spend five years and countless hours in college and studying - then become a mother and spend NO TIME researching ideas and methods which will help me excel in my new profession of motherhood?"

And so I read and read. I remember nursing my first child with a book in my hand. I thought, "Must learn everything!" (I look back on my intensity and smile) Very near the top of my list was a desire that my children have incredibly good feelings of self-worth. I wanted them to love themselves and the whole world.... I was convinced that one of the ways they could have good self-esteem was to be high achievers, talented performers with winning personalities. I was passionate about learning how to create such a child!

The amazing thing is - everything I read suggested that, yes, if your child is a high achiever, talented, and bubbling over with personality, she'll have incredible confidence and exceptionally good self-esteem. As a result, when my first child, Missy, was six years old she was on the soccer team, a gymnastics team, playing the piano, singing in a musical group and performing as often as I could arrange it. And it didn't stop with Missy.....

Then I read an article about self-confidence – self-esteem – that changed my perspective forever relative to this subject. I've tried to share parts of it with as many parents as I can, because I think it offers valuable insights. The article, "*Who Put The Self in Self-Esteem?*" was written by the very talented writer and teacher, Cheri Loveless:

“I think I can say I worked at building self-esteem as diligently as any mother. I compiled baby books, and though they will never grace a demonstration table at Homemaking Meeting, they provided each son or daughter with a wonderful record of the creative way they toddled through their first years of exploration and discovery. I made elaborate (though often unsuccessful) arrangements to spend time alone with each child once a day, and I managed to celebrate a number of birthdays with a memorable theme or activity. Most of all, I tried to encourage everyone’s unique response to the world, nudging them into their own hobbies and lessons and sports. I cheered for one at soccer games, waved to another from the chilly seats surrounding the ice skating rink, applauded the third after every somersault on the tumbling mat.

I even bought a red place setting to honor each child on “red letter days” and instituted family traditions that spotlighted each child periodically so we could openly admire each one in turn.

Though the goal was noble and the methods faultless, I found my first “reading while nursing” experience to be, if not the norm, certainly *my* norm. In the very act of trying to nurture self-esteem “here,” I often inadvertently undid it “there.” Sports alone took more time than a part-time job. And not only did my house fall apart in direct proportion to the time spent in our growing number of self-esteem-related activities, the children who weren’t directly involved (and sometimes the child who was) fell apart as well.

In fact, it was disconcerting how often what was good for one child appeared to damage the self-esteem of another. And no matter how careful I was about giving “equal” esteem-promoting attention to one, I found that my children assessed my gifts of time and effort far differently than I did. Once or twice, I even wondered if having more than one child in and of itself ruined everyone’s self-esteem, mine included!

After running around with my children from sport to sport and music teacher to music teacher, and observing the children of other mothers who were doing the same thing, I felt, in an unexplainable way, with that mothering part of my intuition, that something was wrong. It dawned on me that children who excelled weren’t necessarily the kind ones, or the ones with the best self-esteem!

And I noticed the many teenagers desperately in need of self-confidence. Furthermore, I recognized that there are an inordinate number of adults who still question their own worth.

Even more disturbing, among the most needy individuals of all seemed to be an awful lot of people reared by parents who did the same kinds of esteem-producing things I was doing! Though I didn’t necessarily feel that those things were wrong or harmful, I could see that they were certainly no guarantee of success.

You know, the more I thought about what we claim to want to accomplish regarding self-esteem, the more I suspected a fatal flaw in the “recommended” way to make it happen. When I really considered the goal (to help children develop into confident, caring, fulfilled adults), I began to wonder about the side effects of my methods. Here I am, telling my children that developing their talents will set them apart from the crowd....they’ll excel...they’ll feel great about themselves. Is that what I really wanted for them - to have them feel like they’re better than others?

Sickeningly, I realized that I was setting them up to make comparisons between themselves and others - a symptom of poor self-esteem! Haven't we observed again and again that people with *low* self-esteem are not those without talents and gifts, but are those who, gifted or not, are forever locked in a cycle of comparing their looks, their athletic ability, their academic achievements, their social popularity with that of everyone else in the room?

And how do we feel when we DO come face to face with someone who matches our ability in our field? Most people are threatened because our cultural idea of worth is based NOT on doing something WELL, but on doing it BEST.

Our opinion of ourselves would actually increase by cooperating rather than competing with an equally talented person, but we've learned to measure success by whether OUR idea, OUR rendition of excellence, gains recognition. Do you realize that our culture actually encourages competition with others? No wonder so many Americans struggle with a poor self-image!

Fortunately, I made all these discoveries when my children were still quite young....in time to change my course and focus on the piece of the pie which IS the MOST IMPORTANT component of genuinely good self-esteem.

It appears that true self-esteem can only be gained by not working on it at all, for the more avidly we seek after it, the less likely it is we will ever find it. Like other truly valuable assets, it cannot be purchased (through therapy), earned (through practicing the "right" method), or otherwise "obtained," because it simply doesn't exist as an independent commodity. It occurs, instead, as a by-product, a natural consequence of living with a different kind of esteem: esteem for others. As odd as it may sound in a society obsessed with nourishment of the self, our feelings of self-esteem, self-worth, self-respect, self-*anything* grow only as quickly, deeply, and securely as does our esteem for those around us.

I first learned the power of this truth from one of my daughters. She was about fifteen at the time and had decided, unknown to the rest of the family to do an act of service for someone every day. Although she began by quietly completing extra chores at home, she felt strongly that she should seek opportunities to serve our neighbors. Her approach was to pray that she would notice things she could do for other people and then to take walks around the neighborhood with that in mind. At first she was limited in her search to small, obvious tasks, like carrying groceries for an elderly lady, tending a preschooler while his mother rested, joining a neighbor who was sweeping a walk or pulling weeds. In spite of a natural shyness, she forced herself to approach people and ask if she could help. The conversations that took place while she lent a hand led naturally to a knowledge of further needs, needs that she made a mental note to respond to later.

Meeting the needs of people who varied greatly in age, interests, and circumstances forced my daughter to learn new skills, often in areas she would never have pursued on her own. In addition, some of her service projects began to require quite a bit of responsibility. Her dependability and pleasant manner earned her a good reputation, and her generosity made people feel comfortable enough to call her again. Although she never expected material reward for her

efforts, it wasn't long before new neighbors were insisting that she take pay for some of the work. They also began to recommend her to others.

Over the course of a year or two, she formed lasting friendships with people from such different age groups that she was as likely to be invited to play tag with eight-year-olds or drive a group of teenagers to the mall as to co-host a baby shower with a young mother or do genealogical research with women old enough to be her grandmother.

Her experiences eventually led to a variety of paid work, leadership positions in the community and at church, and even opportunities to travel. In short, through attention to the needs of others, my daughter set in motion an unpredictable and certainly unexpected chain of events, and in the most graceful, yet spontaneous way, developed a concept of herself as a worthwhile, well-respected, and unique person.

Unfortunately, self-worth based on the opinions of others will always rise and fall with the comments or actions of whoever happens to be around us; and self-worth planted in our own knowledge of who we are will sometimes be uprooted by circumstances beyond our control, like the well-disciplined athlete suddenly paralyzed by an automobile accident. Only self-worth based on our knowledge of who we are and what we can become is unfailing.

Instead of the familiar contortions of elaborate checklist goal-setting, competition-driven talent development, and scheduling feats that rival Wall Street CEO's, could it be that instilling confidence in our children is meant to be a gentle, uncluttered process?

Perhaps we should stop arranging experiences in the spotlight for our children and start arranging time to make a difference in someone's life, with the kids along. Maybe the only real advantage we can give our children towards developing self-worth is a personal example of genuine concern for other people.

For self-esteem, if it should even be termed such, is never built upon anything having to do with self. It is wholly, absorbingly others-centered. Meanwhile, society treads an illusory path, seeking a pot of self-esteem at the end of a rainbow when it is waiting for them right down the street - or next door - or even within the walls of their own homes."

HELP YOUR CHILDREN HAVE PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING



Help Your Children Have Physical, Mental, Social, Emotional and Spiritual Well-being

I covered two of these topics already: physical well-being (see “Have Healthy Habits”) and mental well-being (see “Enjoy Learning”).

Let’s talk about helping our children experience **social well-being**. There are 5 things you can do:

1. Teach your children good manners. They should know how to behave; say “please” and “thank you;” eat properly; excuse themselves when they unintentionally do something rude (like burp); they should not interrupt; they should apologize to others and be quickly forgiving.
2. Be sure that they dress and wear their hair appropriately – that they’re not extreme in either direction. Make sure that their bodies and hair are clean and their clothes are well-fitting. This helps them avoid embarrassing ridicule from their peers.
3. Give them many opportunities to socialize with people outside the family circle. Invite other families to dinners and special events; make arrangements for your children to have other well-behaving children play at your home, from their earliest years. Encourage your children to have wholesome friendships.
4. Exemplify and teach good communication skills. Be aware of how your children talk to others and teach them acceptable ways to talk and to listen. Especially teach them how to listen well.
5. Exemplify and teach kindness and compassion. Your children will always be well-loved if they can learn how to quickly see the needs of others and cheerfully help them, without any thought of personal gain.

Now, how about helping your children experience **emotional well-being**?

1. Children who receive love, praise and encouragement from their earliest years have a huge advantage over those children from whom love is withheld and praise is denied. Please know this: it is never too late to shower your children with love, praise and encouragement. Tell them often how much they are loved, and praise their good efforts...no matter how old they are, and regardless of your possibly weak efforts in the past. Start now to encourage your children in their activities and hobbies, and give them your time and your love. These are vital ingredients in the recipe for emotional well-being. Remember, a child’s self-belief (an integral contributor to his emotional well-being) is based largely on the way he is treated by people who are important to him.
2. Create a warm, loving atmosphere in your home. Out in the world our children are tossed about emotionally...often hurt by cruel peers or insensitive adults. For their

emotional well-being they need to know that they can always return to the safe harbor of home. They need to know that you will be there to help heal their emotional wounds with your listening ear and words of understanding. Home needs to be a place where children feel emotionally safe, and parents are the key to that. Build up children's damaged egos. Your positive beliefs about your children will help them think well of themselves. Your words of encouragement will give them the courage to face another day. And, a special opportunity parents have: we can teach our children that no matter how unkindly they are treated, they can choose to treat others with kindness. It is a choice...and it is the road less taken.

3. Help your children excel in at least one area. They don't have to be great – just a little above average is OK. Our children will have better emotional well-being when they think highly of themselves, and success breeds success. For example, a child who shows a talent for drawing can be encouraged in his artwork. You can give him many opportunities to develop that talent, and you can praise him every step of the way. If your child is especially good at sports, or music or making friends...point it out, encourage them to develop the talent and talk about how special they are.
4. Be pleasant and cheerful as often as you can. Avoid extremes in your behavior and learn how to control your anger and your moods. Children who enjoy emotional well-being don't have high-highs and low-lows. They are fairly even-tempered and cheerful most of the time.

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILDREN HAVE SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING



How to help your children have spiritual well-being:

I approach the subject of spirituality very carefully because I understand the personal and sensitive nature of this issue. However, I cannot ignore my belief that spiritual well-being is a piece of the whole. In my opinion, people who believe in and rely upon God can experience additional strength and serenity in their lives. There are many ways to experience and express spirituality. I would like to share one of my favorite stories:

A mother, wishing to encourage her son's progress at the piano, bought tickets to a Paderewski performance. When the evening arrived, they found their seats near the front of the concert hall and eyed the majestic Steinway piano waiting on the stage. Soon the mother found a friend to talk to, and the boy slipped away. At eight o'clock, the lights in the auditorium began to dim, the spotlights came on, and only then they notice the boy –up on the piano bench, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." His mother gasped, but before she could retrieve her son, the master appeared on the stage and quickly moved to the keyboard.

He whispered to the boy, "Don't quit – keep playing." Leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in the bass part. Soon his right arm reached around the other side and improvised a delightful obligato. Together, the old master and the young novice held the crowd mesmerized.

In our lives, unpolished though we may be, it is God who surrounds us and whispers in our ear time and time again, "Don't quit – keep playing." And as we do, He augments and supplements until a work of amazing beauty is created. (Author unknown)

PART TWO

LIFE-CHANGING
STRATEGIES THAT PRODUCE
IMMEDIATE RESULTS



PART TWO
Life-Changing Strategies For Immediate Results

3 SIMPLE SENTENCES THAT PUT AN IMMEDIATE END TO NAME-CALLING, HITTING, AND QUARRELING



3 SIMPLE SENTENCES THAT PUT AN IMMEDIATE END TO NAME-CALLING, HITTING, AND QUARRELING.

These sentences are to be used when the children who are quarreling are very angry and the quarrel is heated and intense. Use these sentences when name-calling and hitting is mean and hurtful...way past the playful teasing stage.

Go quickly to your child and look at him/her directly in the eyes and speak very firmly but not angrily:

1. “_____ (His/her name(s), this is **absolutely unacceptable behavior in our home!**”
To watch a similar scene in action, see your “Creating A Successful Family” video, Step Six: Discipline Effectively.

2. “**You chose to break our rule, and now you’ll pay the consequence of _____.**”
(Clearly explain the consequence for breaking the rule. Your family already decided on rules, and the consequences for breaking rules, in your Family Meeting. See pages 24-29 in the Solutions For Families Manual)

3. “**I’m sorry you made a bad choice; I’m sure next time you’ll obey the rules that you created; now go to your room...you can come out in _____ minutes.**”

Parents, do you see how this teaches children the seriousness of their actions? You should not allow name-calling, hitting and quarreling. Do you see how this teaches children that when they misbehave they’re breaking family rules that they helped create? By talking like this and disciplining this way, you’re teaching children that they own the rules...and they own the consequences. Be sure to make the consequences serious enough that they really feel disciplined, not just inconvenienced. We’re talking no TV or telephone or Internet privileges for a week. And follow through! Children need to know that you are serious about the family rules.

Your children WILL CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR QUICKLY IF:

- They participated in creating the rule and it’s consequence (so they have ownership and prior agreement)
- The consequence is a serious one to them
- You are firm but stay in total control and consistently follow through

These sentences are to be used when children are just lightly joking in their name calling or playfully hitting one another: (You know the difference between really intense and just playful; it’s a big difference)

1. “_____ (His/her name(s), when we talked about name-calling, hitting and quarreling in our Family Meeting, what did we decide?

Your child: “We shouldn’t do it...” or, “We made rules about not doing it...”

5 THINGS THAT KEEP YOU CLOSE TO YOUR TEENAGER



5 THINGS THAT KEEP YOU CLOSE TO YOUR TEENAGER

1. **Try and remember what it was like to BE a teenager**...with their life experiences, needs and desires. Many times when parents take themselves back (in their minds) to their teenage years, it helps them re-gain that youthful perspective, and it helps them be more empathetic. What's that well-known advice? "If you want to really understand a person, walk a mile in his shoes."
2. **Be interested in what they're interested in.** Kids know when we're faking it. Take the time to learn about your teenager's hobbies, activities and interests. Go to his games, his concerts and his special school events. Make sure that you give him 'prime time' instead of 'leftover time.' Teenagers will be impressed that you gave them your prime time...and they'll love you for it.
3. **Share your heart with them.** How do we have a close relationship with anyone? We share our heart-felt feelings with them. We ask their opinion about things in our lives. So do the same with your teenagers if you want to be close: share your concerns, your joys and sorrows. When you do this, your teenagers will likely reciprocate and tell you the feelings of their hearts. Priceless moments communicating deeply with your teenager will bond you to them. And LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN. With your whole heart listen and try to understand what they're not saying sometimes. Read between the lines and don't expect them to explain everything perfectly...they're still maturing and often they don't know how to express their inner feelings. Help them out by asking appropriate, gently questions...but mostly just listen and be there.
4. Frequently the analogy is made about deposits and withdrawals when talking about raising children. It's a good analogy and applies well in our discussion about teenagers. The advice is this: **Make lots and lots of deposits into your children's emotional bank account.** In other words, give them love, praise, appreciation, your time, your help, respect, empathy, etc. Show them with countless acts of love and service that you care about them deeply and you want them to be happy and live a good life. Then, when you require a deposit – like when you discipline them or you expect them to obey even when they don't want to – they will be FAR more likely to accept that deposit and comply. Keep the bank account with your teenagers in the black...with more deposits than withdrawals. This will contribute significantly to a close, healthy relationship.
5. **Don't sweat the small stuff** – adjust to their age-related needs and don't expect way too much from them. **And have a sense of humor!** Be a fun parent – one that your teenager and their friends like to be around. Laugh and joke with them – they love it! And invite their friends over to your fun-filled (and refrigerator filled) home. In short, have a good time with your kids during their teenage years!

HOW TO ELIMINATE WHINING AND NEGATIVE TALK IN YOUR HOME



HOW TO ELIMINATE WHINING AND NEGATIVE TALK IN YOUR HOME

Frequently, at my parenting presentations I teach audiences how to master this strategy. If I'm lucky enough to have a child in the audience, I bring him/her onstage and demonstrate how parents can immediately eliminate whining and negative talk in their homes. It works like magic because of the way children learn. How do they learn? By imitation. That's right, children are master imitators. This is how it works:

Child: (Yelling rudely) "Mama! Tie my shoe!!!"

You: (Go right to them and look directly into their eyes. Speak kindly but firmly) "Honey, tone of voice. Say, (you speak with the exact tone you want him to use) "Mama, please tie my shoe. Now say it just like that...Mama, please tie my shoe."

Child: (Mimicking you exactly) "Mama, please tie my shoe." IT'S AMAZING HOW THEY COPY YOU EXACTLY!

You "That's right, honey...that's the way we talk in our family!" (Hug him)

Now, this works perfectly with young children. You'll see this scene acted out in my parenting DVD **Creating A Successful Family** in Step 1: "Create a Loving Atmosphere." (See www.SolutionsForFamilies.com)

So, what about children who are older, whose habits of speaking rudely are well-ingrained? This is what you do:

Talk to them either during the Family Meeting or at another time – when the timing is right. (I teach how to have successful Family Meetings and I provide you with content for the meetings in my book *Solutions for Families*.)

You know what I mean about "when the timing is right"...there are good times to talk to an older child and there are bad times. Be sure you choose a time when his/her heart is soft...like at night when they're in bed. They are usually more mellow then. Say this:

You: "Honey, you know...this parenting thing is sometimes hard. I mean, this is the first time I've done it, and even though I'm trying my best I still make mistakes."

Child: "Yeah..."

You: "There's something that I learned recently that I think will help me be a better Dad/Mom. Is it OK if I share it with you?"

Child: "Yeah."

You: "Well, I should really have started to do this when you were little, but I didn't and now I'm sorry. I should have taught you from when you were young that it really bothers me when I allow you to speak unkindly...rudely. It's always bothered me, but I never knew what to do about it until now...I just learned."

Child: "What?"

You: "Well, this is something that we're going to start tomorrow, because it just isn't acceptable any more when you talk to me with a rude tone of voice. So, starting tomorrow - if you talk unkindly to me or to anyone in the family, I'm going to try and help you change your habit...and that's all it is...it's a habit that I allowed you to

develop. So this is what we'll do: When you talk unkindly I'm going to ask you to say it again using a better tone of voice. Like this: Let's pretend you told your sister, "Get out of here!" I'll say, "Jared, tone of voice. "Please get out of here Jessica" and then I'll expect you to say it the right way. That way you'll be able to change the habit, and we'll all be happier."

Child: "This is stupid Mom, that's treating me like a kid..."

You: "Can you think of a better way to stop talking unkindly in our home?"

Child: "I'll just stop."

You: "If you can, that's great – it would be wonderful. And if you can think of a better way than mine, I'm all ears. But if you can't then we'll start tomorrow with this. And, Jared...if you don't cooperate and change your tone in our home, then you'll have to experience the consequence of disobedience. (You don't talk about the details of future discipline now, but the consequence for disobedience is usually loss of privileges - something the teenager really likes to do). I love you, honey, and I'm sure we'll be able to work on this together until our habits are broken...I have some work to do on this, too!"

Now, what if the next day you repeat what your child rudely said and he didn't repeat it back to you with your kind tone? You say, "No, like this: "Mama, please tie my shoe." You say it kindly, and you stay there UNTIL YOUR CHILD DOES IT RIGHT. My children know that I will stand beside them 'till the sun goes down and the sun comes up again, but I will continue insisting that they get it right until they get it right. If you do this strategy correctly, they'll learn...I promise.

The key is kindness, firmness and consistency. You MUST follow through and NOT ALLOW disrespectful and unkind tones of voice in your home. Once the habit is changed, the entire family will live more peaceably. Of course, this means YOU need to set the example by speaking kindly.

**SIMPLE, STRAIGHTFORWARD
WORDS TO IMPROVE YOUR
MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP
...TONIGHT!**



SIMPLE, STRAIGHTFORWARD WORDS TO IMPROVE YOUR MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP...TONIGHT!

All of us want to have strong, vibrant marriages. We want our spouses to love us, respect and cherish us. The best way to do that is to focus on your spouse – not on yourself. Ask, “What can I do to make her/him happy? How can I best meet her/his needs?” When you do that, you’ll be delighted to discover that the goodness you give away always comes back to you – heaped up and overflowing. Love begets love. Now, the question: What do you say to make a great marriage? Let me set it up by explaining this first: The words you say must be said with sincerity. If you can’t do that, it won’t work. So you may need to practice saying it until you believe it and can speak with honesty and sincerity, from your heart.

Please understand that if you don’t truly believe the words I’m about to give you, then you might consider checking your heart and evaluate whether or not the problem in your marriage lies within you. Perhaps you’re more self-centered than you should be. Because if you can honestly put your spouse’s needs and happiness before your own, these words won’t be difficult to say. I’ve never known this to fail when done with sincerity and at the right time. That’s a good point - be sure the setting and timing are just right and then say this or something similar: (I’m going to use “wife” and men can think “husband” - because it gets fairly confusing to write both)

“Honey, I want you to know that I love you with all of my heart. I’m so grateful you chose me to be your wife. I want you to know that I’m 110% committed to our relationship and I want to be the best companion and partner in the world. So honey – could you share with me some ways you think I could be a better wife?”

THEN LET HIM SHARE HIS/HER HONEST FEELINGS AND THOUGHTS WITHOUT GETTING UPSET....DON’T BE DEFENSIVE; BE TEACHABLE. This is critical. Your husband/wife must feel like he/she can verbalize his/her honest feelings without you getting hurt or offended. If you can’t do this, it won’t work. But if you can be strong and realize that this is an exercise to truly improve your marriage, you’ll be able to listen with an open heart and mind...allowing him/her to share his heart-felt feelings with you. This gets tricky, but determining beforehand to be in total control of your emotions will help.

Listen carefully, asking clarifying questions when needed. Be sure you really understand how he/she thinks you can improve. Then discuss how you can turn his/her suggestions into “baby steps” that you can work on day by day.

Thank him/her for sharing his/her heart and giving you ideas for improvement. Be sincere and loving when you do this. Then try your best to make the changes he/she suggested. This will endear you to him/her in ways you never before imagined.

And some great news? When you do this right, HE/SHE WILL PROBABLY ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTION. Perhaps not that night, but eventually....

All couples who do this exercise with love, unselfishness, and a sincere desire to strengthen their marriage relationship report significantly successful results.

3 EASY STEPS TO DIFFUSE ANY ANGRY PERSON



3 EASY STEPS TO DIFFUSE ANY ANGRY PERSON

1. Acknowledge their anger. (You don't have to agree...just acknowledge)

Say something like,

- “Boy, you are really angry.”
- “That just made you steamin’ mad, didn’t it?”
- “I can see how that guy really made you angry.”
- “That makes you so angry – man, I’d be angry too if that happened to me!”

2. Listen. Don't interrupt or offer solutions...just listen.

To let the angry person diffuse, let them know that you're ‘with them’ by listening carefully and by looking in their eyes with an interested expression. Say “uh-huh” or “yeah” and nod as they're speaking. Allow the angry person to completely ‘purge’ – let him run out of steam before going on to step 3.

3. Be solution-focused.

- Don't allow the conversation to go backwards, pointing fingers and blaming...steer the angry person forward, toward a solution.
- Say something like, “How can I help you find a solution?” Or, “What can I do to help?”
- Make it easy for the angry person to discuss a solution, then help him put his idea into do-able “baby steps” so he can move forward.

• EXACTLY THE RIGHT THING TO SAY IMMEDIATELY AFTER YOUR CHILD DISOBEYS.

Immediately after your child disobeys, you must remind him kindly, firmly and consistently that disobedience is unacceptable in your home; that there are always negative consequences for consequences (which he agreed upon at your Family Meeting when you all created rules and consequences); and that you have confidence in his ability to make a better choice the next time.

This is what you say:

“I’m sorry you made a bad choice and lied to me. You know that lying is absolutely unacceptable. The consequence for lying is to stay in your room from after school until dinner...for two days. I’m sure that next time you’ll tell me the truth, because you’re usually such an honest boy.”

Parents, make sure that your consequences are serious enough to the child. The consequence above is just an example. You’ll know best what privileges should be taken away so that your child learns a lesson. Then – and this is very important – PRAISE THEIR

GOOD BEHAVIOR! Catch your children in the act of making good choices and acknowledge them! Let them know that their good behavior is “just like them” because they are such obedient (kind, sharing, truthful) children. You want obedience to become their comfort zone. Our children will become what they’re told they are. And they will get our attention by misbehaving if we don’t give them our attention when they behave well.

THREE WAYS TO MAKE DISCIPLINE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE



THREE WAYS TO MAKE DISCIPLINE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Ideally, discipline is what we do to encourage good behavior.

The root of the word discipline is “disciple” – a follower, supporter, willing student. That’s what we want our children to do: follow us because they love us and want to obey because it’s the right thing to do. We don’t want them to fear us.

Correct discipline is not punishment...it should be a teaching experience. Think about it: what is your ultimate goal when you discipline? For your child to learn better behavior. So, if you discipline - and your child learns nothing – you’ve failed.

Real learning comes from the inside out. Parents can’t “make” their children learn good behavior. Children learn by discovering that behaving well is a better way to live. And how do we help them learn this? One wonderfully effective way is by asking questions which really help children think. This requires that parents don’t lose their tempers....it is mandatory that they stay in control as they talk. Here are three ways to make discipline a positive experience:

1. **PREVENT MISBEHAVIOR** by catching your child being good. This is the very best way to teach children to behave well, because all of us (all animals) learn best with positive reinforcement. You frequently say things like:
 - “I know that when you play together you’ll share your toys, because you’re such sharing children!”
 - “I like the way you’re playing so nicely...you don’t quarrel...that must make you so happy. It sure makes me happy!”
 - “It’s just like you to put away your things so your room stays clean. Boy, that helps our family, honey....thanks!”
 - “I’m sure that as soon as you’ve finished your after-school snack you’ll start practicing your piano, because you have such good self-discipline and you know that this is piano time.”
 - “I like the way you’re always so kind....everyone likes to be around children who are kind.”
 - “Thanks for doing such a good job with that – you always do things so well!”

In addition to verbally reinforcing good behavior, take every opportunity to give your children a hug, a pat, a wink, and lots of smiles and “I love you” messages. These deposits into their emotional bank accounts will reap rich dividends of good behavior.

2. **ASK QUESTIONS THAT HELP THEM CHANGE FROM THE INSIDE OUT**

Instead of yelling at a child who just took a toy away from a friend, kneel down in front of the child, looking him right in the eyes, and say, “John, you just make Alex sad. We don’t want to make our friends sad, do we? (He’ll say “No...”) You: “That’s right, honey...we’re always kind in our family. Now, can you think of a better way to get the toy that wouldn’t have made Alex sad?” Chances are very, very good that your child will then ask his friend nicely for the car. If your son is uncooperative, then say, “I’m sorry you chose the wrong, but we are always kind. I’m going to stand here until you ask Alex nicely for the car.” And Mom, you stand there – even if you’re late for an appointment...you take the time to teach your son – in kindness, but firmly. Just remember: the less confrontational you are, the more cooperative and compliant your child will be.

More highly effective questions that work:

- ❖ “I see you’re having a problem here. Let’s stop and talk about what we can do to fix it. Jared, what do you think should be done so that you two can get along better?” If Jared blames the other guy, you say, “OK, that’s one idea...but what is something YOU can do. I’ll ask Peter in just a minute what he can do.”
- ❖ “Nancy, let’s think about what’s going on here. I see that you’re having troubles. Now, without blaming anyone, and without explaining what happened....tell me what you think you can do to help fix the problem.”

3. ASSURE CHILDREN THAT MISBEHAVING IS “OUT OF CHARACTER” FOR THEM, AND YOU’RE CONFIDENT THEY’LL MAKE BETTER CHOICES NEXT TIME

We want our children to have obedience as their comfort zone, don’t we? Because whatever is a child’s comfort zone....what he believes in his heart he is....that’s where he’ll return. For example, if he gets lots of attention when he misbehaves (and all children crave attention) then that becomes his comfort zone – how he defines himself – as a misbehaving child....and he’ll continue misbehaving.

On the other hand, we can help our children embrace good behavior as their comfort zone. We want them to know that we believe in their ability to make good choices; that misbehaving is just not the way they are – that when they misbehave they’re acting ‘out of character,’ and they’ll quickly return to the good behavior that is ‘really them.’ Remember, our children become what they’re told they are.

I’ve addressed this, but I want to be sure that you’re clear on this critical piece: In addition to preventing misbehavior, positively reinforcing, staying calm, and asking good questions, there is one more piece. It is this: after you have dealt with your child’s misbehavior, the last thing that you say is something positive, like this:

- ❖ “I’m sure that next time you’ll make a better choice, because you’re usually so obedient (honest, kind, etc).
- ❖ “Honey, that just wasn’t like you to act like that. I’m sure next time you’ll choose the right.”
- ❖ “I know that next time you won’t do that...because you’re a _____ (truthful, unselfish, etc) boy/girl.”

Expressing your confidence in children’s ability to behave well is a huge deposit into their emotional bank account, and it takes them giant leaps toward the comfort zone of good behavior.

**HOW TO IMMEDIATELY
ELIMINATE TWO MONSTERS
THAT DAMAGE RELATIONSHIPS –
CRITICISM AND SARCASM**



HOW TO IMMEDIATELY ELIMINATE TWO MONSTERS THAT DAMAGE RELATIONSHIPS – CRITICISM AND SARCASM.

Gather your family together and have a talk. Tell everyone ahead of time that you're going to have an important Family Meeting. When everyone is together:

- First tell your family how much you love and appreciate them.
- Second, talk about each strength your family has. For example, if your family is especially compassionate and does frequent service for others...praise those efforts. If you family supports one another well in their different sports and interests, then compliment that.
- Third, say something like this:

“Although our family does some things well, the reason for this Family Meeting is because I’m concerned about the criticism and sarcasm I hear in our family. Whether you believe it or not, criticism and sarcasm damage relationships. They don’t ever strengthen love – they weaken it. For example, If you did something poorly and your brother laughs and says, ‘You’re so stupid!’ how does it make you feel? That’s right, you feel sad...and we don’t want to make each other sad.”

“Our family is the most important thing we have in this world, and we need to treat each other kindly. If feel so strongly about this that – starting tomorrow morning – all criticism, sarcasm and put-downs will no longer be acceptable in our home.”

“I know I’m not perfect in this area – I admit that I’ve been guilty of criticism and sarcastic remarks...so I’m going to have to work as hard as any of you to change my bad habits. But I want you all to know that I will do my very, very best to never be critical or sarcastic. I’d like each person’s commitment that you’ll do your best to be kind to one another and stop all criticism and sarcasm in our home.”

“_____ (name of youngest child) Can you do your very best to speak kindly to your family?”

“_____ (name of the next oldest) Can you do your very best to speak kindly to your family?” (Ask each child, from youngest to oldest for their commitment to try and improve.)

“That’s wonderful! Thank you everyone...I love you all so much, and I appreciate the commitments you just made. I know that as a family, working together, we can eliminate negative talk and put-downs. This will make our family better, and we’ll all enjoy a more loving atmosphere in our home.”

- Fourth, say something like this:

“Now, I don’t expect instant perfection with this. Talking critically and sarcastically gets to be a habit, and habits are hard to break. So the first couple of times that you talk unkindly I’ll remind you. The third time you’re critical or sarcastic there needs to be a consequence...so you’ll learn. Let’s talk about what we think the consequence should be for criticism and sarcasm.” Discuss as a family and decide. Examples: The critical one has to apologize and then:

- ❖ Do an extra chore
 - ❖ Do the chore of the person he criticized
 - ❖ Stay home from an activity
 - ❖ Stay off the computer or not watch TV for 2 days
 - ❖ Lose a privilege the child currently enjoys
- Fifth, (and this is highly important) Be a good example, be consistent and follow through with this. Each time a family member is critical or sarcastic he needs to experience the consequence you decided on as a family.
 - Sixth, when discipline is necessary, say something like: “I’m sorry that you chose to _____ (criticize your sister, or whatever they did). Do you remember the consequence we decided on, as a family? I’m sorry – no TV for you for 2 days.” Then kindly but firmly follow through.

Note to readers: Although this process may look like it takes a long time, once the initial Family Meeting is over, and everyone in the family understands the new rules and the consequences for disobedience, it doesn’t take long to change behavior – especially when parents make improvements too. You simply say three things:

1. “It’s unacceptable to talk like that in our family.
2. _____ is the consequence.
3. I’m sure that next time you’ll choose the right.”

**TWO THINGS YOU NEED TO TELL
YOUR CHILDREN EVERY DAY
TO TEACH THEM KINDNESS AND
GOOD MANNERS**



**TWO THINGS YOU NEED TO TELL YOUR CHILDREN EVERY DAY
TO TEACH THEM KINDNESS AND GOOD MANNERS**

My children are now ages 34, 32, 30, 28, 26, 24 and 14. Although they're mostly grown and living happily on their own, I remember the many, many mornings I sent them off to school with these words - which I believe helped them be kind, compassionate and polite children (their teachers often remarked to me how kind, compassionate and polite they were). This is what I told them each morning:

1. "I love you! Remember to BE KIND TO ALL YOU MEET."
2. "And ALWAYS CHOOSE THE RIGHT."

My children have shared with me that during their days at school - when an opportunity came to make a choice - my words rang in their ears: "Be kind to all you meet and always choose the right." They said it made a difference. I think part of the success was the fact that I said it day after day, year after year...it was the last thing they heard from their Mama each morning.

THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO INSURE A HEALTHIER MARRIAGE THAN YOU'VE EVER HAD



THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO INSURE A HEALTHIER MARRIAGE THAN YOU'VE EVER HAD

Here are three things you can do to insure a healthy marriage: (You can receive my free e-article

“How to Make An Amazing Marriage” by visiting www.SolutionsforFamilies.com)

1. Think of your spouse BEFORE you think of yourself.

In most weak marriages there is selfishness with one or both partners. They think, “Why can’t my spouse do this for me?” They mostly think about their own needs and desires; they’re selfishly focused on themselves too much. That’s “third-rate” love.

In most average marriages things have to be fair. You’d hear, “I did this for him, so now he should do this for me.” When they quarrel partners think, “I’m going to get back at him/her for doing that to me...then we’ll be even!” That’s “second-rate” love.

In most strong marriages the partners think of their mate’s needs before thinking of their own. They care deeply about their spouse’s happiness and well-being, and unselfishness abounds. Instead of trying to improve their mate, these companions focus on improving themselves...they spend their time and effort trying to be the best person and the best wife or husband they can possibly be. That’s “first-rate” love. (This should be our goal)

2. Don’t take offense/Don’t sweat the small stuff.

Life is simply too short not to “get this.” Here it is: We CHOOSE our own responses. That means that no matter what is happening around us – no matter what anyone says or does – we can choose to be cheerful, optimistic, annoyed, angry, frustrated or calm. It’s a choice. Do you believe it? It’s true and it’s a powerful truth that highly-effective people understand.

They understand that blaming and pointing fingers is unproductive and pulls you backwards. They understand that no one MAKES them angry because they are in control of their own emotions. Highly-effective people are usually cheerful and optimistic because they choose to be. They still have problems and challenges, but they know how to direct and control their thoughts, words and actions in positive directions.

Abraham Lincoln understood this. He said, “Folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.” Dale Carnegie understood it. He remarked, “Happiness doesn’t depend on outer conditions. It depends on inner conditions. It isn’t what we have or who we are that makes us happy or unhappy. It’s what we think about it. For example, two people can be in the same place at the same time, doing the same thing, and one is happy and the other is miserable. Why? Because of a different mental attitude.”

So in your marriage, choose to be cheerful and loving. And for heaven's sake, don't sweat the small stuff. Don't get angry at little, petty things that simply aren't that important. *You* be the one to see the bright side of things, and set an example in your home of cheerfulness and optimism.

3. **Keep the romance and the fun in your marriage.**

This takes effort; it doesn't happen unless you work at it. There are countless ways to keep the romance and the fun in a relationship. Here are just a few ideas:

- Go on a date once a week, no matter what. (It doesn't have to cost much)
- Leave little love notes on the mirror, in desk drawers, in lunch sacks, etc.
- Keep yourself fit and looking attractive for one another
- Plan surprises for special days and holidays, and sometimes for no reason at all
- Communicate deeply and honestly – often
- Compliment one another frequently
- Give backrubs without being asked
- Hug, kiss, touch, tickle, smile, wink...keep flirting!

TWO HIGHLY-EFFECTIVE WAYS TO CREATE FAMILY ORGANIZATION AND UNITY



TWO HIGHLY-EFFECTIVE WAYS TO CREATE FAMILY ORGANIZATION AND UNITY

1. Create a Family Goals Statement.

This takes just a few minutes and it is remarkably powerful. Your Family Goals Statement is like a family constitution. It's a statement of your beliefs and your goals as a family. It's the definition of the course you want your family to take. Once you have that sense of direction you can set your long- and short-term goals and you have the vision and values that direct your lives.

Like all families, your family needs to have a clear understanding of where you're going. When you follow a plan, each day will be in harmony with the vision you have of your lives. The steps you take will be in the right direction – toward your personal and family goals.

In my book **Solutions For Families** I teach step-by-step exactly how to create your Family Goals Statement, and I provide a sample.

With a Family Goals Statement all family members feel more like a team working together toward family happiness. Be sure you do this!

- 2. Write your family rules and consequences** all together – with everyone participating. This is such a valuable exercise for family organization and unity. It doesn't take long, and it makes all the difference. Be sure that everyone has input and that everyone agrees and commits to obeying the family rules. Also make sure that each family member has clarity about the consequences for disobeying rules.

HOW TO UNPLUG THE POWER OF TOXIC PERSONALITIES AND LIVE PEACEFULLY



HOW TO UNPLUG THE POWER OF TOXIC PERSONALITIES AND LIVE PEACEFULLY

I sometimes call toxic personalities “human porcupines.” One of the solutions I teach is how to unplug the power of the difficult-to-love people in your family. These folks have several characteristics. Check and see if you have a toxic personality in your life:

Toxic personalities:

1. Are critical, judgmental
2. Have high, unrealistic expectations; perfectionists
3. Manipulate others by guilt, ridicule
4. Are easily offended
5. Send the message to others that, “I am unhappy. If you would do this ‘certain thing’ or behave in this ‘certain way’ then I won’t be unhappy.”

The truth is, though, *you can’t totally please a toxic person*. They may seem pleased for a little while, but soon they’ll find another way to emotionally wound you.

You must understand that all the solutions are of no value until you are willing to stand up for yourself. You must not accept abuse...you must assert your right to be treated with respect. Once you’re firm on that, you learn the tools which will unlock the key to your peace of mind. Once you know these tools you can expect immediate results in your happiness – not in the happiness of the toxic one...remember...they can’t ever be totally happy. You just have to understand that and live with that sad fact.

Three of the many things you can do to unplug the power of toxic people:

1. Let go of the expectation to please them. Pleasing yourself must replace trying to please them. Always remember that it isn’t possible to change toxic people, they can only change themselves. Your primary goal should be to develop a healthy self-concept; to become your best self. Focus on that – not on the toxic one.
2. When you’re spoken to rudely, say: “I won’t tolerate disrespect. If you can talk to me kindly, I’ll listen. Otherwise, write down your concerns and I’ll read them...or we’ll wait until you’re in control. Until then I’m leaving the room...I’ll return when I’m ready.”

It is very important to excuse yourself the moment the behavior becomes unacceptable to you. This is one way you can teach toxic people that you will not be controlled or manipulated.

3. Decide what is “enough” to give to the relationship...and explain it clearly to the human porcupine in your life. This includes how much time, money, and energy you’re willing to give. It won’t be enough for the toxic person, but it doesn’t matter. It’ll be enough for you. *Living with your definition of “enough” is a key to coping with the unreasonable demands of toxic people.*

HOW TO ASSESS YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES WITH A SHORT SURVEY THAT REVEALS HOW EACH FAMILY MEMBER REALLY FEELS



HOW TO ASSESS YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES WITH A SHORT SURVEY THAT REVEALS HOW EACH FAMILY MEMBER *REALLY* FEELS

The Family Survey is an incredible tool. It is designed to help families understand one another's honest feelings and how each person views the family. When all family members honestly respond to the survey questions and talk about the results with kindness, the survey can be a powerful resource for family growth. This remarkable survey and a detailed explanation about how to do it (and what to do afterwards) is found on pages 15 to 21 in **Solutions For Families**. Visit www.SolutionsForFamilies.com to purchase the book.

HOW TO HAVE 15 MINUTE WEEKLY FAMILY MEETINGS THAT WILL IMMEDIATELY BRING UNITY AND INCREASED LOVE INTO YOUR HOME



HOW TO HAVE 15 MINUTE WEEKLY FAMILY MEETINGS THAT WILL IMMEDIATELY BRING UNITY AND INCREASED LOVE INTO YOUR HOME

Building a successful family is like building a home. Both need a plan. A successful family based on unity and love takes careful planning, but it's worth every moment. The best way to be organized as a family is to hold Weekly Family Meetings. By doing this, families enjoy a special closeness and stability. Choosing to spend time with your family sends a message more powerful than words. Memories made together during this time will bond and sustain your family through the years.

The Family Meeting should be an important part of every family's weekly schedule. The meeting can have three parts: the Family Council; the Lesson; the Activity.

In **Solutions For Families** I have provided detailed instructions for you. There are Suggestions for the Family Meeting, a Sample Agenda and a Sample Lesson. You will find it all on pages 24 through 29 in the **Solutions For Families**.
www.SolutionsForFamilies.com.

25 EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND LESSONS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



25 EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND LESSONS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

These lessons are in my book **Solutions For Families** – pages 28, 29 and then pages 39 to 242. The first lesson is a sample lesson for the Weekly Family Meeting. The 24 lessons which follow reflect the 24 questions in the Family Survey. The lessons all follow the same format: a follow-up from the previous lesson; a concept; family survey review; story and discussion questions; activity; family assignment.

The lessons are to be given by a family member, and ideally every person in the family should participate. As much as possible, family members should take turns giving parts of the lesson. For example, one person could read the concept, another family member could share the story and lead the discussion about the story, another person could help with the activity and assignment exercises. Of course families can use the lessons however they'd like – there is certainly no wrong way to do it. The key is to meet regularly and use the lessons in whatever way is best for your family.

HOW TO RELEASE YOURSELF FROM DAMAGING BELIEFS AND SELF-DEFEATING THOUGHTS



HOW TO RELEASE YOURSELF FROM DAMAGING BELIEFS AND SELF-DEFEATING THOUGHTS

Answer this question: How did you learn that you're good at some things and not good at others? The answer is that you experienced success and failure from your earliest years, and you build beliefs about yourself based on these experiences and based on the way people reacted to you. Consciously and unconsciously you've developed your self picture from your past experiences and from the input of others. Unfortunately, many people created negative, damaging beliefs about themselves which have crippled them emotionally at one time or another throughout their lives.

To release yourself from damaging beliefs and self-defeating thoughts you must first believe that you can control your thoughts, words and actions. And you can! Negative thoughts and beliefs simply pull us backwards and they need to be eliminated. Please know that it is possible to rid yourself of them. This is one of the key principles I teach in my book titled *Believe It, Become It!* And although we don't have time to discuss this subject here, I can give you three things to say that will help release you from damaging, self-defeating thoughts:

1. **Just as soon as the negative thought enters your mind, label it.** Like this: *"That was negative. That's not like me...I usually don't think negative thoughts."* (This moves your thinking forward and your positive self-fulfilling prophecy will come true with practice) The second step is to quickly replace the negative thought with a positive one. For example, if you're berating yourself about "something stupid" you did in the past, think: *"I made the best decision I could with the information I had at the time. Now I know more, and I'll make better decisions, starting today!"* Whatever damaging belief you have, turn it to be positive after you label it.

2. **Don't live in the past. Don't allow past unhappiness to pull you backwards. Replace negative thoughts about the past with strong, positive belief statements.**

An example of what you think when negative thoughts arise about the past: *"Even though my Dad wasn't there for me when I was little, I'll take the best and discard the rest. I'll think about the good times and move forward."* Or, *"My _____ may have stolen my childhood, but he can't affect my future. I'm in control and I'm doing great!"* Then don't dwell on the past...think about something you're looking forward to in the future.

3. **Imagine your future (awesome self) in great detail.** Did you know that our subconscious mind can't tell the difference between an actual experience and an experience imagined in great detail? It's true. In my new book *Believe It, Become It!* I discuss this and I cite several actual scientific experiments that prove it. So what does it mean in terms of releasing yourself from damaging beliefs? It's huge! The moment a negative belief enters your mind, you: LABEL IT, REPLACE IT, THEN IMAGINE – in great detail – WHAT YOU WANT TO BECOME.

For example, if you want to be a cheerful, confident and highly-capable wife and mother, then think about what that looks like...in detail. Imagine yourself looking attractive and fit, efficiently working in an organized home, with loving appreciative children. (Does that stretch your imagination? That's OK – it's the first step to getting there.) Try your best to imagine every detail of what – and who – you want to become. Remember, your subconscious can't tell the difference between a real experience and one that's imagined in great detail. So imagine exactly what you want to become, think about it and work daily to reaching that goal (of course you have to do more than just *think* about it, you need to actively apply yourself), and you WILL achieve success. Count on it. Each day act “as if” you already were that person – and you'll become that person.

PART THREE

INSIGHTFUL ARTICLES
FROM PARENTING EXPERTS



PART THREE

Insightful Articles From Parenting Experts

In my desire to share with you valuable parenting information, I contacted two experts for whom the study of families is their life work. I believe their insights can be profoundly helpful to all parents. First, I asked Dr. Victor B. Cline (professor of psychology) for permission to share some of his thoughts with you. I appreciate Dr. Cline's gracious willingness, and I applaud his outstanding work. The information I included below was taken from Dr. Cline's remarkable book *How To Make Your Child A Winner: Ten Keys To Rearing Successful Children*.

Second, I requested that Dr. Kathleen Slaugh Bahr (associate professor and mother extraordinaire) share her delightful insights on how work can contribute to family happiness and solidarity. She readily agreed and offered kind, helpful suggestions. Her timely contributions follow Dr. Cline's "Ten Keys."

TEN KEYS TO REARING SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN



TEN KEYS TO REARING SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN

FIRST KEY: STIMULATE YOUR CHILD'S INTELLECT

Psychologist J. McVicker Hunt estimates from his research that IQ's can be increased by as much as twenty-five to thirty points or more by proper environmental stimulation, but that it can drop by as much as fifty points in children who are reared from birth in extremely monotonous and unresponsive conditions. This amounts to a range of seventy-five to eighty IQ points...all caused by proper or lack of proper environmental activity and stimulation.

Timing is crucial here because there appear to be certain ages in a youngster's life when the brain is most receptive to stimulation for a certain kind of skill or ability to develop. Miss that time period and it becomes much more difficult for the child to learn that skill later. Since parents do have great control over the environment and experiences their very young children will have, it means that they can play a powerful and direct role in raising their child's IQ if they know what to do and when to do it.

(Some of suggestions in Dr. Cline's book are: Create an active, stimulating home environment; read to children often; provide intellectually-stimulating games, toys and a place for play; encourage participation in sports, clubs, school activities and interaction with wholesome friends; discuss current events, scientific breakthroughs and other topics of interest.)

SECOND KEY: BUILD YOUR CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

The vital core of every living human being is his self-image. This picture or image which we carry around in our heads will profoundly influence every decision we make. It will determine in great part the extent of our personal misery or happiness. It will also affect our job success, choice of spouse, the ability to have and hold friends, even our capacity to love. If a child has respect for himself he is then free to respect and love others. With good self-esteem he has the courage to risk, explore, try new things, and even occasionally fail, but in the end succeed.

Accepting and loving our children is important, vitally important, but it's not enough. It takes more than just telling our kids that we love them and that they are great to give them a good self-image. Their personal worth has to be validated by some tangible, successful accomplishments. The child has to do something, have some skills and abilities which bring genuinely earned praise and recognition. Every child has to slay a few dragons - do some tough, difficult things successfully. Parents can engineer this. Our kids also should have the ability or means to influence their environment, have power, make things happen, win some battles. They need to know that they count, that they aren't helpless, that they can change things.

So teach your child to be competent, to excel in some areas of his or her choice and interest, do something better than most of his peers. Also, every youngster needs a special friend, a good person who likes him. Parents can do much to facilitate this.

Earning money through successful work experiences also builds self-respect. In addition, give your children repeated opportunities to make decisions and assume responsibility. This is your way of letting them know they count.

THIRD KEY: TEACH YOUR CHILD EFFECTIVE SOCIAL SKILLS

A great share of our children's future happiness and personal fulfillment will depend on their ability to relate effectively with others. What makes them truly human is how effectively they love, work with, and relate to others. Fortunately, these skills can be learned, shaped and enhanced by caring parents.

I have found six things that contribute to a child having superior social skills:

1. Being truly loved, providing the child with a deep inner sense of security.
2. Having a lot of exposure to people, all kinds of people.
3. Looking reasonably attractive in appearance and grooming--not being too different, for that keeps others at a distance.
4. Repeatedly witnessing and observing the modeling of skilled social behavior by family and peers (parents, invite a lot of friends over!).
5. Having a reasonably good self-image to allow the child to respect himself and feel worthy of having friends.
6. Having at least moderate verbal fluency, to be able to communicate and carry on a decent conversation.

Most shy children have a certain amount of social anxiety which makes them feel nervous around other people. They often fear and expect a negative evaluation of themselves. This is always learned. This leads in time to a negative bias against themselves; they think negatively about themselves. Soon it becomes self-perpetuating. They shun opportunities for social development, but this only makes them even more aloof and different.

FOURTH KEY: CONTROL THE USE OF TELEVISION - UNHOOK ADDICTED KIDS

Television addiction can disturb both children's intellectual and social growth. The evidence keeps piling up suggesting that, like the Pied Piper or a magic sorcerer, TV can steal away days, months, and years of a child's lifetime. The latest research documents that the average child spends more waking hours in front of a TV set than in any other type of activity, including going to school.

The average preschooler living at home is exposed to in excess of fifty TV hours a week, according to the Nielsen Television Index. This means that by the time the child is ready to start kindergarten he or she will have spent more time in front of a TV set than the average college student will spend in the classroom during four years of college.

Marie Winn has assembled evidence suggesting that such massive TV viewing by preschoolers may adversely affect their left hemisphere brain development. This is the brain

hemisphere specializing in language and speech, thus producing children who later have difficulty communicating, who remain regressed at the level of feelings and emotions. They may operate more by “gut” feelings than by rational, reflective, inner thought or spoken dialogues with others.

*(Paula’s note: In the **Solutions For Families** lesson on Mental Well-being there is a suggested list of things to do instead of watching TV. Visit www.SolutionsForFamilies.com)*

FIFTH KEY: STRENGTHEN YOUR CHILD’S CONSCIENCE

Dr. Charles E. Schaefer recently surveyed fifty parents who had “successfully” raised their own children to be productive adults and who from all evidences were apparently adjusting well to society. He asked the parents, “Based upon your own personal experiences with your own children, what is the best advice you could give new parents about raising children?”

One of the major pieces of advice given was the need for new parents to actively teach their children basic values: integrity, moral courage, honesty, and a desire to treat others as they themselves would like to be treated. In other words, to promote ethical values and conscience.

The research evidence suggests that developing a conscience and an ethical sense takes considerable time, requires repeated explicit teaching by parents of right from wrong, continual reinforcement of good behavior, and negative (but fair) consequences for bad behavior. It also takes parents who themselves model and repeatedly demonstrate responsible behavior.

If the kids like and admire you, they will imitate your behavior and tend to assume your values when they are adults.

There is a great deal parents can do to help promote conscience, especially before their children reach their teens and get on the rollercoaster of adolescent turbulence and shift their attachments and allegiance away from their parents to their peer culture. Do your homework early!

SIXTH KEY: TEACH YOUR CHILD TO SHOW LOVE, EXPRESS AFFECTION, AND DEVELOP HEALTHY ATTITUDES TOWARD SEXUALITY

Before one can truly love someone else he or she has to experience love. Your cup has to be full in order to share it with someone you care about. Easily the most powerful way for parents to produce affectionate, loving children is to give the kids a lot of T.L.C. as they are growing up. And the kids need to see Dad and Mom kiss and hug affectionately as they greet or leave each other’s company or on impulse at other appropriate moments and occasions.

It needs to be part of the family style.

If mother feels secure in her husband’s love for her, this helps open up her faucets so she can pour it out on the kids. What I’m suggesting is that the single most effective thing a dad can

do to express love to his children is to love their mother, to make sure his wife has her cup full. Then she can give to the kids out of her overflow.

I'm not suggesting that single parents can't also give great quantities of love to their children. They can and do. But it's not as easy and it's not the same as in a complete and integrated family unit. However, the single parent will do a better job single than when harassed in a very difficult marriage being burdened with chronic conflict and divided leadership.

Regarding appropriate sex education, I have found in working with large numbers of couples that a healthy sex adjustment involves far more than having considerable knowledge about (*sex*). It involves the whole mix of male-female relationships....such things as consideration, affection, good communication, and a non-exploitive relationship.

It involves a commitment to the person as a person. And children need to understand this. If you *just* teach them about conception and the pregnancy cycle...you do them a disservice. They also need to know about values and the importance of responsibility to their partner. These are things that only caring parents can give to their children. No formal class can possibly teach or give all of this.

SEVENTH KEY: LIVE IN A GOOD NEIGHBORHOOD

Whether you like it or not the children our youngsters choose as their friends will have an increasingly significant impact upon their lives, values and behavior, especially as they get older and move into their adolescent years. It is also very clear that neighborhoods and even communities or subsections of larger urban areas vary in their character, healthiness, and degree of pathology.

This means you should choose the neighborhood you live in at least as carefully as you choose your particular house; the neighborhood will provide the peer culture for your children as they grow up and that might make a critically important difference in their lives. A home can be repainted or remodeled, but you can't single-handedly change the character of a neighborhood. And the relative affluence of the homes in a neighborhood isn't necessarily a good guide to whether the neighborhood is healthy for children. You have to make discreet inquiries to find out. Do your homework before buying your next home.

Also check out the schools. They will play a vital role in your child's exposure to a healthy or sick peer culture and potential friends. There are great schools and sick schools in every community. Avoid the latter like the plague.

While you will not be able to choose exactly who your children will have as friends, you can do a great deal to increase the probability that their friends will be decent youngsters from healthy homes by carefully choosing where you live.

EIGHTH KEY: SET REASONABLE WORK AND BEHAVIOR STANDARDS BACKED BY APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE

In a great variety of research studies cited in *How To Make Your Child A Winner* it is clear that children possessing higher self-esteem, confidence and personal competence come from homes where parents set high standards for their youngsters, expecting and requiring more rather than less, who in a sense run a “tight ship.” These were families where parents took clear leadership roles, assuming that they knew better than their kids what would be helpful to them as adults.

The parents had been where the kids still weren’t. This did not mean that the parents were tyrants or that the children had no input in making family decisions or that there was a lack of good communications. In fact these were emphasized. But these parents had no hang-ups or feelings of guilt in setting standards, giving directions, and using discipline appropriately and where necessary.

However, we must add that there is considerable evidence that different children from the same parents will vary, probably genetically, in their temperament and disposition. Some will grab at a challenge and run with it, being almost impossible to hold back. Others, also good kids from the same parents, will need an electric cattle prod just to move from one room into the other. Parents, don’t fret. This is to be expected and is found in every home in the land. Just think of it as a leadership problem. Yours!

Positive reinforcement can work magic in motivating youngsters to perform and excel. In fact it works better than punishment in most cases.

Remember, responsible competent kids are not produced overnight! It’s a step-by-step process which takes many years.

NINTH KEY: TEACH YOUR CHILD SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Research on men who were stress-proof as well as competent and effective across a broad spectrum of personal activities showed these men had early life experiences filled with successful achievement. They were doers from a very early age. This suggests that you might consider encouraging your children to try out all kinds of activities and new experiences.

You, to a degree, can engineer their success. You make sure, in an enjoyable way, that they learn how to ski, skate, play ball, fish, hunt, tune a car, jog, raise a garden, earn some money working for someone else, plus a hundred other activities. You fill their lives with small challenges that lead to successful accomplishment. As they get older they’ll be able to handle bigger challenges. Success becomes a pattern in their lives. They expect it. They learn not to give up. They persist until they’ve won their victory. They are not afraid of failure, because they know, given time, they will make it through.

Since each child’s brain, like his finger prints, is unique and different, each of your children will vary in his inherited natural aptitudes. This means you should build on each child’s special strengths and aptitudes. What is crucial is to start providing these experiences early in life, to set a pattern of continuing challenge followed by success.

TENTH KEY: FOSTER AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE. DON'T DO FOR YOUR CHILDREN WHAT THEY CAN DO FOR THEMSELVES

Our ultimate goal in raising winner children is to prepare them to leave our homes and protection and make it on their own, successfully establishing their own homes and family situation. This requires that we constantly give them increasing responsibilities and challenges, for how will they ever make it on their own if they don't have a chance to try their wings, and sometimes fail, under our protective custody?

The way you teach responsibility is to give kids responsibility. Expect a few mistakes or goofs. Let them make as many decisions as possible as early in life as possible. Let them feel that they count, that their judgment is important, that to an increasing degree they do have some control over their lives and personal destinies. Parents are to cheer the kids on, give occasional advice, and maybe even a nudge sometimes. Let them try all kinds of things. Let them, where practical, participate in family decision making. Put them in charge of things. Let them work for other people, as early in their lives as possible, at things they can do successfully.

BONUS KEY: FOSTER A WARM RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD BUILT ON GOOD COMMUNICATION

Effective positive communication is the royal road to a good relationship with your child, regardless of age. A father of a large family I knew once shared a secret that the "golden hours" with his teenagers were after midnight. He didn't mean this literally, but he was suggesting that the late hours are often best for letting down your hair and getting close to your youngster. This is when the little one is asleep, the TV is off, the phone has stopped ringing, and house visitors have long since left. The late-hour fatigue factor also tends to open the kids up (and you too). Their defenses are down. It's a time to share, open up your heart, and listen sympathetically. Most teenagers in our current culture are under a lot of stresses; a lot of them are hurting and bruised; they have a lot of unanswered questions, problems, and temptations. If you're there, uncritical, and their friend, not boss or first sergeant as earlier in the day, they may just open up. You might, out of your experience, give them an idea that might solve a tough problem or comfort the wounded ego of a rejected child who earlier in the day suffered a disastrous disappointment or a miserable putdown that rankled deep inside.

Occasionally, I find that a non-communicative morose youngster suddenly wants to talk. It's a rare occasion, and I let all other things go. I cancel an appointment or am late to something, because I'm needed then. Later may never come. My wife, Lois, is marvelous at this--she knows and senses when the right time to talk is. She'll stay up most of the night if needed, and is glad to. And it pays off, again and again.

There are a lot of books on effective communication, but the most important key, I believe, is that you care. This must somehow shine through, clear and unmistakable, as you talk with your youngster. You can say it almost any way you wish, as long as that is the message the child gets. It builds trust. It enables the child to endure your occasional discipline; they understand that you do it because you love them.

Above all, every child needs private, uninterrupted time with one or both parents, frequently! Take the child riding, or for a leisure walk, or out for a bite to eat. Do it on a regular basis. Give the child private moments, when he or she is the center of your attention, and concern, and love.

While we can never be fully responsible for our children's eventual happiness or personal choices, we can give them a host of advantages which will optimize their chances of enduring life's challenges with grace and courage.

WORK IN THE HOME: BUILDING ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS



WORK IN THE HOME: BUILDING ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS

Contributed by Dr. Kathleen Slaugh Bahr

Today we worry a great deal about what will foster a child's feelings of worth. My research supports the idea that participation in family work is one of the best ways to do this. In family work, children learn skills, they see the results of their work, and they develop a keen sense of being needed, valued, that they belong, and are important contributing members of the family.

Today we see too many signs that children are growing up undisciplined, self-centered, self-indulgent, seemingly unable to notice or respond to the real needs of others, especially the needs of members of their own families. How have we tried to solve this problem? It has been through "values" curriculum in the school. That means talking about values and doing written exercises about values and playing little games about values. What do the children learn? They learn to talk and write about values. There is little evidence that such exercises teach them to live moral lives. The quality of morality they need is learned in the process of serving others, and typically such learning takes place in family settings or not at all. A child learns to be helpful by helping his father and mother and brothers and sisters. A child learns to see need by being encouraged to respond to the real needs of other family members. If young people do not develop these moral strengths at home, they may learn some through hard experience later in life, but it is surely more difficult. How much better to learn them at home, serving and caring for those nearest to them.

Family work is the essential labor of life, the activity which makes all other social life possible. I believe that family work is the most important work we do in this life. I believe that no success can compensate for failure in the home. Working alongside parents and grandparents, children learn to know their parents, to love, respect and care for their elders. And as parents and grandparents work with their children, their love for them grows.

As fathers and mothers work together in this important work of nurturing family, boundaries disappear. Family work provides a common ground that brings husband, wife, children, the very old and the very young together. And families that learn to work together and care for each other are more likely to extend a helping hand to others in need, extending their good works beyond their home into their community and beyond.

Today, people who see the value of family work only in terms of the economic value of processes that yield measurable products--washed dishes, baked bread, swept floors, clothed children--miss what some call the "invisible household production" that occurs at the same time, but which is, in fact, more important to family-building and character development than the economic products.

The results of this oversight are serious. Many are now convinced that a mother is wasting her time and talents by being a mother. If she is doing nothing more than staying at home and caring for her family, she must be lazy, lacking in intelligence and ambition, or she is oppressed. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Our work as mothers and fathers is indeed the most important work we do in this life.

For the past several years I have had an interest in the transmission of culture through family work. I have interviewed Navaho and Apache grandmothers, daughters, sons, and grandchildren. I ask grandmothers to recall experiences with their grandmothers, what they did with her and what she taught them, what they learned. I have asked them to compare their experiences as children with the experiences they have with their own grandchildren today. The comparisons are dramatic.

An Apache man recalled his relationship with his grandmother. She was old, and as a young child he was sent to help take care of her. He said, "They (your parents) always want you to respect the older people. You never walk over them and you never talk back to them. You always listen and then they cook for you and you learn lot of things from them."

In the traditional way of the Apache, adults were expected to live lives worthy of imitation, and children living and working side by side, doing as their parents and grandparents had done, learned their culture--what it meant to be a good Apache.

Theirs was a rich culture, a proud heritage. What has happened today? What do today's grandmothers do with their grandchildren? Very few have gardens any more; they buy their food at the store. They wash their clothes at the Laundromat or in a washing machine. The children go to school all day, play in the streets, and when they are at home they watch television. The grandmothers report they have difficulty competing with the television for the attention of the grandchildren. Only a few of today's Apache children spend much time cooking or cleaning. And the grandmothers seldom tell stories anymore; no one has time to listen.

How does ordinary, family-centered work like feeding, clothing, and nurturing a family....work that often seems endless and mundane - actually bless our lives? Family work links people. On a daily basis, the tasks we do to stay alive provide us with endless opportunities to recognize and fill the needs of others.

Family work is a call to enact love, and it is a call that is universal. Throughout history, in every culture, whether in poverty or prosperity, there has been the ever-present need to shelter, clothe, feed, and care for each other.

Family work, by its very nature, can bind us to one another. Ironically, it is the very things commonly disliked about family work that offer the greatest possibilities for nurturing close relationships and forging family ties. Some people dislike family work because they say it is mindless. Yet, chores that can be done with a minimum of concentration leave our minds free to focus on one another as we work together. We can talk, sing, or tell stories as we work. Working side by side tends to dissolve feelings of hierarchy, making it easier for children to discuss topics of concern with their parents. We also tend to think of house hold work as menial, and much of it is. Yet, because it's menial, even the smallest child can contribute.

Perhaps foremost, family work binds us together because it requires sacrifice. It demands that we put aside our own self-centered aims, to see more clearly the needs of others.

Some people insist that family work is demeaning because it involves cleaning up after others in the most personal manner. Yet, in so doing, we observe their vulnerability and weaknesses and we are reminded of our own dependence on others who have done, and will do, such work for us. We're reminded that when we are fed, we could be hungry. When we're clean, we could be dirty; and when we are healthy and strong, we could be feeble and dependent. Family work is thus humbling work....helping us acknowledge our interdependence; requiring us to sacrifice "self" for the good of the whole.

A frequent temptation in our busy lives today is to do work by ourselves. We've learned that it's usually more efficient to work alone. And we make our child responsible only for his own mess, to put away his own toys, to clean his own room, to do his own laundry and then to consider this enough family work to require of a child. When we do this, we shortchange ourselves...we miss the growing together that comes from working together.

There was a study done with children from six cultures. African children showed the highest degree of helpfulness. They do family-care tasks like fetching wood or water, tending siblings and running family errands. Children in the United States whose primary task is to clean their own room scored the lowest of the six cultures tested.

Today's media-sustained popular climate seems hostile not only to family work, but to family life generally. As family work has become devalued, activities of television and computers and market-oriented work and recreation have crowded out many of the opportunities for teaching service, sacrifice, love, caring, respect and mutual nurturance that were provided by shared participation in family work.

In America the activities of television, computer games and recreation have made life so crowded that the virtues learned from family work are often neglected: service, sacrifice, love, respect and mutual nurturing. I'll close with Wendell Berry's words:

"In the face of prevailing fashion and opinion, my father showed remarkable insight and foresight. He insisted that I learn to do the hard labor that the land required, knowing - and saying again and again - that the ability to do such work is the source of a confidence and an independence of character that can come in no other way....not by money, not by education."

My best wishes are yours as you seek and discover solutions for your precious family.

Fondly,
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