

TIPS FOR
POSITIVE
PARENTING



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L.M.H.C.

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David Fang, cover design, www.hofcollective.com

Rose Yancik, interior design

Diane Stallings, editing

Wendy Anderson, editing

Printed in the United States of America



*This booklet is dedicated with love
to my children Kristine, Caroline, and
Mitchell. Thank-you for making parenting
an exciting adventure! I am honored to be
your mom!*

TIPS FOR POSITIVE PARENTING

Parenting is the most difficult job—and it doesn't come with a training manual. Naturally, we often go into parenting doing what we may have seen and experienced within the home in which we grew up, even though it might not have been the most healthy scene in the movie!

As I write this booklet, I look at the challenge of parenting today as the world is rapidly changing around us. My observation is that it's not easy to be a parent in this day and age; and therefore, it is not easy to be a child either. I do have some important news though: You will make mistakes in parenting. But allow me to challenge you to do one thing—learn from your mistakes!

As you learn from your mistakes, you can improve your parenting skills and raise your children to be healthy, reasonable kids! I challenge you to wake up each day and decide you can effectively fulfill this most important job called parenting—one step at a time. I have provided seven tips to help you in this challenging journey. They are:

- ❶ Make your household rules clear and reasonable.
- ❷ Endeavor to make your home a place of peace.
- ❸ Have meals around the table.

- ④ Delay gratification—it's okay to say "no."
- ⑤ Celebrate your child's inner beauty and uniqueness.
- ⑥ Instruct your children about money—money matters!
- ⑦ Teach your children they can talk to God.

1 *Make Your Household Rules Clear and Reasonable*

Children crave consistency! They probably won't tell you this, but they do. Whether you realize it or not, your rules are a safety net. Healthy boundaries and rules help to create within your child a network of security. This also indirectly reinforces to your children that they are loved and cared for by you, the parent. Creating rules where the boundaries are clear also makes it easier for your children to align their behavior patterns with your expectations.

Formulating rules will not just be a one-time occurrence. Having clear guidelines and learning to follow them should be a way of life. Rules will evolve and change as the children grow older, and therefore, the parents must also formulate rules that are clear and reasonable for the level of each child.

One suggestion for implementing clear rules is to let your children help with the wording of the household rules and with writing them on paper. Allowing your children to participate in writing the rules will give them ownership of the rules as well. Once you have them written down, place the rules somewhere within the household where they can be seen, perhaps on the refrigerator.

Recognize and keep in mind that you do not

need to micro-manage your children. Make your rules clear in order to help you be consistent in discipline, and make sure you have age-appropriate consequences for negative behavior when needed. When it comes to discipline issues, try to identify what each child enjoys doing and what he or she would prefer not to live without. Incorporate what your children do not want to live without as part of their consequences in times of discipline. Do this ahead of time with your children so that they are aware of potential consequences for inappropriate behavior.

For example, let's say that your 10-year old son loves to play games on the computer. Therefore, a consequence to his negative behavior would be that his computer time would be shortened, or even that the computer would be off-limits. Another example would be your 17-year old daughter who loves her cell phone and driving privileges. A rule could be that the car keys, cell phone, and/or both would be off-limits for a period of time as a consequence of inappropriate behavior.

The secret to success is to know the piece of "bait" that your child does not want to live without. Remember to be realistic with the length of time that you remove the "piece of bait." To us, it may not seem to be a long time, but to him (or her) it will probably sound like an eternity! If the length of time is too long, or say you quickly bring unrealistic discipline forth out of anger, you run the risk of losing

the motivation of your child to change his behavior to get the thing he wants back. And consequently, your actions could be counterproductive.

For discipline to work, your children have to know that they are loved. Children can sense when you are genuinely being realistic in a loving manner. Therefore, be keenly realistic in setting the length of time that something is taken away and in the manner in which you bring forth the discipline.

As you work on being consistent with your expectations, and then follow through with the disciplinary consequences to a child's inappropriate behavior, this will automatically create a more peaceful atmosphere within your home. So start today and *make your rules clear!*

2 *Endeavor to Make Your Home a Place of Peace*

What needs to happen for you to have more peace in your home? Only you can answer that question. One of the things that can detract from making your home a place of peace can be called “activity addition.”

There is an expectation in our society to be “busy.” Many demands are placed on parents today, i.e., work, school, kid's extra-curricular activities, church activities, volunteering, and community events. Parents can drive themselves and

their children like racehorses, and at the same time be oblivious to how exhausted they or their children may truly be. If not carefully guarded, families can become so busy trying to fulfill society's expectations that the entire family unit tends to just rush from one activity to another. Often, by the time a parent gets home in the evening, he or she is exhausted. That alone can open the door for the fuse of a short temper to ignite.

First of all, as a parent, take care of you! It is difficult to adequately take care of others when you are neglecting yourself. Make the time to rest and relax. Schedule it in your calendar if you have to, but take care of yourself emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Find a strategy to routinely take care of your basic needs first. By doing so, you will become a more effective parent.

One of the best things we can learn in slowing down the pace of our families is that it is okay to say "no" to extra demands placed on us by the fast-paced society in which we live. Saying "no" to these extra demands also conveys to children that downtime is not only okay, but it is a vital component for creating peace within our homes. That said, teach your children that they can turn off the computer, cell phone, or electric games, and do something different to slow down the busy pace.

Always remember, you are your child's number

one role model. Your kids are watching how you take care of yourself. Encourage them by example to let the home environment be a place of peace where they can rest as well as work and play. John 14:27 states, *“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* Parents, Jesus left us His peace. It is up to us to grab hold of it for ourselves and for our families.

Disallow the busyness of life to erode the necessity for downtime in your family. Your children are only going to be young once, and they do grow up very quickly. Create downtime to enjoy them. Learn to guard the peace in your home while they are still there.

3 *Have Meals Around the Table*

Can you picture family dinners becoming a tradition in your home? Can you picture a dinner time where all activity ceases and you sit around a table for dinner? You are probably thinking that there is no way family dinners could happen in your home because of all the activities in which your family is involved. Well, maybe every night is not realistic to have dinner all together around a table, but maybe two, three, or four nights a week you could

work toward making this a reality. If you cannot make the dinner meal a time where the family eats together, then be flexible. Perhaps try getting together for a lunch or breakfast.

Meal times can be used as a great opportunity to get together and connect with your children. But first, it is wise in this day and time to designate a place in your kitchen where all cell phones and other electronics can go and be switched to a completely silent mode. Another suggestion is that these devices be put away for a suggested time-frame during mealtime. This way, a child is not compelled to just jump up from the table and leave when she is finished eating so she can get back on her phone or game. Also, you stand a better chance of making mealtimes more comfortable and enjoyable without the pull of unnecessary interruptions while you have time together as a family.

The conversation during the meal can provide the opportunity for the family to bond, practice healthy ways to communicate, and learn to enjoy each other's company. Family dinners can also be a great opportunity to involve your children in learning how to cook, set the table, demonstrate table manners, and clean up. Meal time is the one main activity, besides family prayer time, where everybody comes together for a common purpose, and it is wise to capitalize on that time to enhance family bonds.

It may not be easy to carve out the time for everyone to get together for meals given the busy activities and conflicting schedules that can arise within the family, but the effort required will pay in the long run where your children are concerned.

④ *Delay Gratification— It's Okay to Say "NO"*

It is just fine to say "no" to your children. To function as healthy individuals in life, children must learn to wait on—or do without—things that they want. Think about it: Someday your child will be an adult, and as an adult (as you well know) one has to wait on things and deal with hearing the word *no*. As an adult you may hear the word *no* on a very regular basis. For instance, "No, there are no tables available without a reservation." Or, "No, we are all out of the brand you want." "No parking." "No trespassing."

The word *no* is heard with great frequency in our everyday lives, whether we realize it or not. There is a statement that I believe we all need to hear: "It is impossible to experience true appreciation until we first experience need." Parents, keep in mind, it is possible to give your children too much too soon. One example of this would be giving your 16-year-old an expensive, new car when he qualifies to drive. Then what will your 16-year-old look forward to when he is 30 or 40 years old?

Generally speaking, it is the parents' responsibility to teach their children that waiting on things in life can be good. This is much easier said than done at times, especially when it is within your means to instantly give your kids their desires. But you will see that as your children's gratification is wisely delayed at times, their character can be developed within the waiting process.

Delaying the gratification of certain things and goals can teach your child early on that words such as *no* or *not now* are a part of life. Always giving your children whatever they want whenever they want it, simply because you have the means to provide it for them, can lower their developmental motivation for achieving their own goals. And further, it can lower their ability to handle the frustration and stress that often accompany the achievement of goals. Besides, if you allow this pattern of behavior to continue, your children will keep coming back to you for that instant gratification (many times money) when they get older. Therefore it is important you allow them to develop the ability to wait when they are younger.

Another issue along this line of thinking pertains to premature exposure. Allowing your child to see too much too soon is not healthy either. Your child's eyes are a window to his or her soul. What children take in, what they watch, do, and see, cre-

ates lifestyle preferences in their lives. Their little souls are impressionable at an early age. During this time, endeavor to first focus and create within them a healthy foundation by which to process the negative exposures that are sure to come their way. Do this by imputing godly standards into their lives in an unassuming fashion.

Monitor what your kids watch on the Internet, video games, and television. Depending on their ages, guide them in the movies that you allow them to view. Guard your children from an incessant pattern of behavior of being on the Internet, playing video games, and watching television. Lay down rules and guidelines concerning what they can view and play, and for how long they can play.

Your kids may battle you and say, “But my friends are allowed to (do this or that) in their homes.” Regardless, let me remind you that the guidelines you set for your children are a safety net. Having rules conveys to them that they are loved, whether they realize it or not, especially during challenging moments. Just remember that children crave guidelines. Again, they probably will not verbalize this fact, but it’s true. Keep in mind that delaying or averting their gratification is best for them in the long run.

Remember, your child will be an adult one day. Teach him (or her) early on that delaying gratification is well worth the wait—for everyone involved!

5 *Celebrate Your Child's Inner Beauty and Uniqueness*

We live in a world that places a major emphasis and value on outward appearances. However, we tend to realize the importance of inward beauty as we mature. As parents we should teach our children that outer beauty may fade but inner beauty lasts forever. But how do we develop our kids' inner beauty? How do we teach our children to "shine"? We can teach them how to shine by being kind-hearted, respectful, and loving toward others.

Simple things such as opening a door for a stranger, a smile, or looking someone in the eye to say "hello" could change someone's bad day into a good one. Don't forget that your children are subconsciously watching you. They see how you value your own inner beauty and uniqueness, and they learn how you value others by the way you treat them and by your sensitivity to others in your surroundings. Your children will pick up what they "see" you do.

Each child is unique and different. Different children will manifest their qualities in different ways. In light of this fact, try not to compare your kids with other kids. Comparison has the consequence of putting down their individual uniqueness. Children develop their own tastes, abilities, preferences, and styles. For example, one son may

be a sports-oriented kid while the other son likes to play the piano. Or your oldest child may be an artist and another child may be good with numbers. One of your children may love being with others and crave excitement, while another child enjoys his or her quiet time by reading a book. Be especially aware and accepting of their innate differences, whether those attributes are what you prefer for them or not.

Birth order is another difference that can contribute to the shaping of a child's unique and different personality. Take time to read *The Birth Order Book* by Kevin Leman. He gives credence to how the birth order of your children affects them—and you.

Be assured that each child is good at something. Watch and see what your child loves to do. Your observations can give you clues about his or her talents and gifts. One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to help your child discover and develop his or her own gifts and talents. Then provide the child with a platform in which he can flourish and thrive.

Make sure you tell your child that God uniquely made him and has given him the gifts and talents he has. Express to your child that God has a purpose in giving her the gift/talents that she has. Speak words of encouragement about the strengths that you see in each child. And always remember that there is power in your words of encouragement!

⑥ *Instruct Your children*

About money—Money Matters!

Life-long benefits come from teaching children good money habits. Before children can add or subtract, they become aware of the concept of money. For this reason, parents should talk to their children about money while they are in elementary and middle school. By the time they are teenagers they will hopefully continue to be in tune with the advice we offer them about money.

Keep in mind that you cannot teach something to your children that you do not know yourself. I always say that we cannot bring our children any further than we have come ourselves. It is worth the effort to learn all you can about effective money management so you can pass it down to your children. Then they will be able to pass these skills down to the next generation. Therefore, learn all you can about saving, budgeting, and reducing debt. Go to seminars pertaining to money management. Take your teenagers with you. Your children will learn more from your actions than your words. Once again, your children are watching you. Lead by example.

When teenagers get older, you can talk to them about the mistakes that you may have made and what you learned from them. I like the statement, *“Our mistakes, disappointments, and failures in life*

can either teach or torment us.” Let the financial disappointments be a tool that you learn from as you try to teach your children the lessons you have learned. Let them benefit from your mistakes.

Another point worth noting is the importance of teaching your children the difference between needs and wants when they are young. Doing so will empower them to discern the difference as they get older. This way, they will be more prone to make sound spending decisions.

An allowance for each child is a good place to begin to teach your children about handling money. Not only can they begin to learn how to spend money wisely, but they can also be taught that they should save a portion of it as well. As your child’s savings grows significantly, take him or her to the bank and to open his own savings account. This is a great way to introduce your children to the banking system, especially since so much banking is done online from home today.

Also, teach your children at an early age about giving and charity. Show them how they can give money to a worthwhile cause through church, children’s hospitals, and non-profit organizations that rely on donations to make an impact on communities.

In addition to giving financially, teach your children to give of themselves. One suggestion to do this is to take your children to a soup kitchen to serve

others who are less fortunate than them. You can even encourage them to save a portion of their allowance to give to something like this—something that is bigger than themselves. This type of giving can teach them that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.

Speaking of donating, also have your children periodically go through their closets to donate to others in needs. You should take your children with you when you drop the items off at the charitable destination. Parents, take the challenge to teach your children to be givers. As you give to needs outside yourself, you are sending a message to your children about your beliefs about giving.

Finances will play an important role in your children's lives and future opportunities. There truly are some life-long benefits of teaching children good money/giving habits early on. Start today. I assure you that it will be well worth the effort!

7 *Teach Your Children They Can Talk to God*

Developing a daily prayer life is one of the greatest gifts a parent could ever give his or her child. A book that helped me develop this fact, one that I read when my children were young, is *The Power of the Praying Parent* by Stormie Omartian. The

author inspires parents to pray for their children and to expect God to answer. We can teach our children through our example about the power of prayer. Think about it: we can teach our children early on to lay down their worries, seek wisdom, and learn to be still and enjoy the presence of a loving God.

Prayer is not complicated. It is simply talking to God. In fact, we should all be talking to God on a daily basis—several times a day. Prayer doesn't always have to be in a closet or down on our knees. We can converse with Him whenever since He never leaves us or forsakes us. Your children can benefit from being exposed to your relationship with God. It teaches them to direct their thoughts to God throughout the day as well—in the good and not-so-good times.

You should also help your children develop their own daily prayer lives as well. No matter how old your child is, it is never too early or late to teach him or her about the simplicity of prayer. When it comes to teaching a child about prayer, simply speaking, prayer is just having a conversation with God. This simple truth can impact your child's relationship with the heavenly Father for a lifetime.

Remember, what you expose your children to will become their preference. Expose them to prayer. Keep a family prayer journal and have your children keep notice of the prayers that have been

answered. Pray together as a family. Encourage your children to pray out loud when you are praying together. Talk to them and tell them that God is anywhere. They can talk to Him in their bedroom, at the dinner table, on the playground, or even in the classroom. In addition, teach your children that they can talk to God at any time. Even if they wake up in the middle of the night, God is right there with them.

Let them know that God is never, ever too busy for them!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



VALERIE PETERSON is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the state of Florida She is also a Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor, and a National Board Certified Counselor. Valerie received her Bachelors Degree in Social Work from

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In addition to her Mental Health practice, Valerie is a conference speaker and regular guest on radio talk shows addressing current life issues. She is also a licensed minister, having been licensed and ordained through the International Conference of Faith Ministries. Furthermore, Valerie is an award-winning writer, recognized by Parenting Publication of America specializing in psychological, educational and health topics. Valerie is the author of four booklets; *Waiting on God to Move? Six steps to get His attention*, *Bullyproof our Schools*, *Keeping Your Marriage Strong – Ten Tips for a Dynamic Marriage*, and *Tips for Positive Parenting*. She lives in Florida with her husband Jeff. They have been married for 29 years and have three grown children.