

HABITS THAT MAKE THE PARENTING FOUNDATION

Proverbs 29:18 provides guidance for your parenting foundation, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (KJV). Thankfully, the thirteen *Simple Habits* in this chapter are essential for establishing a foundational vision for parenting your child.

These parenting fundamentals are the cornerstone of your child’s life as you seek to lead and guide your child. Parenting correctly with the clear-cut concepts found in this chapter will keep you purposefully focused.

The parenting process begins with specific goals to develop you as a leader and an example. Understanding the importance of the four foundational “Rs” will help you become a purposeful parent. Like the four legs of a table, all four “Rs”—Relationship, Routines, Responsibilities, and Rules—must be stable and solid. Acceptance, Affection, Attention, and Appreciation are connected to the first “R”, Relationship, and provide powerful ways to show love and encourage your child.

There are numerous qualities you want to instill in your child, but I believe that morals based on Biblical values, character, and determination are three of the most important. The last two

lessons focus on how to be an *Effective Parent* through desiring obedient decision-making for your child, as well as the three parenting extremes to avoid.

With the thirteen *Simple Habits* in this chapter, you will be able to parent your child to eventually manage his or her own life as a competent, independent adult. Thus, you accomplish a parent's ultimate goal of becoming nonexistent in your supervisory role because parenting is truly meant to be temporary.

1. A Purposeful Parent with a Plan

The Bible encourages purposeful planning: "He will give you your heart's desire and carry out all your plans" (Psalm 20:4 GW). An extremely important parenting plan is for you to fully understand what internal qualities you want your child to possess as an adult. An *Effective Parent* looks to the future by understanding what it will take for his or her child to become a competent, Godly adult.

Benjamin Franklin said, "Living without a goal is like shooting without a target."

I suggest that when there is no vision for the internal attributes you want for your child as an adult, the greater likelihood your child may have a life of struggles. Every great accomplishment in life began with a dream that became a clearly defined goal. You want your child to fulfill his or her dreams and this parenting resource will help you lead your child in a positive direction with his or her goals.

Successful parenting is never accidental but the result of goal-orientation. As an *Effective Parent*, you will lead, nurture, support, encourage, and value your child. At the same time, remember your long-term objective for your child's independence from you, self-reliance, and dependence on God. Having goals of what it will take to move your child toward self-sufficiency and managing his or her own life one day is essential.

As you read *Effective Parenting*, think about the initial goals to aim at as a parent. Examples are: things to say, specifics for

building a parent-child relationship, particular parenting skills to implement, things to model for your child, etc. The more exact you are with written goals the better.

Victorious visualization happens for every great athlete. Professional golfers are some of the best when it comes to visualization. They exude confidence by making a successful shot in their mind even before hitting the ball. As a parent, picture in your mind your child being a responsible, Godly adult one day.

Reading this book will motivate you to be a *purposeful parent with a plan*. Much of your child's success in adult life boils down to *Effective Parenting* and you will now possess powerful *Simple Habits* to accomplish that objective.

2. A Leader NOT a Boss

When you are a leader, not a boss, your child will feel safe and secure. Business leaders provide employees with opportunities for growth and success. A leader believes in his or her employee to do the job on their own which brings out the best in an employee.

A boss controls and micromanages his or her employee with too many rules. A boss gives the employee a task and then continually looks over the employee's shoulder dominating the work process. A bossy parent will exasperate the child (Ephesians 6:4). Children do not respond well to a bossy parent, so always lead, never boss!

Parental leadership is the activity of influencing a child by word and deed. To be a leader, your biggest challenge is yourself. Are you becoming more of a leader every day? Every exceptional leader is also a learner. Leaders learn from other people, books, podcasts, videos, and life experiences.

A parental leader is a gentle authority figure who possesses predictable behavior and allows for freedom of choice, NOT control. A parental leader also avoids being a demanding dictator who bosses the child. Instead, he or she establishes expectations

to protect and lead the child and fairly, lovingly enforces those limits.

Parental leaders set the example, thus, bringing out the finest in their children. Parents who lead help their child become a competent and capable person. A leadership parent wants the child to manage his or her own life. A leadership parent increases the likelihood that the child will regularly assume age-appropriate roles. The quality of your parental leadership will have a great deal to do with the quality of your Christian walk.

Through *Simple Habits for Effective Parenting*, you have the challenge and opportunity to grow as a leader in all aspects of parenting. Be a benevolent leader instilling character and courage in your child's heart. Use your parenting leadership skills to encourage, nurture, and build a solid foundation for your child's life. When your child sees you living an ethical life and making Godly decisions, he or she will trust you and be much more likely to follow your *parental leadership*.

3. An Example

A parent's example will have the most powerful impact on a child's perspective of life. The clichés are true: Example is not the best teacher, example is the only teacher; and values and principles are more caught (from your example) than taught to a child.

Never take your example for granted!

Live out your faith in Christ by walking the Godly path you want your child to walk. Titus 2:7 declares, "In everything, set them an example by doing what is good" (NIV).

A fundamental truth is to absolutely never compare yourself to others. Revealing your life mistakes leads to comparisons between your child and you as a parent and that is unhealthy for two reasons. First, comparisons produce lower self-worth due to not measuring up. Second, comparisons may also lead to the sin of pride creating a feeling of superiority. Also never compare

your children to each other. Instead, encourage Biblical values and help them follow the example of Jesus.

Your attitude also significantly determines the health of your personal life as well as your child's attitude toward life. Developing a wholesome, positive attitude is one of the most important goals you may have as a Christian parent. Since your example often forms the future life of your child, constantly work on maintaining an encouraging, Godly attitude for the sake of your child's maturing growth toward adulthood.

Your attitude also sets the morale for your home atmosphere. Whether it is optimism, pessimism, cheerfulness, moodiness, etc., your child will absorb in some form the family air. The reason is, your actions are speaking so loudly your child can't hear what you are saying, to paraphrase Ralph Waldo Emerson. Your child's disposition will often closely resemble one or both parent's attitudes.

Please recognize being an example is not an on and off process, but a commitment to stay the course every single day, so your Godly qualities become a natural part of your Christian walk. Let your example be something your child wants to imitate for his or her entire life. Parenting is "training" your child to follow your example and incorporate your Godly qualities throughout his or her adult life.

4. Operate at a Higher Level In Every Area Of Life

In Lesson 10, I discuss the importance of identifying qualities you pray your child will have as an adult. Many wonderful attributes are also listed in Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (ESV).

Whatever qualities you want your child to possess as an adult, live your life at a higher level than your child in each of those areas. A worthy objective is to hope that your child will attain a higher level in each attribute than yourself.

Perhaps grade yourself in every quality you aspire for your child. An admirable goal is to get a “B” or higher in all the qualities you want for your child.

I counseled parents whose four-year old son lacked self-control and had anger issues. Other family members and his pre-school teachers also said he was an exceedingly difficult child. When I asked the father what grade he would give himself in the areas of self-control and anger, he graded himself a “D+” in both aspects. Is it any wonder that their son had struggles? The first goal was to have the parent improve his self-control and anger management through books, counseling, etc.

How can you really expect a “B” grade from your child in the “fruit of the Spirit” or any other qualities if you do not have that “B” grade yourself? When your child needs improvement in a quality or certain area of life, make sure that you are also at a “B” grade or higher because your child will become a close copy of your attitude and traits.

Competent, healthy parents strive to avoid offensive language and have a significant goal to only use Godly, uplifting language. If you struggle using foul language, and many individuals do, make it your highest goal to stop using filthy talk.

As a parent, read personal development books, listen to uplifting podcasts, etc. Associate with Godly individuals who are continually trying to improve their life and maintain a positive attitude. Read the Bible and have regular devotions. Subscribe to personal development emails, inspirational newsletters, or encouraging quotes. Set the example for your child through your own personal development program.

Striving for improvement in the “fruit of the Spirit” and other qualities of life will require effort for you and your child. An *Effective Parent* keeps learning and growing, which is also a significant goal for a child. Hence, be willing to change and improve. Set realistic goals, be patient, and aim for small advances as you lead your child toward internalizing positive, Godly attributes.

5. A Healthy *Relationship* Increases Trust

Your parent-child connection is so essential I devoted the second chapter solely to emphasize that *Effective Parenting* always begins with a *strong relationship*. Psalm 127:3 declares that children are a gift from God and so incredibly special they need to be valued daily. For you to lead your child toward a successful, fulfilling adult life, you must establish a *strong relationship*. Thus, your number one goal is to do whatever it takes to ensure that your relationship is totally unbreakable.

The four “Rs,” *Relationship*, *Routines*, *Responsibilities*, and *Rules*, are extremely important, but in order of priority, your *relationship* with your child is your number one priority. Psalm 84:12 says, “Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you” (NIV). Throughout the Bible, Almighty God tells us and shows us that we can absolutely trust Him. In the same way, build trust with your child with actions first and then words. Without your child’s *trust*, you will probably have a difficult time influencing his or her heart.

When your behaviors and vocabulary are God-pleasing, you increase trust and respect, which builds a very solid parent-child relationship. Being extra polite in words and actions along with praising good choices will strengthen a parent-child connection. Laughing at a child, mocking, or breaking promises will not boost a parent-child bond.

You can utilize all these parenting skills, tools, and ideas, but without a *strong relationship* your influence will not be nearly as impactful. When there is a disconnect, your child will likely not be influenced by your parenting but more by his or her peers.

Three important words for a successful relationship with your child are communication, communication, and communication. Your child’s self-esteem is built through affirmative conversations because that builds a secure parent-child foundation. Positive conversation is needed daily for a sound, wholesome relationship. The stronger your relationship, the stronger will be

your child's self-worth. With a solid connection, your child will respect you, and that will lead to a willingness to listen when you find it necessary to apply rules.

I absolutely believe that a strong ***relationship plus*** an effective application of the ***rules*** will help your child become a ***responsible decision-maker***. On the other hand, if your primary focus is rules, with a minor emphasis on your parent-child relationship, you greatly increase the odds of your child becoming rebellious.

I encourage you to work hard at growing in your faith in Jesus Christ because that is the starting point to strengthening the relationship with your child. Only when your relationship with our Heavenly Father is strong will you be able to enhance your relationship with your child. The more you love God in Jesus Christ, the more you want to serve God by living a life to His glory. And the more your child loves you, the more your child will want to follow your Godly guidance and be a responsible decision-maker in all areas of his or her life.

6. Regular Routines Instill Organization

Regular parent-child routines allow for time together and that develops a close bond with each other. Sadly, too many parents and children are often like strangers simply because they do not have family routines. Routines provide a wholesome structure for your child both internally and externally. Depending on your child's age, you may want to help him or her establish a routine, so your child knows what to expect each day and throughout the week.

What are some necessary routines that are important? Although not an exhaustive list, consider the following ideas:

- ✓ Good morning routine
- ✓ Mealtimes together
- ✓ Greet your child with a smile and hug
- ✓ Prayer time together

✓ Bonding bedtime routine

A healthy personal life is discussed in Lesson 52 and regular routines are one way to achieve that goal. Your child needs to witness you having an organized life that provides for your personal success. I have found that *Effective Parents* are those who are personally well-organized in scheduling their time.

A productive person is usually well organized in various aspects of his or her life, which is an important goal for your child as well. When you have a clearly defined schedule, you provide a suitable structure for connecting with your child. A word of caution, please remember that family routines must be “flexible” as opposed to “rigid” routines.

7. Responsibilities Establish Confidence

The Bible stresses the benefits of both hard work and laboring together: “The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work” (1 Corinthians 3:8 NLT). At one time, our nation was an agricultural society that stressed the importance of diligence and great work habits. Children were absolutely necessary on the farm to help their parents handle numerous tasks. For example, children learned how to care for farm animals, till the field, plant and harvest crops, etc. These abundant farming chores provided responsible activities for children. It is not surprising how mature, dependable, and reliable most of those children became as adults.

Likewise, today children need to learn self-discipline through assigned household tasks that are accepted by your child and then reliably finished. It is interesting that some people who were not given responsibilities as children often struggle as adults with feelings of not being capable, productive, and dependable.

It is very detrimental for a parent to limit a child’s responsibilities along with his or her decision-making opportunities.

Parents who overcompensate for their children usually foster an unhealthy parental dependence producing children who are often incapable and incompetent to deal with adult life.

One essential parenting goal is for your child to function as a self-sufficient adult. One way to accomplish that task is to provide your child with numerous responsibilities over his or her eighteen years under your supervision. With each stage of your child's development, the number of tasks along with the difficulty of those responsibilities should be increased.

When your child helps around the house, he or she is not only contributing to the family's good, but more importantly, he or she is building his or her self-worth and self-confidence. In the early years, it might be picking up toys and putting away books. During the teen years, those responsibilities might be mowing the grass or washing the car. Children who are given responsibilities by their parents develop a self-assurance that they can succeed in life.

When you give your child responsibilities, he or she certainly sees that as an indication you believe he or she is capable in handling tasks that you ask him or her to fulfill. Completing responsibilities will be one factor in leading your child to an autonomous, competent life.

8. Rules Increase Freedom

The Bible provides a foundation for rules to guide a person's life. Jesus summed up the rules of life by stating, "Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37 and 22:39 NIV). The Ten Commandments are laws for Godly human behavior. 1 Peter 2:16 states, "Live as free men but do not use your freedom as cover-up for evil; live as servants of God" (NIV). Children should have *freedom within the rules*, which allows them to then make responsible decisions.

Society has rules and laws at the local, state, and national level. There are also rules for adults at work and for children in schools. In a similar way, your child needs rules and boundaries in your home to feel secure and have freedom. Home rules prepare your child to easily adhere to work rules and the laws of society.

What would it be like to not have rules at work or laws in society? Some people do not think societal rules are necessary, but what would it be like to drive a car without any lanes or road rules. Rules and laws actually reinforce our freedom to overcome confusion and chaos, thus, preventing a miserable existence.

In a similar way, when you do not specifically let your child know what is expected of him or her, he or she will probably feel insecure, suffer chronic stress, and experience anxiety. Worse, your child may doubt your love because rules are a sign of care and concern.

As an *Effective Parent*, you need to define your rules whether it be inside or outside your home, and then, convey those expectations to your child. Once you have established limits, a lot of stress will be removed from your home atmosphere. Your child is also more likely to respect you and conscientiously adhere to your rules because there are no surprises. With a clear understanding of the rules, your child will develop self-discipline and be more open to your example and guidance.

A caring home atmosphere allows your child to readily understand that reasonable limits are in place because you love him or her. After speaking with thousands of parents, I find it interesting that when a parent-child bond is strong, having rules is not usually an issue for a child because he or she feels valued and special. When you have rules and expect your child to stay within those limits, your child also develops a sense of identity and becomes a responsible decision-maker.

9. Amazing “As”: Acceptance, Affection, Attention, and Appreciation

Your child must absolutely have a daily dose of *Acceptance*, *Affection*, *Attention*, and *Appreciation* to feel secure, believe in his or her abilities, and know you always love him or her! All four “As” are equally important, so they are not listed in order of priority. I hope you understand how important the *four “As”* are for your solid parent-child connection.

a. Acceptance

Loving your child unconditionally is the ultimate goal for every parent. *Acceptance* is giving your child unconditional love *no matter what* he or she achieves or what mistakes or sins he or she commits. *Acceptance* is absolutely choosing to always value, and never devalue, your child. When your child feels completely loved by you, he or she also has the same feeling that Almighty God totally loves your child as well.

I am not saying you must approve of your child’s wrongs, but your child always needs your acceptance, a true belief that he or she will always be your wonderful child. Even if your child does something serious like break the law, he or she needs to have complete confidence you will still love and accept him or her.

When your child chooses to make a minor or major mistake and, after giving him or her a consequence or taking away a privilege, you want to share a message like, “I love you *and* I will always love you *and* I don’t approve of wrong decisions.” When I sin or make a mistake, that is exactly what our Heavenly Father says to me. Through my faith in Jesus, I have total unconditional love *and* acceptance. God is telling me, “You will always have my unconditional love *and* acceptance no matter what!”

NEVER use the word “but” because whatever you said prior to that is overturned whenever “but” is used. “But” often degrades your attempt to nurture your child. Instead, have run-on sentences and use the word “*and*.”

Many parents don't know how to show unconditional love toward their child. One of the best ways to demonstrate acceptance is to look directly in your child's eyes when you speak positive words that make a significant loving difference in his or her heart and mind. Acceptance is also giving specific praise frequently about your child's wonderful internal qualities.

Acceptance is helping your child always know the foundational fact, "I love you so very much because you're my child." Absolute acceptance of your child truly defines unconditional love and is a *Simple Habit* for your *parenting foundation*. Children who feel unconditionally valued before the age of twelve are more likely to resist peer pressure and numerous teen temptations versus children who do not feel thorough acceptance by their parents.

b. Affection

I define *affection* as verbal and physical expressions of love. Your child wants to feel completely confident you love him or her. When you demonstrate any form of affection toward your child, it provides your child with an internal belief that he or she is lovable. If your child does not receive affectionate love from you, he or she usually gets it from something else that could be harmful or detrimental.

More than 70 percent of individuals I have counseled said they never received *BOTH* verbal and physical expressions of love from their parents. Those adults often shared with me that they now felt insecure, indecisive, and not deserving of an enjoyable life. Lessons 14 and 15 will explain in more detail how to show unconditional love both verbally and physically toward your child, so he or she doesn't have those negative feelings in his or her adult life.

c. Attention

Parenting is about daily connecting with your child which requires focused *attention*. My synonym for attention is *time spent*

looking into your child's eyes, dialoguing with your child, or doing an activity with your child. Your child cannot thrive without trust, and focused attention is one of the greatest ways to build a trusting relationship. One of your significant responsibilities as a parent is to build confidence in your child's heart through positive focused *attention*.

Take note, being physically present with your child is *not* focused attention. Due to your job and tasks around the house, I realize that you may feel exhausted, overwhelmed, and perhaps think you just do not have the energy for focused attention. To overcome that mental block, have a goal with specific words and actions you will demonstrate daily toward your child for focused attention. Knowing ahead of time those behaviors for positive attention is one of the most powerful ways to connect with your child so he or she feels unconditional love.

d. Appreciation

The apostle Paul was wonderful at giving abundant praise and *appreciation*. The apostle declared, "Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3 GW), and again Paul said, "I thank my God for all the memories I have of you" (Philippians 1:3 GW).

"Thank you" is important but those two words are an expression of gratefulness for something your child said or did. I define *appreciation* as *praise*, which is more than gratitude or a simple thank-you.

Affirming your child will bestow on him or her a feeling of internal value. *Appreciation* or praise creates positive energy in your child. Praise lifts your child's self-worth. When you focus more on what your child is doing right, instead of what he or she is doing wrong, you have an appreciation mindset.

Always give honest praise, not flattery or insincere appreciation. Written notes of appreciation can be even more meaningful

because those short notes of encouragement can be reread by your child over and over.

10. Three Qualities to Strengthen Within Your Child

How do you picture your child as an “adult” at twenty-five years of age? That mental picture will help you identify meaningful internal attributes for your child.

Ask yourself: What do I pray for in terms of my child’s Christian life journey? What will his or her attitude be like as an adult? What internal character qualities will he or she possess for succeeding in life, as well as handling the challenges of daily living? What important characteristics will my child possess for enhancing adult relationships?

You absolutely need to envision your child as an adult to know how to lead your child toward incorporating positive qualities. There are numerous characteristics that are essential for healthy living, such as “...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (NLT Galatians 5:22-23), as well as selflessness, humility, seeking good in others, forgiving spirit, willingness to serve, trustworthiness, compassion, etc. I pray that your child will possess all those positive attributes. What will help your child cope with life and succeed as an adult are *three significant positive qualities*:

- Morals based on the Bible
- Character
- Determination

a. Morals Based on the Bible

Your child deserves to have well-defined, distinct values of Godly behavior to follow in life. The Bible instructs all parents, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NIV). Unfortunately, for many people the Bible is no longer

the moral compass of society today. In 1980, the Supreme Court took the Ten Commandments out of public schools. Since that decision, the boundaries with sin began being pushed further and further apart.

Solid Biblical values and a stable nuclear family have continued to decline because of many within society moving away from God. Hence, morality has become extremely blurry and left up to an individual's feelings, not Biblical guidance. Such unhealthy thinking leads to the immoral, selfish belief—"If it feels good to me, even though my actions may not be Biblically based, I will choose those damaging behaviors anyway." Such corrupt, worldly thinking would be very detrimental for your child.

The importance of a moral education is reinforced by the words, "Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6 NIV). Do not take a chance by leaving your child to develop morality and faith in Christ on his or her own. Equally important, incorporate Biblical values through your own words and behaviors.

Teach the Biblical absolutes of right and wrong and attend a church that believes in those same Biblical principles. Nothing will confuse your child more than if your actions do not match the Biblical values you are trying to teach him or her. Biblical morals will motivate your child to love God with all his or her heart as well as love his or her neighbor.

b. Character

While morals are the absolutes of right and wrong according to the Bible, *character* is all the internal assets that assist your child in following those ethical standards found in God's Word. Internal Godly character is best seen through external actions because one's core character will become the sum of the choices made that eventually become habits. Having Godly character will help your child make moral decisions.

The Bible talks about the character of God as loving, compassionate, just, good, and holy, to name a few traits. Jesus was patient, loving, obedient, caring, and forgiving. Jesus served the people around him and sacrificed for them.

Character involves ethical functioning by taking action that is consistent with Biblical beliefs. Godly character means doing what you say you will do, practicing what you preach, walking the talk, and having your actions be consistent with your words which equals integrity. Strong character within your child now creates a high integrity adult later.

Being humble is to be teachable and willing to learn, while boasting is a function of sinful pride. Proverbs 11:2 declares, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.” Humility within your child is an essential goal because many Godly traits flow from that character quality. A person or child with high character is humble, not needing to advertise his or her wonderful attributes.

Frequently today, the focus for character development is more on feelings rather than absolute Biblical values that make a difference in the lives of people. When an adult or child is making poor decisions, it is often the result of cracks in one’s character. Your character will often determine your child’s future character. Building character within your child will also strengthen his or her core identity of who he or she is in God’s eyes.

A person with *character* will still have weaknesses for he or she is not perfect. However, in the midst of being human, a person with solid character consistently stands for what is right and does what is right in the eyes of God. Hence, develop Biblical character within your child so he or she will be motivated to serve God and others.

I hope the knowledge found in *Effective Parenting* will help you develop Godly character in your child so he or she will succeed in adulthood. I encourage you to identify and write down ten character qualities that you believe are essential for your

child. Then, compliment, encourage, and reinforce those character qualities when your child demonstrates a particular positive trait. Beginning today, take dead aim at reinforcing the Biblical qualities you desire for your child's character.

c. Determination

Throughout your life and my life, we have been knocked down, had setbacks, and dealt with many unfair circumstances. Adversity happens to everyone and your child will face hardships as well. Ask any successful person if he or she had misfortunes and he or she will respond with a quick, "Yes, many." The apostle Paul said, "We know that suffering produces perseverance (determination); perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4 NIV). The truth is, most of a person's character is established early in life. Adversity can help build your child's character so that *determination* is also part of his or her personality make-up.

Attitude means everything in terms of how your child will handle adversity. Charles Swindoll said, "Life is ten percent what happens to us and ninety percent how we react to it." Like Pastor Swindoll suggests, I am confident you want your child to react positively and be self-assured that he or she can overcome any obstacle. To have that optimistic attitude, you will want to lead your child to have a persistent, *determined* spirit that causes them to *never give up*!

Winston Churchill gave a commencement address about his philosophy of life. Churchill simply stated, "Never, Never, Never Give Up!!!" That might have been the shortest commencement address ever, but he expressed succinctly an essential attitude for your child. *Determination* is being persistent to never give up!

Extracurricular activities can help your child learn the valuable quality of determination. After your child begins an activity or sport, never allow him or her to quit until the activity is completed. I have counseled numerous adult individuals who

shared when they were younger, they quit an endeavor. That established the bad habit of simply giving up in the face of a challenge. Now, when there is any life obstacle, it is that much easier to quit. Whether music lessons, swim lessons, karate, etc., have your child finish the activity or sport he or she agreed upon to solidify a determined spirit.

When adversity occurs for your child, let him or her know that will happen over and over throughout his or her life. Every setback is a great teaching opportunity, but you must be an encourager, cheerleader, and supporter to assist him or her in successfully handling each and every challenge. Reframe adversity, setbacks, or even failures as “new beginnings,” “fresh starts,” “opportunities for renewed effort,” etc. Tell your child: “I believe in you!” “I know you can do it!” “I am proud of you!” “All successful people have adversity and setbacks, and you will be successful.” “I am confident you will bounce back!” Think of your own re-frames and phrases so your child never gives up and consistently stays determined!

Successful people are just ordinary people with an extra amount of determination. Individuals who think of themselves as victims are satisfied with excuses. Victors say “no excuses” while looking for solutions to the problem. Excuses are simply not an option for a determined person, including your child.

Help your child learn to welcome difficulties with a persistent confidence. When your child never gives up and always bounces back, he or she will not only handle adversity well, but also be a successful adult.

11. Mutual Respect

A foundational principle for all relationships, including parent-child, is *mutual respect*. As the Bible emphasizes, “So then, in everything treat others the same way you want them to treat you” (Matthew 7:12 AMP). Mutual respect is critical for healthy

parent-child functioning, as well as essential for your child's interactions with others.

It is essential that your child respects you, not to help you feel good but because you can only influence your child's heart when your child respects you. You will have great difficulty applying consequences and taking away privileges when your child does not respect you. Responsible, good decision-making children are usually raised by parents they love and respect.

Respect is a two-way street. One of the best ways to teach your child respect is to show him or her respect because respect must be earned. Attaining respect requires that your tone of voice and attitude be the same with your child and family members at home just like it is when you address others.

Without respect for you, it is also highly likely that your child will not respect his or her teachers and other authority figures. When a child does not respect his or her parents before the age of twelve, the probabilities increase that he or she may not respect others as a teenager and later as an adult.

What causes disrespect? Disrespect happens when a parent does not listen well, disregards a child's questions, is sarcastic, does not spend time with his or her child, or does not effectively discipline the child.

When a child sees his or her parents not demonstrate respect for government officials, police officers, their pastor, or their boss, a child learns to disrespect authority figures as well. Sometimes, when a parent gives a flippant response rather than a thoughtful reply, it can come across as disrespectful.

Recognize that for your child to respect your Biblical values as a teenager and adult, he or she needs to respect you during the elementary years. Always treating your child as you would like to be treated enhances mutual respect. Be a constant example of *mutual respect* by demonstrating respect, care, kindness, and compassion toward everyone.

12. Obedience Leads To Responsible Decisions

Colossians 3:20 provides guidance for every *Effective Parent* declaring, “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord” (NIV). Our Heavenly Father wants every adult child of God to also be obedient. Thus, our loving God never controls our choices but seeks *obedience*. Your goal as a parent is to help your child grow in responsible decision-making through obedient choices.

Have your child follow the example of Jesus who “humbled himself and by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:8 NIV). Christ obediently paid for the sins of the world offering eternal life in Heaven for all who believe in Him.

With Adam and Eve, our Heavenly Father sought obedience, *not control*, over their decisions. Certainly, the Creator of this awesome universe could have controlled or prevented Adam and Eve from eating the fruit on the tree. However, God wanted Adam and Eve to *obey* and make a good choice. Due to a rebellious spirit, Adam and Eve made the sinful decision to disobey God by eating the fruit.

Many parents believe their number one goal is to control their child’s behavior, but that is certainly **not** *Effective Parenting*. Unfortunately, parents who “control” their children may create kids with poor decision-making skills, low self-worth, struggles with perfectionism, irresponsible behaviors, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, etc.

As an adult, how would you like it if someone controlled almost all your decisions? You would probably feel miserable, anxious, and depressed. You do not want your child to feel that way for eighteen years under your roof.

Although not healthy, to a degree it is normal to wish you could control most of your child’s life until he or she is eighteen. However, after the age of twelve, when your child is not always around you, your child will start making impactful decisions

about smoking cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, other drugs, academics, and sexual activity.

Children who have learned to make good choices by following a parent's rules and obeying God's laws up until the age of twelve are usually fairly responsible decision-makers during the teen and early adult years. On the other hand, children who were controlled by their parents, may take freedom of choice to an extreme during the teenage and young adult years by often committing irresponsible actions and even choosing to be defiant. When your child has the freedom to make good choices, you are not controlling but helping him or her learn obedience.

An *Effective Parent* has tremendous faith in the child's ability to govern his or her own life. While under your care, the letting-go process can be scary, but it is essential. Your goal as a parent is to help your child become a self-sufficient decision-maker, so that by the time your child is a senior in high school, he or she is making almost all his or her own choices with your guidance. Hopefully, after high school, your child will either go to college or get a job and move into an apartment. As a young adult, responsible decision-making will now be essential!

God wants everyone to obey Him and make healthy decisions because that leads to freedom and a joyful life. Likewise, children who learn *Godly obedience* are also the happiest children, and parents who seek obedience for their children are the happiest parents. Learning obedient decision-making is at the heart of a healthy parent-child relationship.

13. Avoid Parenting Extremes

Maintaining a balance between seeking obedience for responsible decisions and avoiding the "three extremes" is a continual struggle for all parents. When a parent is controlling, overprotective, or permissive, the child usually struggles and is often labeled

a disobedient child. It is always important to avoid extremes in parenting your child.

a. Controlling

A controlling parent dominates the child with fear, manipulation, passive-aggressive anger, and strictness over the child's life. The child and the other parent often walk on eggshells trying to fulfill all the rules every day. The controlling parent is the most powerful parent because in his or her eyes, "he or she is always right and has all the answers to life." A controlling parent often personally struggles with anxiety, perfectionism, compulsions, feelings of inadequacy, and low self-worth.

A controlling parent is usually focused on how the child appears to others because a lot of his or her self-worth stems from the child's appearance and accomplishments. On the other hand, an *Effective Parent* has the goal of a long-term perspective of how a child will live for God from the ages of eighteen to one hundred.

A controlling parent is similar to the Pharisees of Jesus' day. The Pharisees had 613 laws or rules that everyone was expected to fulfill. The Pharisees viewed themselves as superior and in charge of others, just as a controlling parent is also in total command of the child. Jesus even said to the Pharisees, "Woe to you, blind guides" (Matthew 16:6)! Sadly, a controlling parent is often "blind" to his or her ruling ways and how detrimental this extreme is for the child.

This extreme parenting style does a great disservice to a child in so many ways. A child raised by a controlling parent will often be defiant and rebellious as a teenager. Or he or she will obey the rules while at home, but after high school, when he or she is making independent decisions, his or her life is wild, carefree, and occupied with party, party, party.

Years ago, I counseled a young man who was salutatorian of his high school class but flunked out of college after his freshman year. Both his parents were loving Christian people.

Unfortunately, their excessive loving ways led to a controlling parenting approach. Through his senior year of high school, these parents made most of their son's decisions for him.

Sadly, when he went away to college, he was unable to decide upon a regular sleep schedule, when to study, how often to go to class, unable to make wise decisions, causing him to fail most of his classes. A truly distressing outcome, but thankfully, it was temporary. His parents and I worked together to assist this wonderful young man to learn how to become a *responsible decision-maker on his own*. He not only earned his college degree but did so with honors.

A controlling parent has a legalistic parental belief system, unbending limits, and a super strict style. This extreme parenting style is almost *all limits with no freedom*. A controlling parent will often express anger in a passive-aggressive manner. Hence, a child has a difficult choice, to live by the rigid rules or experience the parent withholding love in various ways.

Many years ago, I counseled a pastor and his wife who were having significant difficulties with their twelve-year-old son. I lovingly suggested that the pastor's parenting style was strictly rule-focused and his relationship with his son was only secondarily important. I asked this pastor to consider that explanation why their son did not respect him and continually made poor decisions.

The pastor replied, "Dr. Schroeder, you are a pastor and yet you don't know the Bible very well because one commandment declares, 'Honor your father and mother.' My son and our other children must obey my rules even if my relationship is weak." My response to this pastor was, "Your children are to honor you, but they may not respect you. The Bible also says, 'Fathers (mothers), do not exasperate your children' (Ephesians 6:4 NIV)." And to have a rule-focused home without the foundation of a strong relationship will only build a wall, anger within your son, and continual emotional distancing."

Over the course of counseling, I learned his wife was also afraid of him and lived in fear of his marital rules. Thankfully, my statement got the pastor's attention and he made significant positive parenting changes in so many ways. The result was a stronger relationship with his son and a much happier marriage.

Unfortunately, too many loving Christian parents practice this extreme parenting style. Our loving God does not control, so do not ever control your child's behavior. If controlling has been your extreme style, I pray you will be able to open your eyes to the more productive parenting system of helping your child learn *obedience*, which God also desires. Please remember that your *parent-child relationship* is always most important!

b. Overprotective

Some loving parents try to protect their child from all bumps and bruises in life. No devoted parent wants to see a child experience the challenges and heartaches of life. When a parent overprotects, he or she may damage the child emotionally as well as prohibit his or her child from learning personal strength and self-confidence. The more a parent overprotects, the less competent a child feels in coping with life struggles. An overprotective parent will benefit from considering the adage, "What doesn't seriously harm my child will make my child stronger!"

Overprotective parents often had one or more painful experiences as a child that crushed their spirit to the point of emotional exhaustion, anxiety, or even depression. As a result of these unhappy events in their childhood, they overly compensate for any emotional or physical pain that their child experiences. Always understand that it is enormously damaging to overprotect because you negatively reinforce your child to be dependent on you. The detrimental result from overprotection will often be insecurity, immaturity, low self-worth, and stifled growth in your child becoming an independent adult.

An overprotective parent often creates fear in the heart of the child, conveying the belief that “you cannot handle the world or your problems without me.” Overprotective parents unintentionally make their child dependent on them, especially when he or she faces difficult times. Continual overprotection fosters a sense of incompetency and feelings of inadequacy in a child.

An overprotective parent is usually also overinvolved in the life of the child. There is an incorrect sense of being indispensable in helping the child survive and even enjoy life. Overinvolvement smothers a child’s independence and squeezes the breath out of his or her personal freedom. Overinvolvement is meeting a parent’s needs rather than doing what is in the best interest of the child.

An overinvolved parent nurtures an unhealthy dependence. Overprotective parents often produce adult children who struggle with:

- Emotional problems
- Being a people pleaser
- Indecisiveness
- Eating disorders
- Compulsive spending habits
- Alcohol and drug issues
- Other addictions

Please understand most behaviors have a purpose. For example, a child’s tears have both a positive and negative purpose, either constructively expressing genuine pain or detrimentally just being manipulative. Unfortunately, rewarding unhealthy tears is easy to do, especially for an overprotective parent. Too often, some parents become overly concerned with their child experiencing minor hurts when they really should ignore the cries. A child may use crying to underhandedly manipulate a parent to overreact and “desperately” respond to a petty pain.

Whenever a child receives a physical injury, his or her crying may come from true physical pain or he or she may shed tears to manipulate an overprotective parent. Letting a child handle physical bumps and bruises on his or her own is one way not to be overprotective.

The next time your child experiences any kind of physical hurt and starts crying, ask your child to come over to you for comfort. When he or she can easily stroll toward you for consolation, you know he or she is not seriously injured, and the tears had the behavioral purpose of getting you to overreact.

Effective parents avoid the extremes of being overprotective and overinvolved by *not holding their child too tightly*. Cuddle-yes . . . cuddle-no. Cuddling is nurturing through physical affection, which is beneficial emotionally and physically. Coddling is pampering excessively which is detrimental for children older than three years of age.

Coddling is for babies and toddlers under three, but coddling older children disables their personal internal strength and weakens their capabilities to cope with life challenges, an essential life competency. Continually rescuing a child from every bump, bruise, and pain weakens his or her tolerance for frustration and diminishes a child's ability to stay determined and never give up.

c. Permissive

Another extreme is the permissive parenting approach, where there are simply few rules and few limits. In a permissive home with few limits, children can do almost anything they choose to do. A healthy parent-child relationship is often missing in a permissive home because there are infrequent connections between parent and child. This lack of a relationship often creates a significant absence of respect by the child for his or her parent. Children raised in a home without rules are often irresponsible, rebellious, and unresponsive to any adult authority.

Rarely is the permissive style prevalent in a Christian home. Christian parents usually struggle more with being controlling or overprotective.

Sometimes a parent striving for *obedience* can also be permissive. This type of permissive parent can have a very loving *relationship* with his or her child, have appropriate rules but *not enforce the limits* by being too lenient. Through my counseling of parents and speaking to parents, I have known many individuals who were ineffective parents because they did not successfully apply the rules they had established with their children. These parents often had fair, reasonable rules but they were not decisive and consistent in applying those rules.

By way of example, let us say every day on my street I drive 55 mph even though it is a 35 mph speed limit. I do this daily for weeks, then, one day, a police officer pulls me over but only gives me a warning without a financial fine. Am I likely to adhere to the speed limit? This is a simple illustration of not enforcing the laws (rules). I definitely would have no fear of speeding because there are no consequences.

Wonderful Christian parents often take the same approach with their children. A few examples: A child is late for curfew over and over but there are never any consequences given. A child does not do his or her homework but is still given privileges each evening. A child is disrespectful but never expected to change that defiant behavior. Hopefully, you see how this is a form of permissiveness even though there are rules.

Parents with few limits may do so for many reasons:

- They are not sure how to set boundaries.
- They do not want to upset their child for fear of hurting his or her self-esteem.
- They want to be friends with their child rather than lead and guide their child toward responsible adulthood.

- Due to low self-worth, they simply don't have the strength to apply consequences.
- They just don't see the long-term consequences of not applying limits throughout a child's life.

A child raised by a permissive parent is likely to be rebellious and often angry. Limits are truly welcomed by children! Loving rules and healthy boundaries actually diminish defiant feelings because rules indicate care and concern by a parent.

Thinking of "peas" and "spaghetti" on a plate can easily explain the extremes of overinvolvement and permissive parenting approaches. Overinvolved or overprotective parents are enmeshed with their children like spaghetti on a plate. Each spaghetti strand is entwined and entangled tightly together. A permissive family is like peas on a plate where each pea is not touching and there is not a sufficient connection. Strive for a healthy balance between these two extremes.

An *Effective Parent* wants to maintain a proper balance of involvement by aiming to not be enmeshed with his or her child nor be disconnected. My prayer is that your ***strong parent-child relationship*** coupled with you ***consistently applying the rules*** will help your child become a ***dependable, responsible*** adult one day.