



## The Priorities of Parenting

### Five ideal goals for raising a balanced, well-rounded child

Being a parent is generally a joyful, rich experience. But it is also challenging, especially when it comes to choosing and setting your parenting priorities. Just when you think you've finally got it all together, a new trend catches fire that suggests something else should rise to the top of your list. Enrichment programs, sports clinics, competitive pre-schools — the list and possibilities can seem endless and bewildering.

So what's a parent to do? First, take a breath. Experts who study these issues usually find that most extra activities offer, at best, minor benefits for raising successful human beings and, at worst, can be overwhelming and taxing for our children.

The biggest parental mistake we make is that we tend to define success by grade point averages rather than eventual life happiness. Our second mistake seems to be that we focus too much on college-prep and too little on life-prep. To help you breathe a little easier, keep the ranked list of parenting priorities below in mind.

#### 1. Your Relationship

You are the most powerful influence in your child's life. Without a connection to your child, none of the other priorities will be possible. Well-adjusted kids have strong, respect-based relationships with their parents. Hold to fair limits for their child, approach borders with calm, not rage, and teach values with love, not a fear of whether or not your child will make the right decisions.

#### 2. Your Child's Heart

Integrity, compassion, courage — these aspects of your child's character push the values in his mind into actions. Values without heart are useless. Encourage experiences where your child will interact with and see things first-hand. Better yet, model them. Focus on who you want your child to be at age 40, not 19.

#### 3. Your Child's Identity

Instead of controlling your child, help her learn to control himself. He should develop values that are his own. Building positive values comes from allowing kids to explore who they are and what they believe. Whenever possible, encourage your child to make age-appropriate decisions about appearance, interests, and ethics.

#### 4. Your Child's Academic Success

Do what you can to use positive incentives for great grades, but know that tormenting your child for academic excellence can be detrimental. Insist on academic successes that are appropriate for your child.

#### 5. Your Child's Activities

Sports, music, and enrichment programs are wonderful things, but only in the dose that's correct for your child. Each kid is unique.

# Incentives

Do you know the difference between a bribe and an incentive? Are your children always concerned with WIFE (what's in it for me)? Do you think the sense of entitlement some children have is growing? How do you teach the inner reward when they want an outer or tangible gift?

## A job well done is a reward in itself.

The feeling of completing a task can't be duplicated or replaced, and it encourages us to start other tasks and move on to do more things. However, a little incentive every once in a while never hurt anything. If you're looking for ways to get your children to feel motivated to do their chores, try giving them an incentive.

An incentive is something small, like a treat, game, privilege, or special time with parents. Don't get an incentive confused with bribes, which are more like blackmail than encouragement. When you offer your child incentive, it's like a little extra something in addition to the overall feeling of accomplishment your child will feel when he's finished his job. If your child feels accomplished and happy after a job well done, this feeling will carry over. He'll be more inclined to finish other tasks, and be more self-motivated.

## Difference Between Bribe and Incentive

The difference between a bribe and an incentive is in the way you word it. A bribe is something like, "If you clean your room, you can have ice cream," while an incentive should go, "When you've finished cleaning your room, I'll take you to get ice cream."

The bribe gives the child a choice, and puts the child in charge. The child feels like she can make demands. On the other hand, the incentive leaves no room for avoiding or changing the terms. The word "when" makes it clear that your child must finish his task, and only then will he be rewarded.



# Making Your Child Resilient to Teen Peer Pressure

In spite of adolescents' vulnerability and the strong influence of peers, parents can exert a positive influence on their adolescents' decision-making processes, offering them ways to combat the effects of peer pressure.

**Keep communication lines open** Talk to your kids -- and don't wait until they're teens. Open communication between parents and their children helps youth better manage teen peer pressure.

**Practice peer pressure scenarios** Teen peer pressure may come as a surprise to your child. Out of the blue, he may face a situation that he does not know how to handle, and he may have no idea how to respond. You can help prepare him for these scenarios.

**Listen to your teen's perspective** Express your personal opinions, but don't let them shut down communication. You want to make clear to your adolescent what you believe in. But if you shut down on certain topics, your kid won't come to you as a trusted adult.

**Keep inviting your kids into your life** "There is a natural break [between teens and their parents], and it should happen. But I tell parents to keep inviting kids to do things. Kids want their parents to maintain the relationship. He warns that it may take some creativity and effort on the part of the parent.

**Think beyond punitive responses** A parent's initial reaction to an adolescent who comes home late may be to punish. But, ultimately, that's not a solution to the real problem. "A punitive response doesn't get at what you need to change the behavior. "

## Our Purpose

Understanding how stressful life is and living in a demanding community, we offer busy parents some effective tips to help your children succeed in school and life. On your behalf, we search for and provide you with the most practical ideas to promote academic success, effective parenting, a solid home-and-school partnership, healthy habits, and positive character traits.