



HIGHER STANDARDS: FOR FAMILY

As parents, we set high standards for our children because we love them, not because we expect perfection from them.

Setting high standards gives our children targets to aim for as we teach and encourage them along the way. We want the world for them, but we know we can't expect it from them. We want to make it clear that their worth isn't connected to their outcomes. We do this by showing that we are most proud of the pursuit of their dreams and the work they put into achieving them. Even more importantly, we demonstrate how to do it by actively living our family's higher standards.

As Norman Vincent Peale once said, "Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll still land among the stars." When it comes to setting standards, "shooting for the moon" means fixing our sights on the way we want to live on our best days.

Positivity is a key component of promoting and maintaining high family standards. Nobody likes to hear a string of "don't do this" and "don't do that." Rules have a place in determining our family standards, but it doesn't have to be all negative. We can frame our standards in a positive way. For example, where we might say, "The Johnson family never lies," we can instead say, "The Johnson family is honest in every circumstance."

When we set positive standards, everyone focuses on the excellence we're striving for as a family rather than focusing on a problem we're trying to correct. Even if they don't necessarily reach the mark, they are going to be headed in the right direction, and that in itself is a worthy success.

By establishing higher standards, we are giving our kids targets. They may not hit the target squarely every time, but they are loved regardless of where they land.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

1. As a family, let each person decide on one family core value (or standard) and put the list in a prominent place.
2. Compliment each other regularly for actions that align with the core values you've chosen.
3. Parents: Share a story of when you were ridiculed for committing to a higher standard. Be sure to describe how you overcame that adversity, and how it paid off in the end.
4. Family discussion: Talk about the influential people in your life and the characteristics you admire about them.
5. Encourage your child to seek mentors. Maybe even recommend a teacher or friend you believe would be a positive influence.



SACRIFICE REQUIRED: FOR FAMILY

"I am consistently surprised by how much my child understands and applies the idea of sacrifice." Said No Parent Ever.

There may be little more foreign to a teenager than sacrifice. When talking about the concept of sacrifice, the temptation may be to engage our children with this concept in the negative: "Why aren't you doing more of _____?" But it is more effective to engage in the positive, and celebrate the increased effort our child is putting into sacrificing for their goals.

Teenagers are all-stars at selfishness and rookies when it comes sacrifice. But rather than holding that against them, we're working to teach our children a new way, a counter-intuitive way. The traditional way of thinking is: "If I want to reach my goals, I must focus on me, myself, and I." What the "sacrifice required" mentality teaches our kids is that if they really want to reach their goals, they are going to have to look beyond themselves in that moment and look towards their goals in front of them and the people around them.

They're learning about sacrificing for their goals in sports and in school, but we shouldn't overlook the importance of sacrificing for family. Family is the people (related to us by blood or not) who support us and need our support during difficult times or with accomplishing day-to-day tasks. Doing chores is a form of sacrifice, because it requires our kids to give up playing video games or chatting with friends to improve the state of our home for the entire family.

As parents, we are uniquely positioned to show how sacrifice has affected our family both positively and negatively. By sharing with our child our experiences, we open up the door for understanding, growth, and illumination of a new way to understand something that is otherwise foreign.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

1. Share a story of a time someone sacrificed on your behalf. How did that make you feel?
2. Why do you think someone should sacrifice for another person?
3. Have you ever experienced the negative effects of not sacrificing for a goal or other person?
4. What are some family goals or tasks that might require sacrifice from everyone in the family? Name some tangible action steps each of you can take.
5. Celebrate, compliment, and say, "Thank you" to one another for a way you have sacrificed for one another recently. What other ways can you create a team dynamic in your home, so that everyone is playing on the same team?



MOST VALUABLE: FOR FAMILY

We try to teach our kids the importance of helping others and making people feel valuable. As parents, we know all about this. Our kids are so valuable to us that we'd do anything for them. We'll lose sleep to tend to our babies, work overtime to pay for Christmas gifts, and rearrange our schedules to make every game, recital, and debate competition. Through these acts of love, we can teach and encourage our children to value and help others, too.

Think about social media for a minute. While it's an incredible communication tool, it can instill a negative spirit of comparison, jealousy, and judgment in our children. But, what if we could flip the script? What if instead of comparing their lives on social media and feeling insecure, our children used it as a tool to encourage others and become empowered?

If one of their classmates posts about earning a scholarship, going on vacation, or winning a competition, encourage your child to celebrate their friend. That refocusing—moving from me-centered to others-centered—changes their mindset from how they are jealous, or lacking in some area, to how they can support their friends when something good happens in their lives. It's a simple, but powerful shift.

We should be sure to encourage our children in the process of learning to put others first. While they won't always receive praise and adoration for doing a good deed, our encouragement early on in their lives will help it become a habit that isn't dependent on reward later in their lives. We can also help them by doing charitable acts as a family, like volunteering at a food bank or homeless shelter.

Teaching our children to shift their view from selfish ambition towards humility and empathy at a young age will help them succeed in the game of life.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

1. Share a story of a time someone helped you and the impact it made on your life.
2. To get their thoughts flowing, ask your child: "What are two ways you can practically encourage, uplift, or help one of your friends this month?"
3. Tell your child about something you do to help others for the good of the other person. How is it inconvenient to help them, and why do you do it anyway?
4. Encourage your child to actionably help one person per day this week, and ask them who they helped and how they helped them each day after school.
5. Reward acts of empathy and selfless care for others.

WEEK 04 R FACTOR FOR FAMILY



R FACTOR: FOR FAMILY

Controlling our response, our R Factor, as parents is just as important as it is for our kids. We are one of the biggest influences in their lives. They look to us as an example for how to handle conflict, struggles, victories, and life in general.

How do you respond when your child is throwing a tantrum? Do you still converse with them? Do you ignore them until they collect themselves? When your child gets angry and slams their bedroom door, responding to them by also slamming a door is not the most effective response. It's our job to show them that there are more mature ways of handling their emotions that will initiate a better response from people.

No child is perfect, just like no parent is perfect. And, there's no perfect formula that would explain how to best respond to every frustrating scenario. So, what we want to focus on is teaching our kids the overarching mindset that will help guide them in the right direction. That starts with our family's higher standards, as discussed a few weeks ago.

Our standards should drive our response to negative situations so we can avoid unplanned reactions. Reactions are fueled by our emotions; we react to the frustration or anger before really processing what's happening. But a split-second reaction is really only helpful if we're about to be hit by a car or other dangerous object. In everyday situations, reacting without thinking often leads to damaged relationships or reputations.

On the other hand, if we keep our cool and think about the situation before responding, we have a better chance of avoiding negative repercussions. Even better, our response demonstrates for our kids that managing our emotions and attitude in order to make decisions out of a controlled place is more beneficial for everyone involved.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

1. Describe a time your children saw you react out of an emotional place. How could you have responded differently?
2. What are things in your life that are out of your control? Do you tend to focus on those things or on the things you can control?
3. Describe a situation where you reacted poorly. How would other members of the family have responded differently?
4. Share a time in your life when you did everything right, but things still went wrong. Then share how it ended up working in your favor.
5. As a family, decide on the amount of time you're going to allow for frustration to linger after an argument.



KNOCK KNOCK: FOR FAMILY

We can give our children all the access in the world to opportunities, but there comes a point where they have to take action in their own lives. Dale Carnegie says “There is only one way... to get anybody to do anything. And that is by making the other person want to do it.”

Our role is to show them that what they’re doing now will help them live a fuller, more satisfying life later. We are in a position to instill the desire in their hearts to want to build doors for themselves. It helps if we also have a lifelong passion for learning and are willing to learn right alongside them.

Maybe that means taking a class with them in cooking or a craft, or whatever topic matches their interests. We can take family trips to museums or historical sites and actually spend time reading the placards describing the exhibits. We can play educational games online or try learning a new language together.

Delayed gratification isn’t exactly a welcome concept to teenagers - or anyone. Teenagers want things and they want them now. Patience is still a cloudy concept for many. Their brains are thinking in terms of instant gratification, so asking them to do things now that will hopefully pan out for them later is somewhat counter to their default way of thinking.

Our children haven’t had enough life experience under their belts yet to see how choices today affect the outcome of tomorrow. Spending hours scrolling through Snapchat and Instagram vs. spending hours reading and learning a new skill—or even watching an educational documentary—will result in vastly different opportunities.

Building doors is a lifestyle, and while our children are under our roof we are the makers of their lifestyle. Let’s create a consistent lifestyle of building doors. Learn about their goals, offer your help, and encourage them to start taking action.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

What are your family members’ goals and dreams when it comes to education, relationships, work ethic, character, career, etc?

What are things each member of the family wants to learn?

Set aside an hour of time every week to help each other build a door in an area of their lives. Maybe it’s enrolling in a pottery class or teaching them how to work on a car. Commit to that hour every single week.

Parents: Share your perspective as an adult about how building doors in your life has produced positive results.

Address recurring actions you’ve seen that are not building any doors in your children’s lives, and may actually be closing some.



BECOME PERFECT: FOR FAMILY

When it comes to developing character, failures and consequences come with the territory. We will not be next to our children every step of their journey through life to save and comfort them, nor should we be. The best thing we can do as parents is to equip them to have the intelligence, grace, and grit to tackle life's challenges. Let's not focus on the failures, but on how to use those failures to further prepare our children for the future.

Every action results in a consequence, good or bad. Consequences build life's guardrails. No one gets mad about highways having guardrails because we all understand they exist for our safety and guidance. Similarly, consequences help build metaphorical guardrails for our safety and guidance.

When our children respect our rules, they might be given more privileges and responsibilities. When our children break the rules, they might have certain privileges limited or suspended. That's the way the world works; those types of consequences will better prepare them for life. That's why correcting our kids is loving our kids.

A tough lesson for teenagers is that their actions have consequences. "But why!?" tends to be common language in a house of high school students. It's up to us to explain our logic and reasoning to cement those concepts while they're still at home.

There is value in consequences if we have the "becoming perfect" mindset because viewing our child in this light allows every failure to be a learning experience. No one will ever "be perfect," including our children, and that's a good thing because being perfect means never growing, changing, or striving for greater things.

When our children disobey us, or fail a test, or get in a fight, there is potential for a valuable lesson. We just have to maintain the "becoming perfect" mindset to see the opportunity.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

Share stories of times when you extracted value from a consequence in your childhood and in your adult life.

Share consequences you've experienced that didn't feel good, but ended up being for your good. How would life be different if you had not experienced that?

Why do people feel the need to "be perfect"? How does focusing on "becoming perfect" instead offer an actually achievable goal?

Consequences are easier to swallow (and learn from) if they are understood. Discuss the consequences for breaking house rules and explain the future value behind the consequences.

Why is failure a requirement for success? What failures in your life have led you to success and how?



WHAT IF?: FOR FAMILY

We should be challenging our children to peer into what's possible beyond what exists today, to look beyond what is and ask "What if?". Sometimes that might mean fighting against the parental impulse to tell them that we know what's best for their lives.

We want to learn about their goals and dreams - their dreams for "what if?" because that's what they will build their futures on. We should be the guide our children need to create a life they're excited about.

Let's think back on a time when we weren't jaded by the world, a time when people thought our dreams were inspiring instead of ridiculous, a time before fear became our #1 mental filter.

As adults, we can lose our "what if?" mentality. We settle for "what is" and stop asking those audacious questions that constantly fall out of the mouths of children with zero filter. We're more likely to say "It is what it is" than to ask how it could be different or better.

The freedom and lack of jadedness that comes with being a child is something to cherish and celebrate. Our child could be impacted by society's opinions and expectations, but what if they made an impact on society instead?

We want the best for our kids, and if we're really interested in supporting our children, we work towards supporting their goals. We can help them define those goals in their own terms. Then, we can give them the advantage of a strong support system at home, made up of people who believe in them, who don't laugh at their wildest dreams, and who spur them on to greatness.

We should encourage them to dream, then help them succeed at making those dreams a reality. We can find ways to help them understand we're on their team, we're in their corner, and we want to support them no matter what.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

Have each family member write down 3-5 life goals and share them one at a time. Are any of the goals surprising to you? Why or why not?

How can you help each other achieve those goals? Commit to doing one thing each week to help another family member achieve one of their goals.

What does failure mean to you? Failure at some level is inevitable for everyone; how can you support each other through failure?

Kids: What do you believe your parents would think if you failed at reaching one of your goals?

Parents: What would you actually think if they failed?



NO EXCUSES: FOR FAMILY

Language is one of the biggest factors in developing a worldview lens. Two people may interpret the same experience completely differently simply because of their worldview.

It's important that our language does not reflect that excuses are acceptable currency our family cultures. The words we use hold great power over our thoughts and feelings. The words we speak to ourselves and others can chemically rewire our brain and our default thoughts about the world around us.

We want to use "expensive language," or in other words, words that cost us something or cause us to take ownership in what we are saying. How often do we hear or use "cheap language" phrases like "I don't have time for that"? Using cheap phrases like this teaches our kids to put the power in external factors instead of their own hands.

Let's talk about the example of a physical therapist. At the end of a session, she would show her patients exercises to do at home so that they had the best chance for a full recovery in the shortest amount of time.

Time and time again she'd hear the words "I don't have time for that." She'd then respond to them, "Repeat this back to me: 'Taking care of my body just isn't a priority to me right now,' and then tell me how that feels."

She made her patients own their choices, and refused to see them blame "time" for their lack of recovery. She wanted to see her patients recover and live healthier lives, so she refused their excuses and their cheap language, and made them take ownership of their choices. The exercises would cost them something, but if they truly wanted to get better, then they'd have to make them a priority.

Everything is a choice. We want to encourage our children to start taking ownership of their choices through expensive language.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

Discuss 3-5 negative "cheap phrases" any family member uses and then write the corresponding "expensive phrases" next to them.

Challenge your family to only use expensive language. If someone uses cheap language, positively encourage them and offer an alternative expensive phrase.

Every time your child says they can't do something, have them replace that with they "choose" not to do that thing.

WEEK 09 5 P'S FOR FAMILY



5 P's: FOR FAMILY

It's easy to think about the big milestone moments of being a parent: graduation days, college acceptance letters, family vacations, weddings... These are our "gametime" moments.

But true parenting happens during the moments we don't post on Facebook. When we're at our wits end. The type of moments when we beg our children to go left and they go right instead. That's the grind of parenting that allows us to get to the big milestone moments and celebrate.

Parents win in the trenches, in the daily grind of dishes and 9-to-5's, not on the mountain tops of parenting breakthroughs. Parenting is hard, and we can't possibly be prepared for every nuanced issue or "trench moment" that may arise. But we can determine principles to help guide us and put those principles into practice during our trench moments. Those moments are our 92%.

As parents, we don't have it all together, but we've blindly committed to love and care for our children and we will find a way to be what they need. We know those hard moments are coming, so let's do everything we can to prepare ourselves for them.

For example, let's think about disagreements. How can we prepare for disagreements so that when one sparks, we've practiced how to handle such situations? As a family, we can write rules of engagement for working through a disagreement. This agreement will help prepare for those head-to-head arguments and difficult conversations.

It will give our family a center point to come to. So when one party breaks a rule, the other can say, "Let's remind ourselves of the agreement we've made. I understand you're frustrated and that's why you said that, but "I don't care" is not an acceptable phrase to articulate your problem."

Is this an idealistic idea? Yes. But we finish where we focus. This is better than fighting and duking it out with no avail.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

What are common things the kids say when they are upset or don't get their way?

What are common things the parents say during disagreements?

Why are those not effective statements and how could they be better?

Prepare your family for an unexpected trench moment by discussing a disagreement agreement. How would that have been helpful during a recent argument?

Write out five statements everyone agrees to abide by during disagreements. For example:

Kids: I agree to not say "I don't care." Instead, I will do my best to describe what I'm feeling.

Parents: We agree that whenever we can, we're going to give a better explanation than "Because I said so."



EIGHTEEN INCHES: FOR FAMILY

Sometimes it's difficult to get our kids to regularly clean their rooms or consistently do homework. It's a typical story in most households. It's tough to keep our kids dedicated to their responsibilities!

The trick is to cast a vision for our children as to why we're asking them to do certain things. For example, if we tell our child to pull the shower curtain shut after they shower, that tells them nothing. Instead, we can explain that by pulling the shower curtain closed, it'll discourage mildew from growing on the curtain liner, which keeps things nice for everyone.

We must give our children more of an explanation than "Because I said so." Remember, we're dealing with a generation that asks "why?" for everything. We don't have to like this generational characteristic, but we can use it to our advantage if we stop getting frustrated at it.

Our children do not need to accept things at face value, because they have the world's information at their fingertips. Taking the time to explain why can do wonders for parenting 21st century children. If we want better results from our children, we must cast a vision as to why we're asking them to do something.

By casting a vision or introducing a narrative, we are helping the information sink from the head to the heart. That simple explanation will help information travel 18-inches from their heads to their hearts and then to their actions.

We should routinely encourage our kids to take know-how and turn it into action. As a parent, the best way to do this is to model it, but the power of verbal explanation can't be denied either. If we explain the rhyme and reason of why we do certain things the way we do, it will help your kids get into the habit of thinking through ideas and putting them into action.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

1. What responsibilities do your children dodge the most? Why do they do so?
2. Reflect back on how you've explained the reasoning behind those responsibilities. Have you given any other explanation other than "Because I said so?"
3. How can we phrase these explanations in such a way that doesn't use a parenting cop out like "Because I said so"? How can we use these moments as teaching moments?
4. Choose a few seemingly small responsibilities and write a short list of the ripple effect each of these have by getting them done or not.
5. Over dinner, explain how little chores and responsibilities actually create an overall harmonious family dynamic.



ONE THING: FOR FAMILY

Our kids tend to have vision no further than the length from their face to their cell phones. It's our role as parents to give them a broader perspective of life outside of themselves.

We want our children to see their roles and responsibilities in our family as necessary or beneficial for the whole. But they might not always understand that making their bed frees up time so mom or dad can make them a healthy lunch in the morning, which in turn helps them perform well at practice.

Most teenagers don't have that perspective without guidance, but that perspective tells a story. And stories invite people into them. That's why we love books, movies, and human-interest pieces so much. We are able to see ourselves in the characters and settings.

We must do the same for our families.

At the heart of it all, most kids are just trying to find a narrative to belong to. Our family has a narrative that our children are a part of, and we want them to recognize and celebrate that with us. We need to paint the picture for them that their everyday decisions matter and have lasting impact on the family's story.

An easy way to do this is to determine a goal for our family to reach as a whole. Such as taking a family vacation, cultivating a garden, or writing the family memoir.

Once we have a goal that we're all trying to reach, we can find the one thing each family member can do daily that will lead everyone closer to that goal. Then, repeat it tomorrow and the day after that.

One small decision, a day at a time, in the right direction is powerful. Let's make special note of how little decisions add up, compound and make a big impact on our family's story.

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THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

What do you want the legacy of your family to be? What is one thing you can change or do today to steer the family narrative in that direction?

What is your family's mission statement? Discuss it, write it down, and put it somewhere prominent, like near the front door.

What are your family goals as a group? What about as individuals?

Define the roles each family member plays to move the group towards your legacy, mission statement, and goals. How can you hold each other accountable for fulfilling those roles?

How can each member of the family do one thing each day to help each other reach their individual goals, as well?



PURPOSED PAIN: FOR FAMILY

We all have some sort of pain from how our parents raised us, and it likely contributes to our opinions and parenting style to this day. But do we ever wonder: What's it like to be on the other side of my parenting?

Our children will experience pains that come from our parenting. It's unavoidable because we are imperfect and our children respond to things in ways unique to them and sometimes unknown to us.

That's why we can't predict how each of our actions—or lack of action—will affect our kids. We might say something that seems completely banal and inoffensive to us, but it could spark a bad memory of something at school or elsewhere that sets our child off—whether they outwardly express it or not.

We don't need to strive to be pain-free parents; life doesn't work that way. Now, this is not a license to cause pain; we must be eager to grow and learn about ourselves and our kids to become a better person and a better parent.

We must have a growth mindset as human beings and be intentional about our parenting. The moment we think we know it all, that's when everybody loses.

When we cause pain as parents, the mark of good parenting is how we respond and grow from it. Since we cannot be perfect, we need to equip our children from a young age to help them grow from pains they experience instead of becoming a victim to them.

That starts with open communication. Our children should be able to talk about their pains, even those we have caused, without judgment or negative repercussions. We may not always say or do the right thing in our parenting, but we can open the door to talk it out with our kids when we slip up. We're a family, which means we're all in this together.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

As a family discuss what it is like to be on the other side of your parenting. Are there things that you do that could be changed? Or is there a reason behind your choices that would help your kids understand?

When things get heated during family discussions, what is your reaction or response?

Do your actions speak the worth of your child and the love you have for them? Do your actions lead the way toward achieving your family goals?

How can you improve communication during difficult times?

What practices can you put in place to bounce back as a family after difficult times? How are you going to lead your family to purpose pain?



OWN IT: FOR FAMILY

We've all made mistakes. Hopefully we also learned something from them. Even knowing the educational benefit of mistakes, we hate to see our kids make them. Often, we want to spare them any kind of pain or embarrassment. We would much rather have them learn from the mistakes of others instead.

The unpleasant truth is: Our kids will make mistakes. Everyone does. But we can teach them how to analyze their mistakes through the consequences of violating our family's rules, standards, and expectations.

So, what's the difference between these terms?

- **Rules** are the things that tell our kids what they can and cannot get away with. They are unyielding. Our kids understand that if they break the rules, there will be consequences.
- **Standards** are usually less overt than rules, and they tend to pertain to everyone in the family, not just the kids. It might seem like a subtle distinction, but standards are more likely to be met with disappointment than punishment. They could be something as mundane as "We won't leave dirty dishes in the sink" or as intangible as "We will always treat each other with respect."
- **Expectations** are the most intangible. They are how we expect our kids to behave. Things like "I expect you to work hard" or "I expect you to stay out of trouble at school." They're guidelines for how we hope our kids will live.

We have rules and standards for our families to help our kids avoid making what can often be painful mistakes. They may not understand why we have those expectations, though. As a parent, it's tempting to use the "because I said so" card to explain our expectations. But, if we really want to help our children make fewer mistakes in life, it's better to indulge that eternal curiosity and explain the reasons behind our rules, standards, and expectations.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

Make a list of your family's rules.

Then, make a list of your family's standards.

What are the expectations that you have for your kids? What are some of the expectations that they have for you? Make a third list with these expectations.

How does everyone feel about your family's rules, standards, and expectations? Are there any on the list that your kids don't understand?

Write down the most important answers from the three lists, and put them somewhere in the house where everyone will see them regularly. At the end of a week, talk about any differences you've noticed since placing the rules, standards, and expectations in a prominent place.



WHY NOT?: FOR FAMILY

"A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do." - Cadet Honor Code

The Cadet Honor Code is used by the U.S. Military Academy, Naval Academy, and U.S. Air Force Academy. Even for people who aren't inclined towards military service, it's a powerful sentiment. Honesty and integrity are essential to the core values of our society. And we'd be doing our children a disservice if we didn't do our best to pass those values along to them.

We all want our kids to grow up to be honest, upstanding citizens. To do that, they need some guidance every now and then. Honesty hurts. It can be painful or embarrassing, and it can have grave consequences. But lies are even more dangerous. As the old saying goes: "The truth will set you free."

There will be times when our child tells us something that we would rather not hear. Like that he threw a baseball through a neighbor's window. Or that the dent in the bumper of the Honda came from a pole that she backed into.

It's tempting to get angry and mete out punishment for the offense right away. But these moments actually offer an opportunity for us to encourage honesty. He could have neglected to tell us about the baseball. She could have told us the dent was just there after she came out of the store.

In a lot of situations, our children could get away with lying to us. When they choose to opt for honesty instead, that is a moment to celebrate. That's not to say that a grounding or extra chores won't be warranted, too. But, we can try to make it clear that whatever punishment they've earned is for the action—not the honesty.

If we do this consistently with the small things, our kids will be less likely to fear being honest about the big things.

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THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

Start a discussion by asking your kids: what does honesty mean to you?

If you catch your child in a lie, try to find out why they chose to lie. Talk about the reasons that honesty would have been the better choice.

Does your family have any specific rules about lying? What about rewards for honesty? If not, jot some down.

Share a story about a time when you had to choose whether or not to be honest. How did you feel? What were the consequences?

Honesty isn't just important at home. Discuss why it is important to be honest in other areas of life, such as work and school.



OVERNIGHT SUCCESS: FOR FAMILY

Parenting doesn't stop when our children are born. Or when they learn to walk. Or once they go to school. It doesn't even stop once they graduate.

Parenting is the ultimate example of a long-term goal. We want our kids to grow up to be happy, healthy, and generally good people. Reaching that goal requires more than one or two moments of "parenting." It's an ongoing process that we constantly refine, and it's made more challenging by the fact that sometimes our role changes as our kids grow.

Worse, it often feels like our kids grow up too fast. But that's just because the big milestones—the things we celebrate and even cry over—tend to overshadow all the work we put in to help them get there.

When we take him to get his driver's license, we forget all the hours we spent scared for our lives while we were getting him ready to pass the test. When she gets accepted to her dream school, we forget the long nights helping her study to get the grades or perfect the application.

In the hustle of everyday life, we sometimes forget to pause and look at how much effort and energy we're expending to reach our shared goals. Raising our child to be someone we're proud of is our main goal, but we share in their goals, too. Their wins are our wins.

Too often, we don't take time to appreciate all the little things that make parenting worthwhile. The celebratory events are markers of goals reached, but the little day-to-day moments are what the long-term goal of parenting is really built on.

We can always take more time to celebrate the little moments that go into reaching those big, winning moments, though. Because inevitably, when we reach a major milestone, like sending them to college, we're going to think it all happened too fast.

/// BEST 5 ///

THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

Parents: What's something small that you're proud of about your parenting? What's something big you're proud of?

Kids: What's something you're thankful for about your parents? What do they bring to your life that no one else does or can?

What's a big milestone coming up that your family is looking forward to? What small steps are going to happen before you get there?

Discuss at least 3 ways you can take time each day to celebrate the little things about being a parent?

What's one of your favorite memories about when your son or daughter was small? What's one of your favorite recent memories?



FOCUS FORWARD: FOR FAMILY

Sometimes it feels like kids have absolutely zero ability to focus. Unless of course we've said "No" to something they want. When denied that new video game or a night at a friend's house, their attention can become laser-focused on obtaining it anyway. Or at least complaining incessantly.

There's a huge difference between tenacious whining and tenacious focus. For starters, one is annoying and the other is productive. Still, both of these arise from a place of "want." It's easy to focus on video games or hanging out with friends because those things are fun, so kids want to do them. It's hard to focus on acing that math test because fractions are generally boring, so it's easy to say "I don't want to".

As parents, we just need to figure out how to redirect the tenacity we already know our children possess. Math may not be fun, but we can demonstrate how it is useful to achieve some other goal that is fun. We know that tenacity comes from desire, so we just have to help our kids figure out how this thing they *don't* want to do leads to something they *do* want.

The jury is still out on what exactly causes some people to be more tenacious than others, but there are ways to begin instilling this tenacity and grit in our kids.

For one thing, we can celebrate those times when they fall down and get right back up. Too often we get caught up in the idea of celebrating success rather than the effort that led to it. Instead of telling our children we're proud of the accomplishment, we can start telling them "I'm proud of how hard you worked."

Tenacity stems from wants, so our job as parents is to translate what our kids need into something that they want. That way, they can use that tenacious focus to achieve their dreams.

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THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

What accomplishment makes you most proud? How do you think the amount of effort you had to put into it affected how you feel about the accomplishment now?

Take turns sharing a time when you were frustrated, but you kept going anyway. What kept you moving forward despite setbacks?

Have each family member choose one activity that sounds fun but challenging, and that needs to be done daily for the entire week. Check each other's progress regularly.

What are your biggest distractions? How can each family member help the others avoid these distractions?

What is the most boring thing on your To Do list? Brainstorm some ways to make it fun.



CLARK KENT: FOR FAMILY

Despite what our kids might think, we do remember the days when we were their age. The reason it's hard for them to believe it is because being a teenager today just isn't the same as being a teenager back when we were growing up.

Our kids are dealing with different issues and a different environment, but we can still draw parallels. The exact circumstances aren't the same because society isn't the same, but there will always be similarities.

For instance, the subject matter in schools has changed, but the consequences for struggling at school haven't. On the plus side, the ways to help struggling students aren't all that different, either. The tutors are more likely to be virtual now, but they still exist.

The social hierarchy at school may not be the same as when we were their age, but they still have to deal with the same "perfect" students, bullies, or bad influences that we did. Sure, we didn't have to worry about seeing the "perfect" student we were envious of posted all over Instagram or Twitter as well as walking by in the hallways, but it's a safe bet that we still remember the envy and how that made us feel.

Adolescence is kind of like a treasure hunt where our kids don't have a treasure map. It's not really about what they find at the end of the journey to adulthood because the journey itself is where growth happens.

Unfortunately, we don't have a map to give because their journey won't look exactly like ours did. The landscape has changed and the tools to help reach the destination have progressed.

Still, we can put up guideposts, paint some boundary lines, or hand them a book of traveler's tips. Things have changed a lot since we were their age, but not so much that we can't recognize the rough outline of the path to growing up.

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THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

What are some of your child's struggles that remind you of tough times when you were their age?

What do you think is the biggest difference between growing up when you were a kid and growing up today? How might it actually be similar?

What is the most important lesson you learned growing up? How could you rewrite that episode of your life in a modern setting?

What's a life tip or piece of advice that someone gave you when you were growing up? How is it still relevant today?

If you were a teenager again today, how do you think the knowledge you gained from your first run as a teen would help you?



GUARANTEED STRUGGLE: FOR FAMILY

We don't like to see our kids struggle. At the same time, we know that we can't spare them from everything in life that could cause them pain. They have to learn how to deal with it on their own. The best we can really hope for is to offer support when they need it.

They might be dealing with a personal struggle like social anxiety or not doing well in a class. They could be trying to cope with a larger issue like a teammate being seriously injured or a national tragedy that's all over the news.

Struggle comes in a lot of shapes and sizes.

Our kids might find it hard to talk to us about something they're struggling with because they are afraid we will be disappointed. If a class isn't going well, she might be worried that we'll react with anger. If he's having trouble with bullies, he might be afraid that we'll ridicule him, too.

If our child comes to us with a bad grade on a paper, or if her teacher wants to talk to us about her performance, we can react in a way that demonstrates we're here to help rather than judge. We can offer to assist her on the next assignment, or if that's beyond our skillset, we can help her find a tutor. And while suggesting ways to help, we can make it clear that we don't think any less of her for having difficulties.

We also need to recognize that if our kids are finding it hard to cope with emotional or other issues, we may not be the best or only option for helping with that. But, we can't help if we don't know something is wrong. The best way to help our kids deal with problems is to make sure they know they can talk to us if something is bothering them.

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THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

Family discussion: Share a struggle that you are experiencing now, big or small. Pledge to support each other through the struggle and help where you can.

What is the family policy for talking about tough topics? Do you have a designated safe space for those conversations?

Take time to visit the more resources page for tips on helping your children deal with stress. What is one article or website that you found particularly helpful? Why?

Share a story of a struggle that you overcame in your youth. What lessons did you learn that you can impart to your kids?

Why is it better to face a struggle head on than to run away from it?