

Strategies for Parenting – The Road to Independence™

Strategies for Parenting – The Road to Independence™
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Cover page picture of Independence Rock in Wyoming USA was photographed by Kay L. Scott.

Introduction

Parenting is the most widely practiced role in the world, accounting for an amazing amount of time and resources focussed on raising children. Are we doing a good job and if not, what are the consequences in our households, schools, communities and beyond? Make the most of your opportunity to develop the right strategies for parenting to enjoy your time with your children and prepare them for a successful life. As you develop the right strategies for parenting along the challenging road to independence for your children, you will experience one of the most satisfying accomplishments in life – a legacy to be proud of.

This book was inspired by comments from teachers and other parents who respected the type of children we had raised and the type of parents we were. We have given a lot of thought to our strategies for parenting and feel that other people could benefit from our approach and success. We realize there is no one formula for successful parenting as there are many variables which will determine your child's success in daily life, school and their future. We will help you parent by providing good logic and thinking to give you a resource to further create and adapt our strategies and develop a framework of thinking in order to develop your own strategies.

We use “strategies for parenting” as a unique way to provide a mix of thoughtful and strategic thinking to elevate the approach to parenting. As parents and

Introduction

professionals we bridge customs, values and philosophies of being a parent with business skill development and a good appreciation of skills needed to succeed in daily life and careers. Our goal is to share our thinking with others in the hopes that we can help parents navigate through the many challenges of parenting and to bring new ideas to parenting. We can relate to parenting and feel we can communicate in an effective way through our experiences. As professionals we bring our own business training skills and techniques, basic logic, research and a great passion for parenting to develop our unique approach of strategies for parenting.

The strategies we have developed and the examples we use can be applied to all ages and respect cultural differences. For example; eating and healthy choices are life skills which can be learned and reinforced at all ages. Safety, education, attitude, interests, stress management and focus are a few examples of many of our other strategies which apply to each age of development and evolve with age.

A key component of our strategies for parenting and preparation for independence is the development of life skills. We define life skills as the skills you inherit and develop which allow you to function in your daily life. These skills broadly include all things people do and are developed over time. The goal of independence for your children will be accomplished once they have the necessary life skills to succeed on their own. The level of success children enjoy will be directly related to the level of life skills they develop.

Introduction

Our underlying theme of independence is the eventual goal and measurement of success as a parent. The Road To Independence™ is the journey to your child's independence. The obvious meaning of independence to most of us is to teach our children to cook and do the wash but it starts at an early age and has a much broader meaning in our minds. We have expanded the meaning of independence significantly to include children doing things for themselves and therefore developing many more important life skills and disciplines. We believe the foundation for independence includes basic life skills, character development, attitudes, experiences and activities all of which shape the individual. Our strategies are very broad and will help you along the long road of many years to develop and prepare your child for independence.

We have succeeded with our strategies for parenting. It is not our intent to boast about our children, but rather draw on our successes to help others learn from and apply our strategies. We realize readers will assess our parenting based on our children's success. Our daughter obtained a Division I athletic scholarship combined with a 93% academic average and our son with a 90% average, an academic scholarship and acceptance into the top business schools in our country. Our children obtained numerous; academic, school recognition, community and participatory awards and an impressive list of other accomplishments such as Student Council Presidents of their high-schools. On numerous occasions our children have been referred to as role models.

Introduction

Parenting is one of the most important roles we face, but most of us have limited to no training. Many of us learn from our exposures to parenting from our own parents, uncles and aunts, grandparents, friends, TV, movies, books and internet. We struggle at times and stress about what to do and how to approach it. We believe parents should give thought to how they should parent in the many situations which they will face. This book will give you helpful insights which you can build on with your own values, customs and approach to develop your own successful strategies.

An important part of successful parenting is your ability to develop as a parent. Children are the consequence of your parenting and the harsh reality is you are responsible for the actions of your children. Be honest with yourself and determine the root of problems – is the issue what your child is doing or how they are being parented. Start early as it will be tougher to treat later.

An interesting by-product of successful parenting is a resulting confidence and improvements in other parts of your life. We have found that our success as parents has also strengthened our professional lives. Conversely, we have seen many professional lives affected by parenting issues or challenges. We have also developed our management skills through our parenting strategies and have been fortunate to have a very successful marriage, which in part is due to a happy and successful household. Successful parenting does impact your life in many positive ways.

Introduction

As the founder of TeachingKidsBusiness.com we recognize the need to develop children as our future leaders. We also have impacted many children worldwide with progressive thinking in the areas of developing business and life skill curriculum for use at an early age. The insights we have gained and the international interest in this initiative have helped us formulate unique strategies for parenting.

We realize the area of Parent Coaching is a growing profession and market; therefore we encourage you to seek coaching to help identify your family's values and develop strategies that will fit. Our book will guide you through a coaching process to help you make more informed decisions. We will help you think through situations and draw out your own inner wisdom to make the right decisions as a parent.

We encourage your children to read this book or read it with them. The role of parenting will be respected more by your children if they realize what parents have to think about and the type of decisions which need to be made.

It is a very satisfying experience to work with our children and develop a book about parenting. Hopefully you will succeed as a parent and someday tell your stories or at least take the time and reflect on parenting with your children to help prepare them as parents. Please see www.StrategiesForParenting.com to share your experiences and learn about other parents and children experiences and strategies.

Acknowledgements

In order to have the knowledge necessary to write this book, we had to be parents, experiencing many scenarios to develop our strategies. I thank my wife for giving me the opportunity to be a parent and for her amazing commitment and insights to parenting. We are fortunate to approach parenting as a team with similar philosophies and goals and to work well together as parents.

We thank our children for listening and learning, which has enabled us to develop as parents. We appreciate their support of our unique strategies for parenting and for making the right choices as children growing up, to become the amazing young adults they are. We enjoyed their idea contributions for the book and the experiences we shared as a family over the many wonderful years of developing the content for this book. We appreciate your patience and understanding on our final say in editing – parental control!

We thank our parents for teaching us many lessons about parenting and for teaching our children many valuable lessons in their roles as grandparents.

We thank the very fine educators who have taken an interest and worked with our children, challenging them, engaging them in learning and participating in their

Acknowledgements

schools. We appreciate the acknowledgement you have given our children and us as parents as this has inspired us to develop this book.

We thank everyone who discusses parenting and takes an interest to develop their strategies for parenting. If we are successful in engaging parents in effective parenting then we will benefit from the successes of their children. You are making an investment in the success of our future generations. Thank you!

Contents

Introduction	I
Acknowledgements	VI
Section 1: Strategies for Parenting.....	1
Introduction	1
Determine your commitment to parenting	5
Compromises as a parent	5
Rethink the type of person you are	7
Define what parenting is to you	8
Parent as a manager.....	9
Be a professional parent – CEO of household	12
Guiding strategies for parenting.....	14
Look in the mirror to better understand your child and how you need to parent.	14
Consistency – “No means no”.....	15
Lead by example	17
Communications	18
Get your children involved in your strategies	24
Discipline	26
Safety.....	27
Family time	29
Sibling interactions	32
Don’t pamper your child	34
Your child is gifted.....	37
Celebrate successes	38
Section 2: Life Skills.....	41
Introduction	41
Life Skills – Basic - Foundation for Success	46
Eating	46
Sleeping.....	50
Focus – attention and concentration.....	52
Attitude.....	55
Reading	56

Contents

Value of money and budgeting	60
Life Skills - Character Development	64
General character development.....	64
Responsibility.....	68
Confidence	71
Leadership	75
Perspective	78
Mentoring.....	80
Interests	82
Bad influences	85
Sense of humour.....	86
Life Skills - Coping.....	88
Stress management.....	88
Expectations	90
Dealing with failure.....	92
Giving and taking advice	95
Priority setting.....	96
To-do lists	97
Learn to compete.....	101
Life skills through golf.....	103
Life Skills - Education and Career Preparation.....	107
Education in and out of school.....	107
Education – college and university	112
Job and career discussion	115
Entrepreneurial Skills and Dream	117
Section 3: The Road to Independence™.....	119
Concept	119
Conclusion	127
Appendix.....	129
Strategies for Parenting Mapping.....	129
About the Authors	133

Section 1: Strategies for Parenting

Introduction

We use “strategies for parenting” as a unique way to provide a mix of thoughtful and strategic thinking to elevate the approach to parenting. As parents and professionals we bridge customs, values and philosophies of being a parent with business skill development and a good appreciation of skills needed to succeed in daily life and careers. Our goal is to share our thinking with others in the hopes that we can help parents navigate through the many challenges of parenting and to bring new ideas to parenting. We can relate to parenting and feel we can communicate in an effective way through our experiences. As professionals we bring our own business training skills and techniques, basic logic, research and a great passion for parenting to develop our unique approach of strategies for parenting.

By definition, strategy is to plan and direct or a policy to achieve. We feel the use of strategy is very relevant to parenting. By thinking more strategically about parenting, you will develop approaches that work. This book presents strategies for parenting and references the importance of strategies together. Use this book to set a parenting plan and modify your strategy based on your learning from the book and your parenting experiences.

Strategies for Parenting - Introduction

People commonly think of the need for rules for successful parenting. Many think it is the use of the right rules that helps you succeed. Our approach is very different as we do not have a specific section on rules. It is our nature to challenge the status quo and find better ways to do things; therefore we developed strategies which replace simple rules. Strategies are much more thought provoking than rules and provide a stronger basis for directing behaviour. Our strategies for parenting have effectively created a new level of rules which are more philosophical, clearly understood, consistently enforced, respected and not just words or simple rules. Most importantly, as parents, we lead by example and bring more meaning and effectiveness to commonly practiced rules.

Our approach to using strategy and planning has evolved out of our professional and business training. In business we have learned to plan by sitting down and thinking before reacting. There are many books on strategic planning which would give you more insight to the use of this type of tool or technique. For our purposes, we will help you to think about important components of parenting and set a plan to execute. All plans are only plans and the assumptions and situations change, requiring new thinking and new strategies. Parenting is very dynamic and requires a balance of planning and reactive tactics.

The fact that you are reading this book is in effect a strategy to gain some additional insight to parenting and will possibly lead to experimenting with new parenting approaches. Strategy is thinking and the more you think

Strategies for Parenting - Introduction

about parenting the better you will do. A word of caution is not to take the thinking to the extreme such that you start spinning on what to do and don't react in time or do nothing.

In general, strategies work in some situations and not in others. There is no one strategy or simple steps for parenting that you can buy to solve your concerns or help you succeed. One strategy may work in one household and not in others. Our strategies have worked for us and can act as a guide to develop your own strategies.

It has been our experience that as you master one strategy it helps you put others in place. If you master eating and sleeping strategies then other strategies become much easier. If you are successful with reading and focus strategies then education strategies are much easier. Success in key areas helps you build other effective strategies. It is important not to take an approach to try and change everything at once but rather start early, build a foundation, gain success and further develop your strategies.

In business many consultants develop the "strategy of the year" to sell a new project which is similar to the fashion industry creating trends and fads to persuade consumers to change their clothes each year. Be careful about taking advice on something as important and precious as your children. Take a long term view on your strategies and build on them. Children require a significant investment of your time and money. Make

Strategies for Parenting - Introduction

the right investments and seek the proper help and you will enjoy successful parenting.

We strongly recommend that both parents use the same strategies. We were consistent in using the same strategies which ensured the decisions were the same from mother and father with no exceptions. It is important for parents to agree that decisions are united and that each parent will support the decision. This is very difficult to accomplish and is probably the root to many parenting problems. The reality is not all parents will agree on parenting strategies. This is a very important consideration and one you should discuss and come to agreement on.

Determine your commitment to parenting

- *Compromises as a parent*
- *Rethink the type of person you are*
- *Define what parenting is to you*
- *Parent as a manager*
- *Be a professional parent – CEO of household*

Compromises as a parent

The biggest lesson we learned as parents was the compromises we had to make for children, as our priorities in life changed immediately with children. Our ability to focus uninterrupted time on work and friends changed. We learned to adopt and enjoy our new focus with children as our priority. We resolved that if we were going to do this, we wanted to do it right. We realized that the satisfaction we had experienced from our work and friends could also come from our children. They assumed many of the roles of our friends and we became dedicated and professional parents – a job we loved and derived great satisfaction from.

We learned to enjoy the changes children brought into our lives, and the time we shared with them. As they got older we shared many times with them that many people would share with friends. We realized they had our genes and therefore had many of the same talents and

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

interests as us. It was easy to do things together. We were known as “the family” at our golf course, playing golf on weekend mornings to the surprise of many. As our children became our friends we developed a very special bond.

We have often heard the expression “Children won’t change our lives”. This wasn’t our strategy as we believe that parents must be willing to make the compromises necessary for their children. It is our belief that if you are not prepared to make a commitment to your children then you should not have them. Children will change your life. If they don’t change your life, you are not parenting and will consistently send the message to your children that you don’t have time for them and don’t care.

Time is a limited resource and parenting requires a large amount of it. We looked at how we spent our time and shifted our priorities to find time to be parents. People are always saying how busy they are but surprisingly they find time for the things they like to do. Find time for the important parts of parenting and if you have to compromise time, be smart about it. The more time you spend with your children the greater the bond, and the more likely they are to want to spend time with you.

We were extreme in many peoples’ minds on the compromises we made to focus our time with our children. We understand our commitment may not work for many people. Our advice is to think about compromises you can make and learn to realize they do

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

not have to be considered compromises as you may enjoy your family time more than you realize.

Another approach we took was to get our children involved in the activities we enjoyed like golf, which we could enjoy as a family activity. I compromised my participation in a regular golf group but over time I probably played more golf since I played with my wife and children. This never ended up being a compromise for me.

Consider doing activities you enjoy doing with your family.

Rethink the type of person you are

Parenting is a good time to reflect on yourself and think about changes you need to make to be a good parent. You can consider your life in stages of pre-children, with children and empty nesters when your children have moved out of the house and become independent. Your life is very different in each of these stages and should be lived differently. This is especially true with the life you lived before children. If you have chosen to be a parent, then you have taken on new responsibilities which require you to identify and manage accordingly. Your actions as a parent will need to be different as, there are times when you have to put on your “parent hat” and act like a parent. Life changes and you need to adapt.

We reassessed and determined what we needed to do differently as parents. This was as simple as looking at

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

the activities we did before children and making decisions to alter our schedule to accommodate being a parent. We believed that having children would change our lives and we happily rethought our priorities to spend time with and enjoy them. Beyond the scheduling issues you will also have to look at the types of activities you did before children. The first five years of a child's life are very important in their development, so be there to make the most of it.

You can take the idea of changing from scheduling and priorities to making changes in the type of person you are. This can be an opportunity for you to make positive changes in yourself to influence your children in a better way. We all have bad habits and things we know we shouldn't do. A good time to break these habits is during the time you become a parent and develop as a parent.

Many people want to leave a legacy. The same applies to you. The type of person you are and the family name you give to your child is part of your legacy. Consider your children as an important legacy. Help develop them into fine individuals who make you proud. Invest the time in your children as you would in other legacy strategies.

Define what parenting is to you

We believe it is important to bring clarity to what parenting is in your own mind. A good starting point for strategies for parenting is to define what you are as a parent and the roles you play. People will develop unique strategies as parents because of customs,

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

upbringing, experiences and advice, but one thing many people may not consider is defining what a parent is and the role they should play. You will find that once you are clear in your own mind what you are trying to do, then you will be more effective in communicating this to your children and getting results. This should be revised regularly.

We attended an introduction to marriage course at our church which was mandatory before the minister would marry us. We went with scepticism about the need for the course but we often reflect back on the experience. Many of the couples had not had basic conversations and did not understand each other well enough to make the commitment of marriage and to possibly become parents. They had not talked about planning for a family or how they would manage as parents or if they wanted to be parents. The more you talk about parenting before you have children the better and once you have children it is critical to discuss how you are going to approach parenting.

Parent as a manager

Consider parenting as managing. Once you consider yourself as a manager, you will draw on other experiences and skills to enhance your parenting. Managing people in business has many similarities to parenting your children. As a parent, be a manager and try different management techniques. You can research the many books and information on management styles which will help you experiment with approaches you are comfortable with and will be effective for your children.

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

This process will also train your children to be managed in different ways and develop their own management skills.

You have more management experience than you think when you consider management in terms of managing situations and being managed by someone. As a student you were managed by teachers and managed by others as a child growing up. As an adult you have been managed and managed through many situations. You have managed situations and have been managed by people thousands of times. You know of ways people managed you which you did not like and hopefully you have had many experiences in which you were well managed.

Management skills can also be learned through observations of movies and TV shows. These may not necessarily be good influences but they can be good and bad learning experiences. The key is to learn from all experiences and develop your own management style that works for your children. You should also realize that the same approach may not work for all children and the effectiveness may change at different ages.

We used a mixture of management approaches. At points in time we made the final decisions, but as our children got older we used more consensus management. We allowed their input and at times we voted on decisions with a majority rules approach. We often used the management approach in which we knew the outcome we wanted but allowed them to arrive at the same decision on their own with guidance and coaching.

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

The key is to try different management approaches to develop your own management skills and find what is effective in your household.

We developed a phrase in our household called “Parent Psychology”. This was our way of telling our children that we were managing them a certain way to help them succeed. We had fun with this concept when we competed. When they won in a friendly competition we suggested it was parent psychology and they felt good about themselves but realized we did not necessarily try our hardest. It was not long before they realized we were just offering an excuse for their successes. They started using the term “Child Psychology” if we happened to win. We continue to have fun with parent and child psychology to this day.

As a parent, like other managers, you have to make decisions. There will be times when you have to take a dramatic position and there will be other times you will need to think about it and consult your advisors. It is not a sign of weakness if you do not know what to do but it is weakness if you don’t take action to figure it out. It is difficult to make tough decisions in business or in your household. It is important to make your decisions based on the information you have and the assumptions you make. You will make mistakes and you will have to take responsibility for your decisions.

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

Be a professional parent – CEO of household

Don't underestimate how complicated parenting is and how demanding it is on you. It may not be commonly referred to as a profession but it has many of the characteristics of a very demanding profession that has impact on lives.

Develop yourself into the title of CEO, of Household. Often with a change in title people take on more responsibility. Consider the idea of training yourself to elevate your role as a parent. Treat parenting more like a profession which requires skills, training and experience in order to excel. Work at strategies for parenting to improve as a parent. Recognize the critical role you play and the need to be good at what you do. Have some fun with the idea of holding a senior role in your household.

A profession by definition is an occupation, especially one that involves knowledge and training in a branch of advanced learning. I realize most people would not consider parenting as an occupation but most would agree we work at parenting and many of us spend more time parenting than we do other jobs in our lives. Most would agree that parenting involves knowledge and training would be helpful. So for discussion purposes we can call parenting a profession that warrants us to think of ways to do our job as parents better. The better we are at our parenting profession the better our children will do in life. This can be one of the most satisfying jobs if you do it well and it can be one of the most stressful jobs if you don't.

Determine Your Commitment to Parenting

Consider parenting in the context of a job description at work. Companies that take the time to explain the job and the expectations of the job are more likely to ensure people do the job well and are not confused on the role. Companies that; identify the skills required for a job, assess skills and provide job training will have greater success with job performance. As in any job, parenting can have high achievers who go above and beyond the call of duty, who are passionate about what they do, and thrive to improve at every opportunity. Parenting is what you make of it. If you strive for excellence, plan how to get there, and work to accomplish your goals, you will be a successful parent.

Consider your parenting role in the context of running a business. A successful company run by professionals can have a great impact on society. As parents we are like small businesses with a smaller scale of individual impact but when consolidated around your neighbourhood, country and the world our success can have a tremendous impact. We are preparing the future generation who will inherit the world we leave them and evolve the world based on their values, priorities and abilities. Parenting is one of our greatest challenges and it needs our professional attention.

Guiding strategies for parenting

- *Look in the mirror to better understand your child and how you need to parent*
- *Consistency – “No means no”*
- *Lead by example*
- *Communications*
 - *How was your day?*
- *Get your children involved in your strategies*
- *Discipline*
- *Safety*
- *Family time*
- *Sibling interactions*
- *Don't pamper your child*
- *Your child is gifted*
- *Celebrate successes*

Look in the mirror to better understand your child and how you need to parent.

The expression of “look in the mirror” applies to parenting as you should be honest with yourself about the habits and character attributes you have. Once you understand yourself it will help you to better understand your children and better manage them.

My wife and I have fun identifying the traits or similarities between us and our children. It should be no

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

surprise our genes are passed on to them. My wife sleeps with a foot out of the covers and my daughter does the same. The closer you examine your children the more you will realize how similar they are to you. Armed with this information and knowing yourself, puts you in a better position to manage your children.

You should realize as parents that you are in effect managing yourself (a mixture of both parents) a generation later. Your parents may have used the expression that he or she is just like you. Logically it is valuable research to understand what the parents were like as children. This may not be the most reliable research but it is worth considering and may help you understand some of the challenges you are facing.

If you are faced with severe issues such as aggression and other more complicated parenting challenges you should consider professional help. Our book does not help you solve all your parenting challenges.

Consistency – “No means no”

One of the most important strategies for parenting was to deal with our children consistently. A very popular expression in our household was “no means no”. We did not waver on our decisions and rules, making sure to be consistent. They quickly learned when we would say no to things and when we would say yes, we meant it. They knew the boundaries and we managed them consistently.

We don’t know how many times we have watched and heard a parent say “don’t do that” several times and then

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

let them do it anyway. Common sense is that once you say no you must follow through with your decision or your decision is meaningless and your no actually becomes yes. Children are smart. Your child will quickly learn to challenge you until you give up. If “no” means no and there is no confusion or wavering on your part, your decision will be respected and followed.

If you want to have disciplined children then you have to learn to be consistent in the way you deal with your children. This is not to suggest that there are no exceptions to your rules. Let the change of mind be for truly unique circumstances or good reasons which make sense given the situation at hand.

Consistency applies beyond decision making and is equally important in all strategies in this book. As a decision maker you have to find ways to make sure your decisions are effective. If your decisions and the way you approach things changes daily then your decisions and actions will not be effective. Children are generally considered children because they need direction and often do not have the maturity to make appropriate decisions on their own. Your role is to give them the needed direction but ensure you don't send them in circles with conflicting directions. A confused child is more likely to make a poor judgement call. You can avoid a lot of issues if you are consistent.

Consistency is also important between parents. It is critical that you resolve an agreement to parent consistently. In the situation of single parents it would be very helpful to agree on parenting strategies with

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

other adults involved with raising your children. In situations in which there is shared custody it would be very helpful to try and agree with some underlying consistent parenting strategies in the best interest of the children as difficult as that might be.

Lead by example

You will discover that your children will force you to lead by example. They are very aware of the things you do and when you don't act the way you ask your children to act. If you yell at your children you can expect them to yell at you. If you don't show respect for your children they will be less likely to respect you and others. If you drink a lot and smoke then it is likely your children will do the same. The strategy of leading by example applies to all areas of this book – eating, sleeping, character etc. It is important to practice what you preach and realize you are a role model in many ways.

We learned to lead by example from our own children. One example that stands out was when we first walked them to school at about five years of age. One cold and snowy day I asked them to wear snow pants to school. They looked at me and asked why I wasn't wearing them. I was quick to put on my snow pants and everything I asked them to wear and walk them to school. My wife and I often laugh about the situation but also reflect on how important it was for us to lead by example. We realized I was probably the only Dad to walk his children to school with hat, gloves, boots and snow pants, but the lesson was worth it.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

There are many influences you lead. We tried to lead by example in key areas and concerns such as health, fitness and environment. We taught them to eat a balanced diet and make healthy food choices. We worked out and tried to stay physically fit. We tried to keep informed about environmental issues and played our part in recycling and energy conservation.

We all have expectations for our children and we often base them on what we have or could have accomplished in our own lives. It is important to find ways to lead the way with expectations you have for your children. You are more credible when you do what you say should be done. If you want your children to succeed then show them the way. Use your experience to help guide them to success or a path you would like to take if you had another chance.

Communications

You must learn to communicate well with your children at all stages of their development. Communications should be two way as you need to learn to listen well and communicate back to your children. We found the less we had to say the better. The longer the instructions or the more complicated the rules, the less likely they would be understood and followed.

When your children are very young, you need to listen and understand their needs. Our babies cried when they needed a change of diaper or were tired or hungry. You will learn when your baby is uncomfortable and needs

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

your attention. Babies communicate much better than you think and they will condition your response. Babies and toddlers will understand you well before they talk. As your children grow older they will learn how you communicate through your body language and mannerisms and tone.

We always believed our children understood us before they could talk. I talked to our babies when they were in the womb. We were amazed at my son's birth when he was born and came out crying but when I said in a comforting voice, that he had heard many times, "hi this is your dad" he quickly calmed down and looked up at me as if to say "I am alright now".

We also believed it was better to talk to our babies as adults and avoid excess baby talk. I don't imagine there is much research on the developmental impact of talking to very young children rather than making silly baby like sounds as you try to communicate with them. We always thought that talking properly would help them understand our sounds and help them understand us quicker. This approach was more relevant when they began to talk.

Your listening skills become more important as they start talking and asking questions. We were very patient in answering questions and any question was a good question at any age. Our children became very inquisitive as a result of this strategy. Children can also learn a lot from you when you answer their questions. If you take the time and interest in their questions you will also develop their sense of self-respect and confidence.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

We realized our children felt good about themselves when an adult took them seriously and did not ignore what they had to say or the questions they had. We also realized their confidence developed at an early age as they could communicate much more effectively from talking with more adults. Listening skills are continually important as children get older. The questions become more complicated and your answers have greater impact.

Communications is far reaching as it should also include the openness of communications, trust in talking to you about issues (you don't over react) and making sure you know where they are at all times and the kinds of things they are doing.

It is important to understand yourself as parents as your children have your genes. One of the parents may not be a good communicator which will explain why it is an issue with a child. Be sensitive to the communication issues which you as parents have. Be creative on ways to help your child change and as the parent find ways to make similar changes.

We felt the techniques of asking them to repeat what we have just told them are effective. Taking extra time to explain the reasons behind your decision is also helpful. If you want to communicate effectively with your children you need to make sure they understand you. We developed the concept of "let's review". This was a common phrase in our household to ensure there was a clear understanding on something very important.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

Talk to your children. Children keep secrets because they are afraid of the consequences or reaction of their parents. You have to learn to manage these situations well. Anger and shouting are not recommended. Try to provide an environment in which your children are comfortable to talk about their problems. You will make mistakes in this area, we all do. It is important to acknowledge you reacted inappropriately, apologize and try not to have it happen again. Make sure you appreciate that a problem to your child should not be undermined by you. All problems warrant appropriate attention and small problems can become big problems.

As our children approached their teenage years, we discussed the mistakes we made at their age and the mistakes we saw our friends and neighbours make. There is risk to this strategy as your children may now do what you did as a teenager! Proceed with caution. If you learned from your mistakes, this can be effective in helping them avoid the same mistakes.

The availability and use of cell phones has provided better opportunities to communicate with children. We purchased our children cell phones so we could communicate with them in cases of emergencies or to know that they arrived safely at their planned destination. Safety was our main reason for having a phone and the main use of the phones. We set rules on how the cell phones would be used and things we would and would not pay for. The phone was also treated as a privilege which could be taken away if not managed properly.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

We let our children know where they stood in our life. They clearly understood that they were the priority and how much we loved them. The security of feeling wanted and needed gives children a sense of confidence and self respect. They understand that we will support them through any situation. They know they can trust their parents to make the right decisions in their best interest. If there is an issue they needed to figure out they knew we would be thoughtful and think through the situation to find the right solution in addition to respecting their input.

There is a time when you need to trust your children with personal and confidential information. It goes both ways if you do not talk about private or sensitive matters then expect the same from your children. Build and develop trust. We talked to our children about how we had planned things if something happened to us. We discussed what measures we had taken to care for them and where to find important documents. This helped them better understand responsibility. As part of preparation for independence we taught them many things a parent has to think about beyond the basics. These discussions were often difficult and emotional but they gave our children a sense of security and confidence as they grew up.

How was your day?

We have had a lot of fun with the question of “How was your day”. In many households this question is probably asked and the common response would be good, fine, terrible or OK and that would be the end of the

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

discussion. We expected a more detailed response because we actually cared and more importantly we were willing to listen and develop discussion around the events of the day. You can learn a lot about your children if you can get past the basic responses to questions. It is a skill you have to develop but it will help you in many other parenting strategies.

One skill you need to develop is the ability to lead a conversation without drilling down with questions. The conversations can take a number of directions to help them deal with issues, create teaching moments and enjoy their experiences. It is one of those situations where you get out of it what you put into it. You also have to recognize the importance of picking the right moment to have difficult discussions.

The more your children can explain their day the better they will develop their communication skills. You can also help them talk properly and drop some of the school slang they develop. I remember when all children talked with the “um like” expression every few words. We had some fun with this. We started talking that way with extreme use of the “like um” until they got the point and were conscious not to use the terms. We also realized how bad habits can surface after years of good habits which reinforces that parenting never ends.

You will find that this “How was your day” approach helps further develop your relationship with your children in a positive way. It helps you understand their perspective and provides you with an opportunity to

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

shape their perspective. Also make sure you tell your children how your day was and ensure they are listening.

Get your children involved in your strategies

We tried to be effective communicators and explain why we did the things we did. We believed that we had to be able to explain decisions with good reasoning or in a convincing way for our children to respect our decisions. When you take the time to explain yourself you will communicate better and have a higher chance of acceptance.

We created a strategy which we called “family meetings” to address things that warranted significant focus and discussion. We had some fun with our “family meetings” when they were young. We would create an agenda and use a Fisher Price flip chart to make our points in the meeting. We also used this as an opportunity to teach them how to run a meeting.

We realized how effective this strategy was when our children called a “family meeting” at the age of eight or nine. They had some serious issues with some rules we as parents had broken and they wanted to revisit the rules and make sure we were clear on what we had done. It was a very memorable moment for us and it helped us realize how effective a family meeting can be. We have laughed about it and still practice it to this day!

There are many situations when you can ask your children what they think of your parenting approach. At

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

an early age you will be surprised on how honest your children are on assessing you. You can be very creative and have them do a review of your performance as a parent and the areas you need to improve on. It can be fun and a very constructive process.

Children will rate parenting based on their experiences in other households and conversations with other children. Sometimes lenient parents and teachers are favourites. We taught our children that lenient teachers are not necessarily the good ones as you will often learn more from more demanding teachers and bosses in later life. The same is true for parents.

As parents we discussed our approach compared to other parents. Our children understood why we did what we did and how it compared. They understood the better way to parenting verses the easy way with little conflict or without making the difficult decisions. We did not do the “status quo”. We made decisions in the best interest of our children and not based on acceptance or peer pressure.

We did not mind being exceptions. We taught our children that it was alright to be an exception in a good way. They realized that they do not have to blend in and do what everyone else does. They also respected that we did not have to parent like others did. They understood we took a different approach to parenting and they respected why we acted the way we did.

“What is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right”. Albert Einstein.

Discipline

Our approach to discipline is more about being disciplined as a parent, rather than on disciplining your children. We believe many of the discipline issues are the result of choosing the wrong strategies for parenting. Disciplined parenting will lead to disciplined children.

Most of the situations in which we had to discipline could have been avoided if we did our parenting properly. Often our need to discipline was on the days when the children did not get a good sleep, were bored or hungry. If you manage the basics well then the need for disciplining will be greatly reduced.

We have discussed the “no means no” strategy and feel it is very relevant in developing an effective discipline strategy. If you are consistent with good and effective strategies with your children then you will have a good chance of getting consistently good behaviour from them. If they know the boundaries of right and wrong and you consistently reinforce them, you will get discipline. We did not tolerate something one day and then get upset with them another day. We were clear on what was acceptable and it was understood and respected requiring few situations for repeated discipline.

We seldom used the discipline of “go to your room”. We always believed their rooms were an area they enjoyed and took pride in. Rooms were not jails or areas of

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

punishment. We encouraged them to spend time in their rooms, to read and hang out and relax. If we wanted to punish them we would have them do something they did not want to do in an area they did not want to be in.

We used “time out” strategies. There are times when we had to stop the activity or stop the continuation of the problem. We would temporarily stop all activities, sit down and create some alone time. We believed it was important to have some time to regroup, settle down and reflect on what was happening. This is good for parents and everyone involved. The key is not to pick up from where you left off but rather change the activity and start over. A time out can be a good opportunity to move on to something else.

Fortunately we have not had to deal with severe discipline problems. It is important not to start with this strategy as the solution is with other strategies. If this strategy is used on its own it will not be effective. If you think through and try strategies throughout this book you should eliminate the need for major discipline strategies.

Safety

We were extremely conservative by most people’s standards when it came to safety. We believed it was important to teach our children about safety and help them understand the risks around them. This is not about making them feel paranoid or unsafe in their neighbourhood but rather to be aware and smart about

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

situations they may face. The world has become a much more unsafe place with widespread kidnapping and internet related concerns of privacy and safety.

Learning about safety is a key cornerstone for independence. If children are brought up understanding the many safety issues parents are concerned about and the risks they face, they will make smart decisions for their own safety. You have to think about risks and help prepare your children. Many situations can be eliminated by making safe decisions. A popular phrase in our household was “eliminate the risk”. If you avoid risky situations you will eliminate risk and promote greater safety for your children.

We were effective in saying no to situations in which we could discuss and agree to on the basis of safety issues. We learned to make decisions in the best interest of the safety of our children. This is one of the most difficult things to manage with children as they are not aware of the many unfortunate things that can happen to them if they walk into the wrong situation physically or electronically.

Safety is a broad concern and applies to all ages of development. It is important to think about safety in your decision making, not in a paranoid way but in an observant way. At the infant stage; how they are left when unattended, and things they can put in their mouths should be considered. At the toddler stage; surroundings such as hot things, animals, stairs, swimming pools, fast running water, roads and cliffs should be considered. At the teen stage; internet,

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

walking on the street alone, drugs, gangs and other situations you will need to think of.

Family time

It is very common to hear the term “balance of life”. In this balance people are looking for family time as an important component. Many people’s work lives and home lives are blurred with the advancements of technology that makes us accessible 24/7. The international competitive marketplace makes it more challenging for the businesses we work in which puts more demands on parents. Everyone understands the importance of family time for the development of children and the relaxation of parents. The key is to find time for family and make it quality time.

We challenged ourselves to discuss what we were trying to accomplish as parents and what family time meant to us. We determined that being around our children was important but was not necessarily quality time. We realized being together in our home or in the same area was not enough and in our mind was not “family time”. Our concept of “family time” was spending time together and doing meaningful things together, not just inhabiting the same space.

Our children challenged us when we were distracted and not paying attention. We taught them to demand our full attention and respect when they had something to say. They would use the phrase “Earth to Dad” or “Earth to Mom” to remind us that we should focus.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

Family time can take the form of meal time, outings, hanging out and simple activities. Being together is one thing but actually doing things together is another level of family time. Challenge yourself to find quality family time. We often examined our options for things to do on the basis of the quality of the time we spent together. Be creative and define family time and work it into your schedules like other things that are important to you.

We tried very hard to find time to eat together as a family as much as possible. This is often difficult to accomplish and when you can make it work it is more important to use the time effectively. The sections of this book, such as “How was your day” and “communication strategies” are very helpful during family time.

We introduced a Friday night tradition we called Nacho Night in which the children made a Nacho dinner and we later watched a movie together. While simple, we made a commitment to do this as a family, made it a priority and made it work but more importantly we all enjoyed and wanted it to work. To this day, even as they have grown up we still work towards having Nacho Night together.

We are a sports minded family and we tried strategies in which our children would participate in the sports we could enjoy with them. Yes, we spent a lot of time watching them play sports but we also spent time playing sports with them. We created a “Champ Challenge” for fun competition in various sports to see who the “Champ” was. We were known as “the family”

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

at our golf course where we played golf as a family early on Saturday and Sunday mornings. We found sports to be a great opportunity for family time.

Travel is an excellent strategy for family time and teaching moments. While you travel you are together as a family. We used travel as an opportunity to share quality time with our children. While traveling we would talk about things and hang out together. We use the term “Road Trip” for our journeys. We drove many places. Our preparation for travel was a teaching moment, as each person had a role and got their own things organized. They learned simple things like learning to pack as we did not pack their bags for them and planning as we took the time to plan out the trips. Travel was also a great opportunity to talk about different markets with different cultures, food, clothing, music and many other things we noticed and discussed.

We recall one long tedious road trip to Florida for a family vacation. We were all tired of driving and being in the van. Our children were starting to ask the question of “are we there yet” and the frequency started to increase. We pulled over to a parking lot and took turns putting each of them on the drivers lap and letting them drive the van. As we drove in circles and laughed, they quickly realized how difficult it was to drive and quickly respected what the driver faced. They realized driving was not something they could do yet and I am sure they watched and learned. The trip continued with much more patience.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

During family time, be present and not distracted by other things. Be focused and your children will be more focussed.

Sibling interactions

A key to our strategies for parenting was to make a commitment from the start that our children would get along together. By succeeding in this area we created healthy dynamics in the house which provided an environment to make it easier to put many other strategies in place. We spent time enjoying each other's company and eliminated unnecessary stress from sibling fighting.

We did not tolerate fighting or not getting along together. While very different individuals, they grew up as best friends and have helped shape each other into the fine individuals they are today. They share common values and interests and helped each other through many of the issues they faced as young people including peer pressure. They may have compromised other friendships, in the short term, but benefited greatly from their friendship.

We have heard of many situations in which siblings do not get along and the many problems it causes in households. Our approach was to eliminate stress from senseless arguments, teasing and unproductive time in managing these types of issues. We created an environment in which we enjoyed each other's company, learned to compromise individual priorities, respect other people's needs and feelings.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

We can't emphasize how important it is to be consistent with this strategy. We had a zero tolerance. We did not pick sides in disputes and when mediation was needed we dealt with it immediately and resolved the issue.

We also gave a lot of thought to the types of activities our children participated in and encouraged them to do similar activities so we were not dividing and conquering when it came to time. This can be difficult to accomplish as you also want your children to try different activities to determine what they enjoy to do. We were fortunate that they enjoyed the activities we all participated in. If you succeed in having them share interests and activities then you will be more likely to strengthen their relationship with each other.

When our children invited friends over, we encouraged them to play together and not exclude the other. If friends did not respect this understanding, they were not welcome in our home. This was obviously easy to accomplish as they were close in age. It also taught them respect for each other which was not compromised with peer pressure and their friends learned to appreciate each other as well.

We did not allow sibling friendship to end with other friendships or boy friend / girl friend situations. We made sure there was sibling time. We taught our children that friends will come and go. Boyfriends and girl friends will come and go but your sibling friendship will continue for a life time.

Don't pamper your child

The notion of pampering your child is very common and something we all see too often. To pamper is to treat in a very indulgent way which is to be too kind and lenient. We have seen and heard of the ridiculous things parents do for their children. We have seen lenient situations when we think to ourselves “please do something with your child”. This is a common problem and a strategy which may seem like good parenting to those who want to spoil their children.

Our goal of independence could not be accomplished with pampering. You may think you are being a good parent by being lenient and giving your child what they want, but you have to challenge yourself to make your decisions for the good of your child. We always used the expression “it is for a good reason” and this holds true in many situations. Your good decisions are often more difficult decisions to make and most important to the development of your child.

Our strategy has always been to be firm on the important things and clear on the rules of behaviour. This eliminated embarrassing situations in public and ensured that our children acted appropriately in public. We have never pampered our children and were always conscious of this issue. We rewarded them for good behaviour with respect and privileges and not bribes or tolerance. We would not give in to bad behaviour like crying to get something; we always took a firm position on that.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

We are very kind and respectful, but we would never compromise reasonableness with pampering. There were times when they were very sick and we would go a little extreme to ensure their comfort. There were times when they had worked very hard and needed a break so we might fuss over them more than usual to treat them for good reasons. We would never treat them to influence their behaviour (bribe) or be lenient to avoid making the tough but appropriate decisions.

It is important to think of the long term consequence of the strategies you use. If you or your care-giver constantly tolerates bad behaviour by bribing your child with treats, you are conditioning this continued behaviour. As the years pass by, the consequences can become more complicated as the initial bribes are not enough and become less effective.

Often children might feel sorry for themselves when their challenges appeared too great. We always listened but seldom focused on feeling sorry for them but rather encouraged them to be determined and move forward. We encouraged them to “deal with it” and focus on actions to move forward rather than being stuck on feeling sorry for themselves. Help give them perspective to manage through difficult situations. Be sensitive and understanding within reason while encouraging them to deal with things.

The issues of pampering become more apparent in college. If you do everything for your children as they grow up, college will be a much bigger adjustment and the likelihood of success will be less.

Our child's perspective:

In my first year of university, I had quite the eye opening experience. Basic principles that seemed like second nature to me while non-existent in many college students. This includes organization, cleaning up after yourself, getting enough sleep, managing garbage and much more. Students took advantage of the cleaning their parents did at home, and as a result lived in very messy dorm rooms, apartments and houses. The sad part is they were completely ok with the mess because they either didn't know how to clean up or were "too lazy to" bother.

The basic principle of cleaning up after myself helped me succeed in an organized college life. Managing garbage is one of the funniest things I find in university students. People will have overloaded garbage cans starting to grow mould and smell from food, and yet they still do not take the garbage out. The extent of putting the garbage out is often to put it in the common area for someone to remove it.

Many kids have taken advantage of the little things done for them while not appreciating the many things done for them and not having to do it on their own. It is hard to believe that taking the garbage out for your children is considered "pampering" until they have to do it themselves and realize it was always done for them.

Your child is gifted

It is important to accept your child for who they are and not who you want them to be. Everybody is unique and this is something which should never be under minded. This uniqueness is a gift as is the many qualities and skills your child has and develops over time. Help your child identify and develop their unique character and skills. Help your child realize they are gifted.

The term gifted can cause confusion. In some school systems there are gifted programs which suggest the children are smarter than others and should be taught differently. We had this type of program in our children's primary school. At an early age of about grade 3, children were given a test to determine if they qualified for the gifted program. My daughter wrote an examination which we really didn't give much thought or interest to until the results. One day I was walking my daughter home from school and we were talking about her day. I knew something was bothering her as she seemed very disappointed. She looked up at me and said "Dad am I gifted"? I asked her why she questioned if she was gifted and she told me she was not accepted into the gifted program. I quickly assured her that she was a very gifted young girl and should be proud of herself. I told her that I believed the gifted program testing was focussed on IQ and not the many other important things that make a person truly gifted. I told her I believed she was born with a level of IQ which may not meet the testing standards of a gifted test but that she should be confident that she is a very smart girl and has many gifts. I also comforted her by acknowledging her gifts of

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

personality, looks, sports ability, artistic and creative talents and much more, all of which would ensure she succeeded in life. I helped her understand the school system did not appreciate her gifts beyond academic scores. It was a tough learning experience but one of those moments that ended up having a positive impact.

Our experience with the notion of gifted children helped us as parents and our children understand how each of us is in fact is gifted. If the school system is limited in their perspective of “gifted”, this does not mean your child is not gifted.

We use the term gifted often to sincerely acknowledge the good qualities, skills and talents of our children. They have learned to realize how fortunate they are to be the type of people they are and how gifted they are.

Celebrate successes

If you teach your children to celebrate success they will likely be more interested and motivated to succeed.

Our family is well known at our grocery store bakery for “Smiley Face Cakes”. Years ago we purchased a cake and were asked what we would like written on the cake. I responded with the request for a smiley face. Through the years we have trained many store personnel on how to draw a smiley face on cakes. We have a film library of great moments. We chose the smiley face to be the symbol of our happiness for the accomplishment of our children. Many smiley cakes later and many happy times we have instilled a tradition and more importantly a

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

reflection on the accomplishments of our children. We have brought smiles to their faces as they have to ours.

The key is to take the time and celebrate success or what we call a small celebration. This is a great time to consistently reinforce what success is and that it is something to be proud of and celebrate. The underlying action is to motivate your children to do well with a simple routine. This is not a bribe or a costly incentive but rather a thoughtful and sincere celebration. The action of getting together and finding the time to reflect and celebrate is a reward in and of itself, while the cake or other symbols of celebration may or may not be appropriate in your household.

The notion of celebrating success can be started at a very early age when there are many firsts in their development such as; rolling over, sitting up, eating on their own, crawling, walking, first words and reading. As your children develop, this strategy applies to minor accomplishments as well as major accomplishments. It is important to not focus on very difficult goals as accomplishments but rather every day goals which have meaning to your children. There are many small accomplishments between the big accomplishments. Take the time and celebrate success.

I recall a golf lesson in which the instructor gave a great tip on celebrating success. He told our children to tip their golf hats after they made a good shot. The idea was to take a moment and acknowledge their success. We had fun as a family throughout the years when they turn to us and tip their hats.

Guiding Strategies for Parenting

A word of caution is to be careful not to expect too much success. It is important for children to set their own goals and determine if they have been successful in obtaining their goals. It is also important for parents to acknowledge accomplishments which in your mind should be celebrated independent of your child's goals. If your child does not reach their goals you can still demonstrate a need to find satisfaction in their accomplishments. An extreme example would be to thrive for a gold medal and finish second or top 10 in an international competition. This is still a significant accomplishment and worthy of celebration.

I remember a situation in which I caddied for my daughter in a world golf championship. She finished third in the event. After her round she looked at me as if to say "how did I do" as she was close to winning and felt she could win but did not win. I started crying with happiness and made it clear that winning was not the only great accomplishment. Trying hard and doing her best was a great accomplishment.

Section 2: Life Skills

Introduction

A key component of our strategies for parenting and preparation for independence is the development of life skills. We define life skills as the skills you inherit and develop which allow you to function in your daily life. These skills are very broad to include all things people do and are developed over time. The goal of independence for your children will be accomplished once they have the necessary life skills to succeed on their own. Therefore the level of success children enjoy will be directly related to the level of life skills they develop.

Our strategy for parenting is unique in our approach to the development of life skills and the type of life skills we develop. Our approach uses a combination of logic, common sense, trial and error, experience, values, background, education, business training, research, creative thinking and passion for parenting. Skills start with the basics such as eating and sleeping and are greatly expanded in the remaining chapters of this book.

We believe everything you do takes a level of skill. The more skills a person develops the more likely they are to succeed. Children are born with many skills which are naturally performed with levels of natural talent. The potential of children can be enhanced with further skill

Life Skills - Introduction

development and natural talents can be developed when they are identified and nurtured. A key strategy for parenting should be to identify and develop many skills.

The key to developing life skills is to understand everything you do requires a skill and then identify and plan ways to develop the skills. We discuss talking, thinking, concentration, focus, leadership, character development and a very long list of other skills in this book. As parents you can develop and influence these skills. Strategies for parenting can evolve as your opportunity to identify the skills your child needs and ways to help them develop these skills. Your level of commitment and type of training in this area will determine their success.

We determined it was important to consciously teach our children to do things and help them identify and develop skills beyond the obvious and with more purpose. We believed their development had huge potential if we could develop an innovative parenting approach. We did not accept the status quo. The underlying philosophy to our skill development strategy was to challenge ourselves on how our children could do things better in their daily lives and prepare them for independence and their working life.

You need to learn to be patient when it comes to teaching skills. Many skills can be taught by taking extra time to allow your child to develop their skills by doing things themselves. It is a tough decision and perhaps more time consuming to not do everything for your children.

Life Skills - Introduction

An analogy to developing life skills is learning and training for a sport. To learn a sport there are basic skills, advanced skills, rules, strategy and situations to play and compete. People who excel at sport will often have natural talent but still have to develop their skills and there are many who have to work very hard to develop their skills. We feel the development of a child or preparing them for life has many similarities to developing an athlete and preparing them to compete in their sport. If you feel you understand sports and sports psychology well, then use this experience in your strategies for parenting.

Our philosophy as parents was to encourage our children not to quit if unsuccessful the first time and to help them develop skills over and above the natural talents they had. We tried to help them reach their potential. We also identified many skills we felt were essential to their development and future success. In effect we started a training program at an early age to start developing their skills.

As professionals we realized the potential of our children. We believed children have no pre-conceived limits but were only constrained by attitude, habits, skills, experience and opportunities. We thrived to share our skills with them at an early age which we developed over our years of experiences, training and research. We never believed they were too young to learn skills but rather they were not yet given the chance.

Life Skills - Introduction

Every experience good or bad can provide a valuable learning experience and can develop skills. When they make a mistake it is important to focus on what they learned rather than all the negative things you may default to. If they understand it was a mistake and learned from it, they are less likely to repeat the mistake. If you just get upset and then let it settle, you will be conditioning them to the fact that the mistake can keep happening and they will learn what to expect with no learning. I remember a successful business person stating that he would not hire someone who tells him they have not made mistakes before. People who make mistakes have gained valuable experience. The key is to allow your children to make mistakes but control the extent and risks to ensure their safety. Do not over-parent such that you do everything and prevent them from making mistakes and learning important skills.

Don't get distracted by terminology on what is a talent verses a skill and what is a strategy versus a goal. The classification of what we are doing in "strategies for parenting" and "life skills" is not as important as the results. Develop and use your own terminology. Many books by strategists and consultants are commonly focussed on the terms and the presentation of concepts while we are focussed on ideas which have results.

This concept of teaching and developing life skills applies to the parent as much as the child. Once you recognize the many skills you use (thinking, focus, time management etc) and accept that these skills can be learned and improved, you will develop these skills and be more effective in teaching them. Our simple advice is

Life Skills - Introduction

to try and do the things you do better. If you develop an attitude to do all the things you do better then you will challenge yourself and find ways to improve. If you can help your children develop a good attitude towards learning and improving as an individual then the development of life skills will evolve more naturally and with more self motivation.

This concept of developing life skills is further explored at www.TeachingKidsBusiness.com in the resource center.

Life Skills – Basic - Foundation for Success

- *Eating*
- *Sleeping*
- *Focus – attention and concentration*
- *Attitude*
- *Reading*
- *Value of money and budgeting*

Eating

We believe eating is a basic yet very essential skill that we taught our children. We realize teaching about eating is a very broad responsibility. There is the obvious need for food, how to eat, what to eat, when to eat, where to eat and how to shop for and prepare food. With the influx of a more health conscious society, we became more conscious about eating and trying to keep current with new research and guidelines. We were very committed to ensuring that they understood the importance of eating and good eating habits.

Eating seems like a very basic subject matter but it is critical to teach your child. Once they master the important fundamentals of eating and learn to continuously educate themselves about eating, they will be well on their way to independence and a healthy life.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

The skill of how to eat or manners is important. It is difficult to generalize as there are many customs and cultural differences in acceptable manners. It is important to understand acceptable manners and as parents it is your role to consistently reinforce manners at mealtime and whenever your child eats. As your children enter the social and working scene, their manners become more noticeable and can affect their acceptance and success.

We realized eating was important on a number of levels for good health, energy, self-image and performance. Learning to eat the right things is a life skill. We taught our children “you are what you eat” and helped them realize good balanced meals would help them look after their bodies. They realized how important their bodies were and that they had to look after themselves with exercise and a balanced food intake.

We understood the importance of a balanced diet from key food groups. We were disciplined to plan meals to ensure our children ate what was good for them and not what they wanted to eat. They never had sugar coated cereals, limited candy and seldom ate at fast food restaurants or processed foods.

We were brought up to learn to appreciate having food. We understand that many children go without food and we are fortunate to have good food, so we don't waste it. We also believe in eating what is put in front of you (provided it is safe and without allergy issues). We never accepted “I don't want this” or “I don't like this and I am not going to eat it”. The only exception to this

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

strategy was when we wouldn't eat it either. Our children were to eat what they were given and to be appreciative of what they had to eat.

One thing we learned at an early stage in parenting was the importance of routine in eating. We learned that when our children were very young and we were late in feeding them that they would get tired and difficult. We would regret the times when we were delayed on meal time and would blame ourselves for their behaviour. We learned to schedule activities and snack time to ensure we did not miss meal times.

Snacking is important provided the snacks are healthy. We know of many situations in which parents snack children before meal time and later their children waste food and do not eat a good meal. It is important to set a plan for snacks at all ages with the help of research, nutritionist and/or your doctor.

We did not treat our children to junk food. We helped them understand that the fast foods and junk food that many parents "treated" their children to were not a good idea as too much junk food would harm their body. A real treat was something good for you. This may seem extreme to many parenting strategies but we truly believed in it and could make a good case with our children. Sure they had some unhealthy snacks like candy, chips, pop and chocolate but it was not deemed to be a treat as it was simply something they enjoyed to eat and could do it in moderation.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

We tried to create “cultural nights” in which we would serve a meal considered to be popular in another culture. The concept was to try food and to research and discuss other cultures. We were not as successful as we would have liked to be but believe this strategy is worth exploring.

As many of the strategies in this book, if you start with good habits, disciplines and understanding, then children will learn to make the right choices. The best way to prepare them for independence is to help them understand the right choices in life. We taught them at an early age that toys and other things could be replaced but not your body. They learned to respect and look after their body more than their favourite toy or any other possession. This applies to eating and to injury rehabilitation. We taught them to understand their injuries, seek advice and take the necessary steps to heal and rehabilitate the injury.

Over the years we had good conversations about abusing your body which helped our children to make informed decisions on alcohol, drugs, risky activities and smoking. They realize that excess alcohol will kill brain cells, smoking will destroy your lungs and drugs like cocaine will damage your heart. Education is a key strategy to prevention. There are many good resources that will help you teach your children what is good and bad for their body.

Sleeping

Good sleeping habits should not be underestimated. A well rested child will be easier to manage at any age, perform better at school, be more enjoyable to be around and will be healthier. Tired children can be cranky and their immune system will be weaker leading to more likelihood of getting sick. If your children don't get the proper amount of sleep you will regret it on a number of levels. Good sleeping habits apply to all ages and if you help develop good habits at an early age your child will benefit from this for many years. Good sleeping habits are a very valuable life skill.

We were painfully consistent as parents when it came to bed time and sleep. Routine was the best approach for us. Everyone knew the rules and we stuck to the rules with very few exceptions. Our goal was to have our children obtain 8-10 hours of sleep each night. We always believed in going to bed early and getting up early. We believe that they should wake up rather than be wakened up so they got the amount of sleep they needed.

The sleeping routine will often determine the experience you will have with your children in the morning. If they get enough sleep and are up in time to get organized for their day, then you have successfully helped them start their day in a good way. If they wake up tired and are rushed in the morning with lots of stress in the house, then they are more likely to carry this state of mind into their day along with the parents. Our children had plenty

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

of time to eat an excellent breakfast, time to prepare a snack, brush their teeth and ensure they were prepared for their day. They would always arrive at school early to ensure they were organized and relaxed for their day.

Sleeping disciplines should carry on to the teenage years. It is more difficult to tell a teen to go to bed early. We found that our approach through the pre-teen years helped our children understand the importance of sleep. Our consistency allowed us to require the same approach in the teen years. There are more exceptions in their teens but we remained disciplined about sleep requirements and while challenging at times, the consistency paid off and they respected our decision.

Once you teach your children good sleeping habits and help them understand the importance of sleep to their performance, they will reach a stage where they will go to bed when they are tired (no games of I am not tired so I can stay up late). Many times our teens would go to bed early by most people's standards (before 9:00 pm), because they were tired and wanted a good sleep. They also realized that a good way to prepare for a test, beyond studying, was to get a good night sleep to ensure your mind was sharp.

In college it is often hard to go to bed early because of roommates and noise. By teaching them the importance of sleeping they planned to take day time naps to get their required sleep and feel effective in class.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success **Focus – attention and concentration**

We believe the ability to focus is an essential skill that is not normally taught. In our minds focus relates to the ability and discipline of attention and concentration. If a child is disciplined to focus on something they are more likely to do it and do it well.

The ability to focus is a skill that we had to consciously develop as parents to sometimes endure less stimulating activities. If we lost interest in activities our children would do the same. We had to be disciplined and taught them to be the same.

As parents we believe focus can be taught. In a generation of high cases of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) we believe there are ways of conditioning good focus at an early age. We were very conscious of having our children do activities for a reasonable period of time and focus. We did not allow them to jump from one thing to the other. We consciously created an organized environment so there was little clutter of things which allowed them to focus on an activity for a period of time. We did not plan their activities such that they would jump from one activity to another or get bored easily.

Sesame Street TV programs have been blamed for altering the attention span of children as they were exposed to short bytes of information. Our approach was to expose our children and develop them with minimal educational TV. We planned many days a week with no TV and when they watched TV they were allowed a

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

maximum of one to two programs in a day. We allowed educational programs only. I know we succeeded with minimal TV when my daughter recently heard about the 40th anniversary of Sesame Street and wondered if she had ever watched it. She did in fact watch it in moderation and enjoyed the characters and the learning lessons.

We discovered drawing and projects at the pre-school age were good activities for focus. We encouraged them to draw and create things and purchased toys which we believed helped develop concentration or focus skills.

We tried to be creative on the types of quality games we played. We played a memory game for hours in their early development. It was a game with many cards with animal pictures. Each card had a picture of an animal. Each animal had a pair of pictures consisting of an adult and a baby. To start you would mix up the cards and turn the animal picture downward and sort the cards in rows and columns. The first player would turn over two cards and if they were a match they would keep them to keep track of their matches and if not they would turn the cards over in the same place they originally turned them over. As we took turns and cards were turned up we would try and remember where certain animals were. The person with the most matches won the game. As adults we never won but had lots of laughs and more importantly our children enjoyed it and developed their memories. As a bonus to the skill development we had great family time.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

The key is to think of activities at all ages that require children to concentrate for a period of time. You must have patience and stick with activities because once you get bored your children are likely to also.

If you think and develop a parent plan on toys, out of school activities and edutainment you will be more likely to succeed with the right choices. It is easy to follow the commercials, the status quo of friends or the hot must have toy. The more difficult decisions are to make the right decision with the right criteria. Ask yourself what you are trying to accomplish and how the toy or activity will influence your children. Many things sold to children are inappropriate on a number of levels and if you stop to think about it you will make better choices. This may sound too deep for many but there are many ways to influence your children and shape the type of people they become. You will have to make difficult decisions.

As they get older, the basic toys are replaced with computers and video games. We took a very strong position on video games. We only allowed sports videos. We believe the many popular violent video games were not appropriate information or influences for children of any age. We recommend edutainment choices. While they may have been exposed to violent video games outside our home, they had perspective and didn't ask for it at home.

Books and music are great activities to help children develop focus skills. Sports can also be great activities.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

We are huge supporters of golf as an amazing developmental strategy for children.

Don't let your children get bored. The impact of boredom can be underestimated. At an early age it leads to senseless problems which are magnified during older ages. By keeping your children busy and focused on the right things you will help develop them in the right ways.

Attitude

Attitude is often underestimated in the impact it has on the success of your children. By definition attitude is a way of thinking or behaving. If a child does not want to learn they will not try to learn. The key is to show your child how they should think with a good attitude. Attitude is also an inward quality that helps build confidence which will help your child succeed.

Attitude has taken our children further then talent and skill. If you shape a good attitude in your children, you will have countered one of the main obstacles for them to develop successfully. As other strategies in this book, a good foundation of attitude is easier to build on and will make other strategies and skill development more effective.

We believe attitude can be shaped by good parenting and also realize attitude can be influenced positively and negatively by other influences. As parents you can clearly control your direct influences and need to take

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

extra care in exposing them to other influences. You have to lead by example with good attitude traits yourself such as positive thinking, desire to do your best, look after your possessions and respect for other people. It is important for you to determine acceptable attitude for your children and make the managing of attitude a priority.

As you examine other sections of the book, consider an “attitude factor” while developing your strategies for parenting.

Reading

We believe reading is one of the most important skills and passions we have taught our children. The ability to read is essential to learning and to unleash the amazing resources available in print format. Reading is a lifelong skill and will help your child develop in many other ways. The better your child reads the more they will learn.

Many people may think the school system will teach children to read and it is one thing we take for granted. It is not our goal to criticize the many excellent teachers and school systems, but there is always room for parent involvement which will lead to enhanced results. There is an opportunity for parents to teach reading skills, encourage children to read and provide reading materials. We do not have to discuss the importance of reading as we all understand it is critical to learning and sharing information in our society. You need to consider

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

improving the level of reading skills, comprehension and desire to read as part of your reading strategy.

Reading is a great investment of time and money. We spent a lot of money buying books and time finding books in the library. We have no regrets and would often buy books over toys. We quickly learned reading became a lifelong skill which would help them in many aspects of their lives. As good readers they absorb information more easily which helped them in school. They become more knowledgeable which makes them more interesting people and they learned to be content with a book which developed concentration skills and a very valuable skill of appreciating down time or relaxation.

Reading is an important skill required for your children to succeed in life. The ability to read may not seem like much of a goal in the developed world but the love of reading, the ability to read well and comprehend are important skills. There are many good books on speed reading and retention which you could explore and expose your children to even at an early age.

Things to consider – with infants:

We propped up picture books at the side of our infants while he and she were lying down or in a baby chair. They would both look at the images and we believed it stimulated their minds in a responsible and enjoyable way.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

Pre-school:

Our children were reading before they entered school. We spent time reading to them and helping them sound words and learn to read by themselves. We found a program called “Hooked on Phonics” to be a very helpful tool. We had fun with emphasis on expression verses mono tone reading.

School Years:

It was important for us to find time to read and eventually be read to at bed time. We made reading a part of the pre-bed time routine for years. Routine is a good way to develop a skill such as reading. Once it becomes a part of their daily routine, they will automatically do it with or without your participation. Our children often reminded us in the morning how they read us to sleep.

One fond memory was a trip to Florida to visit grandparents. On arrival, one of the first things our daughter said to her grandma was “will you please take me to the library”. Since we were traveling it was clear we did not pack enough books and she enjoyed her reading time with grandma!

You have to be creative in finding good books. We were fortunate that our children enjoyed Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys. These were great book series with good values and influences.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

In the early teen years and with more demands with school home-work, reading time was reduced. Reading became more part of school breaks and summer down time.

Books like Harry Potter have been criticised by many groups but from our experience they have been great in continuing our children's interest in reading and developing their imaginations. They looked forward to the books being published and re-read them in preparation for the movie release. We also read the Harry Potter series to keep in touch with our children and have interesting things to talk about. The activities of reading and discussing the books were a great way to develop comprehension and communications skills.

Reading is a skill that is greatly appreciated in college years. Children are required to read more than they could have imagined. They must be able to skim through books and pull out key information quickly. Well developed reading skills have helped our children succeed in college and find more time to enjoy other important experiences.

Reading is also a lifelong interest that your children will continue in their working life and beyond. Help them get started.

Value of money and budgeting

It is important to teach children about the value of money and budgeting at an early age. There are many lessons related to money which children need to be taught such as not wasting things, wanting things vs. needing things, appreciating the cost of things, and learning to save for important things like education. Money discussions can be very broad and can be related to many activities your children participate in. If you teach the value of money then you can shape their attitudes and eliminate waste and unnecessary demands.

The key lesson to teach about the value of money is making choices. The simple approach is to demonstrate the choices of a budget. A good teaching approach is to create the opportunity in which they have a certain amount of money to spend and let them participate in the choices. If something is broken and needs to be replaced, give them a sense of the amount of work required at minimum wage to replace the item. Teach your children that it is hard to earn money but easy to spend, therefore it is important to make wise choices.

Parents should be motivated to teach their children the value of money as it will actually help save a lot of money. After many years of parenting, we realize how much money parents waste on toys that were never used and the many things they buy their children that they want but do not need. It is a very difficult balance for parents to figure out what they should spend on their children. Once the value of money is considered and

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

respected by children and parents, the decisions become easier and the pressures for buying “stuff” is less.

The demand from your child that “I want this” should not be rewarded with buying the object. We taught our children to figure out what they really needed as the important criteria for spending money. There should be an important distinction between “wanting” and “needing”. They did not usually get what they wanted but rather what they needed. This can be taught at an early age by simply not wasting money on excess toys and clothes. Our children learned to look after what they had and be happy with what they had. If they were careless or wasteful, their possessions were not replaced.

Our children never got what they cried for. This was not tolerated and crying and whining only happened a few times before they got the message. Again, consistency is critical. If they cried and/or acted badly, trying to get you to buy something they are attempting to condition you to respond to their demands. Don’t let them train you but rather do them a favour and train them that “no means no” with no exceptions.

Our strategy was to purchase quality rather than quantity. Our children learned to live with less good quality items that they learned to look after. This was especially true with clothes and toys.

Allowance programs can be a helpful way to help children learn the value of money. You should structure the program so that they earn the money and ensure they learn to save money and use it wisely.

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

Children need to understand the relationship between work, money and the life they live. Money should not be the sole focus of success but in most cultures and countries has a direct relationship to your standard of living. The key lesson is if you want to have things then you need to prepare yourself to earn the money necessary to purchase things with money.

Our child's perspective:

The value of money is an extremely beneficial concept that many teenagers do not understand. We live in a very materialistic world that unfortunately deters parents from effectively teaching this lesson. Part-time jobs are a great way to learn responsibility, gain experience and make money, but before letting your child get a job, examine their reasoning for wanting money. I have seen many teenagers work many hours each week, taking away from their school work and extracurricular time, only to spend their entire pay check on clothes, eating out and alcohol. Unfortunately, their income is disposable and they begin bad habits of managing their money. They should learn to budget and use their money wisely. The question they need to ask themselves is “do I really need this”? It's very easy to waste the dollars away on eating out for lunch on junk food while they could pack a healthy meal and use their money for something more important. I wish I would have known more about the stock market and investing at an early age. Many people think of the stock market as a risky venture but when you think of it, would the 20 dollars you spend on a t-shirt be better used in learning about

Life Skills – Basic – Foundation for Success

investing in the stock market and possibly appreciating in value. A t-shirt will seldom gain value.

Life Skills - Character Development

- *General character development*
 - *Honesty*
 - *Respect*
 - *Integrity*
 - *Empathy*
 - *Fairness*
 - *Initiative*
 - *Courage*
 - *Perseverance*
 - *Optimism*
- *Responsibility*
- *Confidence*
- *Leadership*
- *Perspective*
- *Mentoring*
- *Interests*
- *Bad influences*
- *Sense of humour*

General character development

We are big believers in character development and consider these important qualities which should be demonstrated and taught by parents. This subject matter is essential to the foundation of your child and the type of person they become. It is also one of the most challenging areas to write about and deserves much

Life Skills – Character Development

more research and thinking on your part. This is a good time for you to review your character qualities and try and make improvements yourself to lead your children with good character practices.

This strategy should start at an early age and should be part of your daily life. The simple strategy of understanding good character attributes is a great starting point. The understanding of good character will help children make better choices. As parents you have to find ways to indentify and influence good character and lead by example.

We often said to our children, “treat people how you would like to be treated” and we used this philosophy in our household. “How would you feel if you were treated like that” is good discussion to learn from bad situations you see, hear of or do yourself. A good lesson is to think before you act – think of the consequences of your actions – how would you feel if this happened to you. If children thought before they acted with a good point of reference – they would be less likely to bully, tease or hurt others.

Character education involves the preparation of children to be responsible, caring and contributing citizens. Good character is a cornerstone of a civil, just and democratic society; it can be both taught and learned. It contributes to the individual’s personal well being. Successful character development will not only benefit your child but the many people he or she comes in contact with.

Life Skills – Character Development

Character in our minds is what your child is all about and what people think of them. A good exercise is to discuss how someone would describe your child. How would they like people to explain them – what is their legacy – help children understand that they will have a legacy and determine what they want it to be? Help your children define themselves. This will help them understand themselves. Many people define themselves in sports as being part of the team. There is a need to stand out and be associated with something. This may be more so when they are not comfortable with who they are and what they represent. Help your children accept who they are and not try to be like famous athletes and movie stars who are not necessarily role models. Help them learn to be themselves and not someone else.

Children understand brands and should go through the exercise of explaining themselves as a brand and developing as a brand.

You can be creative in how you teach and reinforce character. Some schools feature a character attribute each month. You can do the same at home. One idea is to take a character attribute; define it, discuss examples and talk about why it is important.

Honesty (being honest – fair and just, free of lies)

We never lied to our children. When they asked us if there was a Santa Claus, we told them the truth but in a way that if they believed there was then there was a Santa. We have an understanding that the only time we will lie is if they are in danger and their safety is at risk.

Life Skills – Character Development

With this one exception we will always tell the truth and expect them to do the same.

Respect (admiration felt towards a person or thing that has good qualities or achievements)

As a parent you must learn to respect your children. If you respect them then you can demand respect from them. Respect is far reaching and a very important skill you can help your child develop. Respect flows to religion, veterans, seniors, teachers, friends, family, our planet and all things we have interaction with or have an opinion on. Once your children understand the importance of respect they will deal with people and situations with respect.

The skill of respect carries to many situations;

- Listen to someone when they are speaking – a good listener is a valuable skill – be present
- Learn to disagree but respect the opposing opinion
- Learn to respect time and money

Each of these character attributes deserve some thought by you. Help your child understand the meaning of these character attributes and more importantly help them take steps to make these attributes part of their lives.

Integrity (honesty, incorruptibility, wholeness, soundness)

Life Skills – Character Development

Empathy (ability to identify oneself mentally with a person or thing and so understand his or her feelings or its meaning)

Fairness (just, unbiased, in accordance with the rules)

Initiative (the power to begin something, the ability to start things)

Courage (the ability to control fear when facing danger, to be brave enough to do what one believes to be right)

Perseverance (continue steadfastly in something that is difficult or tedious)

Optimism (a tendency to take a hopeful view of things or to expect that results will be good – think positively)

Responsibility

A fundamental strategy to help your children reach their goals is to teach them about responsibility. We define responsibility as taking care of something and having to account for your actions. As parents a primary goal is have your children become responsible for their actions and success.

As parents we quickly learn the huge responsibility we have for our children. The first day we became parents we assume the responsibility for our children 24/7. This is a very high level of responsibility and one many people underestimate before becoming a parent. You learn about responsibility as a parent and become much

Life Skills – Character Development

better qualified to teach your children about responsibility.

The managing of toys and pets are good ways to teach responsibility. We were effective in teaching our children to look after their toys. We would not replace the careless loss of toys or the senseless destruction of toys. We did not have pets as we traveled and did not feel we could commit to a pet. The fact that we discussed why we could not have pets was a good lesson on responsibility.

An effective way of teaching responsibility is by learning to share. Children quickly learn about looking after something when their own favourite toy is put in the hands of someone else. They realize they don't want the person who they are sharing their toy with to damage it or misuse it. This is good teaching moment to help them understand the responsibility they must take when they are on the receiving end of sharing. It is important that children learn to treat other peoples belonging with the respect they would treat their own.

There are many opportunities to talk about responsibility with your children. At an early age, if something is broken it is important to accept it and learn from it but teach your children how to take care of things to prevent it from happening in the future. Outcomes in which we have to take responsibility are often a result of a mistake or something that could have been avoided. There will be lots of times you can help your child understand who is responsible for a situation and why it is important.

Life Skills – Character Development

One simple strategy we used to help our children learn about responsibility was to identify the source of a situation. We took this approach a step further and tried to understand why it happened in the first place. If someone was running through the house and knocked something over and broke it – why were they running in the first place – maybe they were being chased. The point is that the obvious fault of a situation is not often the conclusion of who was really responsible. By teaching your children to get to the root of a problem, they will learn about responsibility.

We were careful to avoid allowing a common response by children to blame someone else for their actions. We taught our children to take responsibility for their own actions. It is important to teach your children to take responsibility for their mistakes and realize what they did wrong, so they are not quick to blame others.

Beyond parenting we can draw from our work experiences to demonstrate the importance and need to be responsible. You can discuss with your children how you do your job, show up on time and manage your role in a responsible way. I am sure you can find examples of people who have not acted responsibly at work which can be used as good teaching moments.

There are many social issues which we discussed to help our children learn about responsibility. We discussed global warming to help them understand the role they needed to play. We were disciplined about our recycling at home to demonstrate our commitment and sense of responsibility. We taught them to take responsibility in

Life Skills – Character Development

their own neighbourhood by picking up their garbage and making sure they do not damage other people's property.

Our child's perspective:

The mentality that I have heard a lot of kids face when it comes to responsibility is the idea that they “don't care” or “it doesn't matter”. It's important to be shown as a kid that your actions do have consequences and that one piece of garbage you throw on the ground, when multiplied by every kid in your country, does make a huge difference. Seeing someone else care and having their parent lead the way helps them care.

Confidence

We have identified confidence as a skill and we feel it is important in helping children take the initiative to do things and learn other skills. Lack of confidence will often prevent children from doing things and progressing. Confidence can be developed with experiences and by learning other skills we have identified in this book. We believe confidence is something children gain and can be taught. Confidence is a skill that allows your children to accomplish many things and stand out in a positive way.

We believe confidence comes with experience. The first time your child tries something they may not approach it with confidence. If you want your children to gain confidence then you have to let them do things, keep

Life Skills – Character Development

trying, develop their skill level and gain experience. If they don't try to tie their shoes, they will not gain the confidence to think they are capable of doing it and further develop the skill. Often confidence gained in learning a basic skill will help them move on and conquer more challenging situations.

We believe confidence comes with encouragement. Initially we would provide encouragement to our children for them to do things. One simple example is during the stage of learning to walk. We used encouraging motions (smiles, excitement, clapping, fist pumps etc) and words of encouragement to get them excited and interested in walking. This approach applies through the years in school, sports and any other activity. Patience and spending time with your children is also a great way to provide encouragement.

We believe confidence can be gained once you feel you are respected. One of our basic strategies of listening to our children and respecting what they said helped them develop confidence. Many people talk down to children and don't respect their opinions. We believe it is critical to listen to your children and talk to them as equals. We always thought they gained confidence from being respected and having the opportunity to shape and voice their opinions. They have clear and healthy minds, they can think and when given the opportunity they have an opinion and a very good point of view. We believe you can learn a lot from listening to your children and more importantly help them develop and engage them in thinking.

Life Skills – Character Development

As parents we created situations to help our children develop confidence. Sports were a great way of building confidence. We often reflect back on an experience in which our son was featured on The Golf Channel. He experienced several interviews in which he carried himself extraordinarily well for his age. The years of personal development and the confidence in his golf game helped him feel confident and demonstrate confidence. At 11 years of age he stated that “golf was not his life” as he was confident in who he was and what he was about. He loved golf but he had it in perspective.

There are a number of ways to prepare your children for situations and help build their confidence. You can coach them on what they should expect when facing a situation. This will help them prepare and gain the added confidence that they can do it. I don’t know how many times we said “you can do it if you try”. Once you teach your child that if they believe they can do something then they will. They will progress from thinking they can, to knowing they can. Again we refer back to lessons in golf. In golf, if you don’t think you will sink the five foot putt then chances are you will not. If you step up to the putt, think through the variables, feel confident you will sink it, commit to the shot, and then do your routine – you will likely sink the putt.

“Think you can, think you can’t; either way you’ll be right”. Henry Ford

We believe children need help to face fears. When we were faced with the situation of our child being afraid of a situation, we tried to understand what it was they were

Life Skills – Character Development

afraid of and why. Talking about fears is a good way to help turn the situation around and begin to build the confidence to overcome these fears. Many children are not confident of talking in front of larger groups of people or in class at school. We practiced speeches at home with our children and encouraged them to participate in opportunities such as speaking at school assemblies. We discovered drama classes were excellent for building confidence in speaking.

We taught our children to try their hardest and accept the results good or bad. They had the confidence to go for it and accept their best effort. This allowed them to focus their energy on getting it done verses worrying if they could or couldn't succeed. Their focus on doing their best and the confidence this attitude provided them, allowed them to perform well.

Confidence is an important skill while recognizing reality is equally as important. Be careful with the encouragement of "you can do anything you put your mind to". We found this is effective in encouragement, but we knew our children had limits and they would use discretion to avoid reckless activities or unrealistic goals. We also taught them that they did not have limits if they were prepared to make the necessary commitment and were willing to make the compromises to develop the skill to push their limits.

It is important to be very supportive and encouraging. There are times when they fail and lose confidence. This is the time when you have to be sensitive and to patiently and thoughtfully rebuild confidence or accept a

Life Skills – Character Development

lesser goal. We also realized there were times when they would not gain the confidence they needed and we accepted this and helped them accept it. It is important to support them in ways that they still feel good about themselves and help them learn from the experience to be confident they can do something or confident they cannot.

Leadership

We believe levels of leadership can be developed in all children once the meaning of leadership is better defined. The definition of leadership is often misunderstood to relate to a very visible leader of a company or country etc. We believe leadership in children is more about stepping forward, taking initiative and influencing actions and opinions in a small scale. These actions can be as simple as an opinion and occur at home, in school, with friends and during all activities. We believe many leadership opportunities can be created when we focus more on the smaller opportunities which all children can embrace.

There are very simple ways to help your child develop leadership skills. Listen to an opinion your child has, allow them to speak out, ask them what they think about a situation or ask them to show you how to do something. You can be instrumental in helping your child lead situations in which you would normally take charge of. Step back at times and let your child lead the way. This can be done in very simple ways such as a bike ride in which you take turns with who leads. Let

Life Skills – Character Development

them make decisions in everyday life to help them develop leadership skills.

We have always encouraged our children to learn to make decisions, provide an opinion and lead a situation. They have assumed leadership roles at home, sports and school which further helped them develop these skills. As captains of sports teams and Presidents of Student Council they learned to manage and develop leadership qualities and other skills as they took leadership roles. In our minds, leadership opportunities helped them develop in other ways beyond leadership skills. As leaders they; lead projects, attended and lead meetings, spoke publically, attended conferences, lead by example, acted on behalf of others and learned to engage and motivate other people.

Your child may or may not strive to be a leader but helping them develop leadership skills will be valuable in many facets of their lives. You will find that many of the skills we encourage you to develop in your children will help them naturally develop leadership skills.

An important part of leadership is collaboration. A leader has to be able to hear others opinions and listen to their perspectives. Helping your child learn to collaborate with others will also help them develop leadership skills.

The environment they interact in will influence their leadership skills. You should be conscious of the age group and level of maturity your child is exposed to. If they consistently associate with older children with

Life Skills – Character Development

greater levels of maturity and confidence, your child will develop more as a follower while still maturing faster for their age. If you are conscious of developing leadership skills you will look for leadership opportunities.

Think about the activities you put your child in. Consider activities in which they can develop leadership skills. If they are involved in sports, help them understand qualities of a leader on their team. If they understand the role of a captain of a team they are more likely to assume the role. A leader in sports does not have to be the captain or the best player, but rather someone who leads in other ways such as excellent character traits.

We were very sensitive to the complications of developing leadership in both of our children. We naturally let our older child develop as a leader but also gave our younger child equal opportunity. It is easy to let the older child take charge but we had to step in many times and make sure our younger child was respected and given the opportunity to lead.

In preparation for leadership there are other qualities which need to be developed. We found that as our children developed confidence and knowledge they were better prepared to lead. Leaders have to be prepared to take risks as they are more visible and their mistakes are more noticeable. We helped them realize their leadership roles would often cause challenging situations as others would question and criticize their role and decisions. We found their leadership

Life Skills – Character Development

experiences developed them in many other ways which further strengthened their leadership skills.

Perspective

In our mind, perspective is the way in which you think about things. If you help your child think with perspective or with a number of perspectives, you will provide them with a great skill and a wonderful advantage in life. We have always discussed things with our children to help them develop perspective by taking different views and arguments.

Perspective should start at an early age when you start explaining things to your child. Through the years they will learn to think with perspective. We remember a school report card for our son who was in grade 7 at the time. The teacher, head of middle school, stated our son “was a man among boys”. It was a great compliment. We gave a lot of thought as to what it meant and why it was said and realized from the teacher that our son had a very mature perspective for his age.

Perspective is one of the most demanding parts of parenting as you have to be thoughtful of what you say. Not that you have to be calculated or untruthful but rather careful on shaping the way your children should think about things rather than teaching them to think like you in all situations. You have to be disciplined to think before you give your perspective or make sure you state your opinion but try and give additional perspective on how they can think of a situation.

Life Skills – Character Development

Example;

You were raised in a household and neighbourhood that had certain customs and values which is what you accept and practice. Society changes and there will be situations when you state your opinion on a situation you feel strongly about. Be prepared to also give a new perspective which may be more appropriate for your child's generation and the peer pressure they are faced with.

We always wanted our children to have a better perspective than we had as children and as adults. We wanted them to evolve their perspectives to the changing world but to maintain good values. We believe you can keep old values but have a consideration and respect for evolving perspectives.

One very effective strategy we used was to remind them at times to keep it in perspective. A popular phrase in our household was “If that is your biggest problem today – it will be a great day” or “you’re well off”. We felt it was important to think beyond the situation at hand and remember that things could always be much worse – hunger to our children was nothing in comparison to the many truly starving children around the world.

Your influences on perspective can be far reaching and should be shared on culture, religion, education, work, relationships, sports, arts, music, sex, drinking, drugs, crime, gangs, pollution, dealing with people, dealing with defeat and celebrating accomplishments and all the

Life Skills – Character Development

many things your child will have to consider to make the right decisions in life. This list is not in priority or complete but only intended to give a sense of the many things you can help your children develop perspective on.

The more people you get to know in life the more you realize it is often their perspective on things that is what interests you about them and makes you like or dislike them. Help your child develop a thoughtful perspective which they will be respected and admired for.

Mentoring

Mentoring is an important way to develop your children. Once you begin to think about mentoring your child, you will start to determine what characteristics are important. The right mentoring can help your children develop into fine people and make good choices in their lives.

Help your child distinguish between action figures, music stars, movie stars, sports stars and quality mentors or role models. Help them understand the difference between a popular person or a star and a quality individual that they can learn good qualities from. It is ok to look up to the music or acting abilities of stars but don't let your children believe these people are necessarily role models. Rather than having them say "I want to be like a famous star" have them learn to understand they want to develop some of the skills of the famous person or have the opportunities that individual had. Often a hard working small business

Life Skills – Character Development

owner in your neighbourhood can be an excellent role model.

Help your children explore and identify with the many less famous people who are leaders and have great qualities which children can learn from. If you have a great selling or customer service experience, then point this out and use it as a learning moment or as a mini mentoring moment. There are lots of occasions to point out good qualities and experiences with individuals.

The key is that one person should not carry the burden of your child's mentoring, but rather many individuals will offer your child more valuable attributes. The more people you consider the less likely you will be disappointed with the movie, music or sports star that may eventually be a disappointment.

Be careful when you say, "be like that person". Respect your child for the individual they are and person they will become.

Thriving to be a role model will help your child understand the concept of mentoring and role models. On numerous occasions teachers and parents have told us how they view our children as role models. This was a huge complement and one they learned from. They realized what a role model was. It is the ultimate compliment for a parent to acknowledge what you are doing is respected and that you are making the right choices for your child which also has a positive influence on others. Good parenting is a great way to

Life Skills – Character Development

give back to your community and effectively mentor others by setting a good example.

Interests

An important part of anyone's development is to have interests. For simplicity let's define interests beyond classes at school or things children do not have to do but should be encouraged to do. Sports, arts, music and hobbies are interests.

At an early age, we explored a variety of activities outside of school in addition to sports involvement. Sports became the best fit for us and accomplished our goals. Our children played competitive soccer, badminton, squash, basketball, volleyball, ultimate and golf. We examined the sports based on enjoyment, team skill development and individual experiences. We were fortunate to succeed with interests that evolved over time and have had a positive influence on our children.

We are huge supporters of golf as a sport that has excellent influences on the development of children. Golf has excellent character influences in the areas of honesty, integrity, sportsmanship and abiding by rules. Golf is a healthy choice, social, and a lifelong skill and interest. If every child had the opportunity to golf and develop the skills to carry themselves on a golf course for 4 ½ hours, the world would be a much better place.

We were very supportive of our children's involvement in their school sports as part of our activities and interests strategy. We believed school sports created a

Life Skills – Character Development

bond with their school, developed friendships, engaged them in their school, helped them enjoy their school, helped them get to know their teachers better out of the classroom and got them inspired about school.

We encouraged our children to participate in community programs to give back to their communities, to learn about helping others and to develop valuable skills such as working with others and project management. We encouraged them to get involved and serve well in excess of the 40 hours of community service required by their school board to graduate from high school.

Our children got involved in their high-schools in extraordinary ways. We were fortunate the school embraced our children and provided opportunities for them to get involved and develop in other important ways. Once they got started, the personal growth and experiences they had were amazing. They evolved in roles in the Student Council to President. They participated in the Athletic Council, fundraising committees and countless volunteer hours in a host of initiatives. It is a great way to get to know quality teaching professionals and school staff and work with them in interesting ways.

We cannot begin to describe the wonderful impact these activities had on our children and strongly recommend your children find ways to get involved in the success of their schools in whatever way appeals to them. The expression of “you get out of it what you put into it” applies to your school involvement.

Life Skills – Character Development

There are many strategies to consider regarding helping your child develop interests. Expose them to your interests and hope they enjoy them too. Follow the interests of friends and neighbours or develop a strategy that makes sense for your household and the development goals of your child. Sit down and examine the opportunities you have and rate them based on a criterion which is important to you.

Some ideas on things to consider in selecting activities;

- How will the activity influence your child?
- What will this activity lead to and how will it help them in life – friendships, social skills, fitness, relaxation etc?
- Will this compromise the time needed for their school education?
- Can you manage the logistics of managing the commitment?
- Does this compromise the balance of time as a family, down time and sibling time?
- What kind of skills will be developed?
- What kind of influence will your child be given? How will it develop their character?
- How competitive is it?
- What is the cost?
- What time commitment is required by your child and the parents?

Bad influences

Every experience good or bad has an influence on your child. As parents we tried to control the bad influences as much as possible. Bad influences can come from people they interact with and things they see through their daily life. We tried to anticipate bad influences and minimize the exposure and effect. Bad influences start at an early age and it is critical to identify them and find a solution.

Unfortunately there are many bad influences in our society. Influences come from school, neighbourhoods, friends and other activities your child participates in. Children are exposed to too much on TV, the internet, social networks, texting and have access to the world on their computers. Our values are being challenged and influenced by global factors and access to more information and easy access to individuals outside of our homes and community. As a parent you need to be aware and make decisions to control and minimize these influences or reduce the risk to the best of your ability.

We gave a lot of thought on the neighbourhoods we lived, the schools our children attended, the friends they associated with, parents they were exposed to and the activities they participated in. We tried to be reasonable but controlled the influences in many ways. We have all heard about the expression of “getting involved with the wrong crowd”. This applies in varying degrees of risk at each stage of their development from pre-school to teenage years and beyond. We were concerned enough to do the most we could to minimize this issue.

Life Skills – Character Development

We also exposed our children to a mix of good influences and bad influences, mainly from news, music and movies. We felt we did this in a reasonably controlled and mature way and with the opportunity to explain some of what we saw and heard. This is one strategy we regret at times as movies can be very disturbing. Movies often try to reflect social issues of the times and in some cases they do a good job but many times it is not appropriate the way they portray situations. Movies are often more motivated to shock and awe rather than educate and entertain.

We always have fun when we discuss the kind of movies we want to watch as we will always request something funny, intelligent and educational but unfortunately Hollywood does not see the market for good influences and this type of film seldom gets produced.

Sense of humour

In general, our family has a good sense of humour. We recognize the role of humour, the value of it in many situations and relevance of it as a skill you should develop. We helped our children recognize the value of a sense of humour and encouraged humour within our household.

There are many parenting moments in which humour can change a very bad situation into a much better moment. A sense of humour can also be effective in communicating a message to children as a laugh may

Life Skills – Character Development

gain their attention and reinforce what you are trying to say.

It is hard to teach a sense of humour but if you try and practice it yourself, it will surface more frequently with your children. One situation comes to mind in which demonstrates a sense of humour in a difficult situation. Ironically it could have caused trouble, but it turned out well. I was traveling internationally with my son who was approximately 10 years old. We approached the customs officer and he asked my son if he knew this guy, while referring to me. My son said “no”. The officer said it in a tone which inferred a sense of humour and my son responded accordingly. I realized the implications to the question and his answer (was this child mine and was he traveling out of the country on his own will) so I told my son this was a serious question that needed an honest answer and he responded with “yes he is my dad”. The officer handled the situation very well and told my son that his initial answer could have gotten his dad in a lot of trouble. We moved on and have laughed about this story many times.

Life Skills - Coping

- *Stress management*
- *Expectations*
- *Dealing with failure*
- *Giving and taking advice*
- *Priority setting*
 - *To-do lists*
 - *Project management*
 - *Time management*
 - *Deal with it*
- *Learn to compete*
- *Life skills through golf*

Stress management

Stress is a well recognized issue in society and affects all of us in work and family life. Stress changes us as people and greatly affects our ability to cope, perform and be ourselves. There are causes of stress we can control and many causes out of our control. Children face stress or situations caused by difficult circumstances and they need to learn how to deal with it.

Our approach to stress management had several components. We developed strategies to avoid stress and coping strategies to manage stress when it arose. We believed we could reduce stress by preparing our children with skills to help them be organized and in

Life Skills – Coping

control of situations. We comforted them during stressful times and helped them cope with stress by understanding breathing techniques and the importance of physical fitness as ways to release stress.

Many of the strategies in this book will help your child avoid and cope with stress. Every skill you teach your child helps them develop confidence in difficult situations and effectively manage stress. If your parenting strategies are well thought out, consistent and communicated to your children then you will create a healthy environment with reduced stress.

We believe it is often lack of preparation which causes stress. We were effective in eliminating the morning stress many families incur by ensuring our children got a good night sleep, an excellent nutritious breakfast, time to get organized and ready for school and ample time to get to school on time. We did not tolerate being late or unorganized. We helped them eliminate homework stress by teaching them to be organized and finish their homework as soon as possible rather than waiting for the last possible minute and creating unnecessary stress to try and complete it on time. It is our experience that parents who let their children leave homework to the last possible moment, often end up doing it for their children. If you help your children develop organizational skills and learn to set their priorities, you will reduce stress with your children and yourself.

As working professionals we are aware of the toll stress takes on working people. We sought advice from our doctors, did research and read on this topic. We tried to

Life Skills – Coping

work out and practice breathing drills to reduce stress. We used family time to take a break and get away from the stresses of work. We recognized stress was an issue and we continued to find ways to try and manage it ourselves and teach our children.

We used competition to help our children develop coping skills. We believe experience in competing will help them develop confidence to deal with many other circumstances which are stressful to many. Our children competed in sports at an early age of six and were playing in golf tournaments at the age of eight. Giving your child opportunities is a good starting point, but make sure they are prepared to compete and understand competition. We prepared them by ensuring they had good skill level to help them feel confident and good about themselves. We helped them understand that if they try their best and work at their skills, they will compete well. The more they competed at an early age the more accustomed they got to it and competed with more success. Our competitive strategies were effective in helping prepare our children for competition and developing experience and skills for handling pressure which reduces stress.

Expectations

We believe that expectations can be the root to many issues you will face with your child. We tried to help our children develop expectations to help motivate themselves, but we also helped them understand realistic goals and the negative consequence of setting

Life Skills – Coping

unattainable expectations. We helped them understand our expectations while ensuring we were reasonable, realistic and most importantly aligned with their expectations.

As parents you don't want to set unrealistic expectations. The unfortunate reality is that expectations can change your child from being happy to sad, and expectations can greatly affect their confidence and sense of self-worth. It is important that they experience both ends of the spectrum but we made sure we balanced it to ensure they were not constantly disappointed from our expectations or their own.

It is an interesting parenting challenge to help your children learn to be motivated and have high expectations, while helping them understand what is really important in life to thrive for. The expectations of success should not be judged on always winning, being the best or material possessions but rather enjoying the things that are important to you. We often thought of ways to reinforce this philosophy and tried to lead by example. Our most successful approach was to spoil our children with love, time and attention and not gifts to fill the void or compensate for things many parents feel they should have done or for the times they should have been there for their children. We took this approach to help them shape expectations for us as parents and to value what was truly important and what should be the measurement of our role as parents. As we helped them understand appropriate expectations for us, it helped them learn about setting their own expectations.

Life Skills – Coping

Having grandparents who were farmers through the great depression, we learned a lot about having less and appreciating what we have. We often reflected on the values and expectations from our grandparents, to help us parent with substance and help our children understand that they can be very fine people without overly materialistic expectations.

Dealing with failure

It is important to teach your children that failure does exist, and the most important part is learning from failure. Do not shelter your child from failure. The earlier they learn about failure the better prepared they will be to prevent future failure which may have much greater consequences. Failure should be acceptable on the basis of learning from experience, but challenged based on lack of preparation and effort or inappropriate attitude.

An important lesson we taught our children about failure was; if they prepared and tried their hardest, then they should accept the results. If they prepared themselves and gave it their best effort, then they did not fail and we accepted the outcome. A big component of failure in our minds is the result of not preparing and applying yourself. The reality is failure is always judged by other people, which we have to accept, but we tried to help our children understand how to deal with failure and set their own standards to determine failure and accept results on their terms.

Life Skills – Coping

We learned to teach our children that there were many situations in which they could not accomplish what they would like to. In our minds this was not failure but to them it was, and therefore we found this challenging to deal with. We had conversations to help them understand reasons why they did not accomplish what they wanted to. There were times when they did not have the skills required. There were times that tests were not fair or well prepared by the teacher and times when they studied hard but were not necessarily focussed on the right material. There were times they had to accept that they could not succeed at the level they wanted. They learned that there were times when they would have to accept falling short of their goals but recognized they did not fail for lack of preparation and effort which was more important.

Failure is something you need to face with your child. Failure should not be about blame and punishment but rather how and why. We often addressed the how component of failure with discussions on what they did or did not do that lead to the failure. We also looked at factors outside of their control which may have contributed to the failure. We did not attempt to avoid the true reasons by blaming someone else but rather tried to understand the reasons. The why aspect of failure is similar to the how, but makes you challenge your children with the difficult question of why. Once you can get to the root of the failure by determining why it happened, they will learn a lesson which will help them avoid failure in the future.

Life Skills – Coping

Failure can be clear in the education system by simple criteria of marks, but the reasons for the failure will often be very unclear. As parents we have to take responsibility in understanding why children fail, take proactive steps and develop strategies to avoid this kind of failure. The strategies throughout this book will help you counter common issues at school and prevent failure.

We had interesting challenges with failure in our household as our children had very high expectations and standards. This was a consequence of them expecting too much of themselves which often exceeded our expectations. This issue was apparent to us in the education system in which the university/college programs they wanted to attend required 90% averages. Therefore, our children established that they would fail if they did not reach the 90% average. We supported their goals but helped them understand that they would not fail by our standards. The education system was failing by setting requirements predominately on marks that was the basis for potentially rejecting their applications. Fortunately, they obtained the marks they needed and got the acceptances they desired, but there were times they felt they had failed as their marks were close to the expected requirement. We had discussions to support the potential failure and gave them the confidence that there were other ways and other schools to help them reach their goals.

It is good to consider failure with the expectations and perspective strategy sections of this book. When you teach your child to think with perspective on a situation

such as failure, they will learn to deal with and possibly avoid the thought of failure. The expression of “keep it in perspective” is very relevant when you discuss failure.

Giving and taking advice

It is important to help your child understand what advice is and how it should be used. Advice is an opinion given about what to do or how to behave. As parents we have to give advice in many situations and learn to evolve our approach through the years. We believe advice is like many of the strategies in this book in which you need to develop an approach early to make it effective in later years.

Strategies on advice should evolve. Our strategy in early years was closer to clear rules and direction. It is often easier, in the early years, as children can be challenging but they often do not have the maturity and perspective to challenge you effectively. As our children got older we used the approach of an opinion and perspective to provide advice. We learned to develop our approach to giving advice and adjusted according.

It is very likely that the older your child gets the more difficult it is to give advice.

We were always quick to give advice and over the years learned to qualify it with “you may not agree, but this is my advice”. It is important to not give up on giving advice. It will be received, often acted on but likely not acknowledged as your children get older. This is a natural transformation as they become more

Life Skills – Coping

independent. Ironically, you have done a good job in developing your child when they learn to develop their own position on an issue or use other sources of advice other than you.

As you develop your strategies to give advice to your child, you will help them develop skills on how to take advice. If you are successful in developing mutual respect with your children, they will learn to appreciate your advice and they will develop the skills to offer others advice. We believe the skills of giving and taking advice are, important life skills. Once they have learned to take advice and consider other peoples advice, then they will be better thinkers and deal with people better. Once they can take advice well, they will be more effective in giving advice. The skill of giving and taking advice will be very helpful as they develop friendships and progress in their working lives.

As your goal is to prepare them for independence, then you should help them understand a framework to make the right choices or ways to take advice. The old expression of “what would my mom and dad do in this situation” is a great gift to leave with your children.

Priority setting

Priority setting is a skill that is not given enough emphasis. Most decisions we make have some consideration for priorities as there is limited time and money available to us. Priorities become more relevant for children as their lives become more demanding and they have to make choices. If you can develop an

Life Skills – Coping

organized discipline which manages priorities well and teach these skills to your children, you will prevent a lot of issues in managing school, other responsibilities and activities your children participate in.

We helped prepare our children to learn to set priorities and manage their time by teaching them to be organized. To teach this effectively we had to be organized.

Fortunately, as professionals we were trained to manage our time and we applied these skills in our daily lives and with our children. A simple strategy to help your children learn to be organized is to insist they put things back where they found them or clean up after themselves.

If it is not a priority, it will likely not happen. This is true for everything your child does. At an early age they need to understand what the priorities are in their life and learn skills to help them manage priorities. This can be accomplished with basic to-do lists and evolve to project management and time management disciplines.

To-do lists

This is an excellent technique to help them accomplish the things that need to be done. It can start simply with a list of things they need to do by day and for a given week. Our business training taught us to put things down on lists to help us from having to remember many things which can lead to stress and forgetting. This technique can help children and eliminate tensions in the household if they are organized and they are doing what they need to do. Many school systems have effectively created “To-Do Lists” with the use of agendas or

calendar books. As children get older and more responsible, there are many electronic planning systems in smart phones etc.

An important aspect of the to-do list is prioritizing. This can be done based on due dates, amount of time spent on each task or a rating of which tasks you feel are more important.

Project management

We were not as successful in this skill development as we wanted to be. We assigned projects to our children to help them develop this skill. They learned this skill mainly through their school involvement and in class at school. They managed school projects well by managing deadlines. Beyond this basic skill there are excellent guides on project management which are good resources. We helped them understand the importance of pre-planning or determining the time required and how this fit with the other things to be accomplished.

Time management

Priority setting and to-do lists are essential skills of time management. This is the goal of priority setting which is to use the time you have to complete the activities you need to do and find time for the things you want to do. There is limited time in a day and therefore limited time to accomplish what you need to. We had fun reminding our children of their “To-Do List” and instilling in them the discipline of being organized. Their response when we reminded them of things to do was “I am all over it”.

Life Skills – Coping

Once you get to this stage, your life becomes much easier.

There are excellent time management resources available for you to research. Initially we used mini white boards on their bedroom doors and then evolved to electronic calendars which were effective for us. Our children learned to map out what they had to do and when and more importantly were organized to get it done.

The most important lesson we taught our children to help them organize “to-do lists” and their time was to be organized. If your room is organized and you can find things then you will use your time wisely. If you are organized with what needs to get done then it has a greater chance of happening. If you set your priorities and get them done first, then you can enjoy your down time. We valued down time at all stages in their development and this was always a motivation to get things done.

Deal with it

We cannot stress enough the importance of teaching your children to “deal with it”. This is a common expression in our household to emphasize the importance of dealing with things immediately. Children need guidance in determining what needs to be done and when. If it is not part of the daily routine it may not get done. We developed the expression and attitude of “deal with it”. Once you develop an attitude to “deal with it”, your children will look at situations differently and take

Life Skills – Coping

the initiative and responsibility to take action on their own.

A good example of teaching your children to “deal with it” is at meal time when they are finished with their plate, glass, cutlery and dishes etc. Many children will leave the table without tidying up or move things to the kitchen sink area. We had fun with this as we explained there was no “kitchen fairy” to tidy up and put things away. It was the responsibility of our children to clean up after themselves. At times when they tried to leave things in the sink area and escape, we would use the term “deal with it” please. If the excuse was that the dishwasher was full of clean items then our response was to empty it and “deal with it”.

An important discipline we taught our children was to not let to-do tasks pile up. By developing the attitude to deal with things as they arise, your child becomes more organized and does not get overwhelmed with a back log of things to do. This applies to keeping their room tidy, homework and chores around the house. It is human nature to put off and procrastinate on the things we don’t want to do which often leads to cramming at the last minute and unnecessary stress over trying to get the task done on time. We taught them to make their beds first thing in the morning, and we believe this helped shape a good attitude to deal with things. We also taught them to put things back where they got them which help them learn to deal with things immediately – if you are finished with it then put it away.

Life Skills – Coping

Another interesting opportunity for the “deal with it” strategy applies to preventing too much multi tasking. Children will often distract from doing a task by playing music, watching TV, internet surfing, or texting while doing a boring task such as homework. This approach will distract them from the task, resulting in more time spent on the task and leading to a back log in other things that need to be done. The important discipline is to teach your children to sit down and just do it. Not everything in life is fun and entertaining, which is a lesson that needs to be learned.

An effective “deal with it” strategy will provide your children with a valuable skill as they enter the working world. They will be a much more valuable employee if they can be relied on to get the job done in an organized way and on time. This skill is very apparent in office jobs in which people who do not deal with things create piles of paper that they end up moving around ineffectively many times.

Learn to compete

There are so many situations we face in life in which we compete. Learning to compete can be considered a basic life skill. To be truly independent, your children will have to compete for a job and work within a business which has to compete to survive. Your child will compete for marks in school, in sports and other types of competitions. Society celebrates success and success often comes from competition.

Life Skills – Coping

We taught our children to compete at an early age. We created a friendly competitive environment in which we often competed for most everything. The expression “I beat you” or “I won” was used in a friendly way to spark competition. We would find simple opportunities to compete such as a walk around the block.

We developed a fun concept for family time competitions and called it “The Champ Challenge”. The competitions were sport related; we had a trophy made, a number of events and name tag spaces on the trophy for the winner. The name tags were magnetized so they could be changed if necessary after each competition. We organized small competitions to see who could be the winner or “The Champ”. We did a mix of team and individual events.

We used sports as a way to train our children to compete. There were many basic principles for competition we tried to instill.

- Have fun
- Be a good sport – learn to compete hard but keep it in perspective – it is only a game
- The most important thing to us as parents is how you carry yourself when you compete and not if you win - winning is a bonus
- Do your best and accept what happens
- Set goals – be honest with yourself – if you don’t prepare properly then don’t expect much
- Work hard when you compete – good effort is more likely to get good results – excellent effort gets excellent results

Life Skills – Coping

- Always try to look at how you did with the attitude of improving
- Enjoy your wins but learn how to loose – keep your head up and be respectful
- It is a privilege to compete – if you don't handle yourself properly – you will not compete
- Do not blame the referee or others

Life skills through golf

The game of golf is a great way to teach your child many valuable skills and influence them in positive ways. Every activity you choose for your child is a learning experience and all sports will develop your child in a number of ways but golf has many added benefits. We found golf to be full of character development, skills, good influences and an activity which will provide a life time of enjoyment. We could dedicate a full book to golf but we will limit this section to an introduction to how golf can have a very positive impact on the development of your child.

I was fortunate to have grown up with the opportunity to play golf. I introduced my wife to the game and we gave the opportunity of golfing to our children. We had golf clubs in their hands as toddlers and had them on the driving range and putting green as pre-schoolers. Grandparents were also a big influence with golf and shared many fond memories of golf outings. My son had countless outings looking for golf balls with his grandfather.

Life Skills – Coping

We were patient and disciplined to teach our children how the game was to be played, etiquette and rules before they had the privilege of playing on a golf course. They were competing in golf tournaments by the age of eight.

The game of golf has been very influential in helping people. The Professional Golf Association, PGA, has risen over \$1 billion dollars for charities. Golf in general has impacted many people in very positive ways through charity tournaments and through the nature of the game. The association with golf helps you develop as a person and be part of something very special. We developed a caddie program through our social venture of www.teachingkidsbusiness.com which has helped children worldwide.

Here are some of the advantages of exposing your child to golf:

Golf is very effective in developing character with a great history of integrity, honesty and sportsmanship. As children play golf or are around the game of golf, they learn rules, etiquette and valuable character attributes. If all children had the exposure to golf and the learning gained from golf the world would be a better place. Golf is a great strategy for parenting.

Golf helps your child develop decision making skills. Each golf shot requires the player to make decisions which consider yardage, course conditions, weather, elevations, wind, the player's ability, the right golf club, course management strategy and the competitive

Life Skills – Coping

situation. A golfer has to think before they react, go through a routine and consider a number of variables in making a decision, which are great skills which can be applied to all areas of your life.

Golf provides an opportunity to develop unique competitive skills. There are a number of dimensions to golf competitions as you compete against your playing competitors, the field of competitors, the golf course and yourself. Our children benefited from golf competition from eight years of age. They learned to compete on their own, to take responsibility for their actions and to compete effectively. They learned the importance of practice, discipline, patience and confidence to compete well.

Golf takes place in a safe and good environment. A golf course is a relatively protected area for children; sheltered from violence and most bad influences. It is a safe area away from the streets and shopping malls. There are rules and dress code at golf courses and a well run golf course is a good environment with good influences.

Golf provides an opportunity to develop social skills. An average round of golf takes 4 ½ hours in a group of four players. This is an opportunity to talk with friends or competitors and meet new people and develop social skills. Golf is a lifelong sport and interest in which many friendships can be developed. Golf can be played at all ages. It is a great social sport. As people reach their retirement age, many find golf to be their main social activity.

Golf is a good source of exercise. Golf is a walking activity that provides excellent physical and mental activity.

Golf is an expensive sport, but if you are creative, there are a number of ways to benefit from golf. Many golf clubs have junior programs and even private clubs have sponsored junior programs. Caddie programs are an excellent way to expose children to golf. Golf is becoming more assessable and is worth exploring. We believe the exposure to golf was an important factor in learning skills and developing character. We believe the time and money we invested in golf was well worth it.

Golf is great for business development and can be a great way to network with people to help the advancement of your career. In later years, golf can be an advantage in meeting influential people who could help you advance your career.

Life Skills - Education and Career Preparation

- *Education in and out of school*
- *Education – College and University*
- *Job and career discussion*
- *Entrepreneur skills and dream*

Education in and out of school

Education happens in an out of school. We believe education out of school is equally as important, and as parents you can impact both. Education must be treated as a priority to make sure it happens properly. As you live your daily lives you can find many opportunities to teach your children a lesson at any age. Life can be one long rich lesson.

One of your primarily goals should be to provide your children with an excellent education. It must be your goal beyond the goals of your government and school system. If you assume the responsibility for education then you will take action to do what you need to do to ensure they in fact get an excellent education. If you help your child learn to take responsibility for their education, you will have a successful education strategy.

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

Education should be an attitude to learn and improve yourself. Education should happen wherever you are. You need to help your children shape a good attitude towards learning. They will go through phases or be influenced by other children whose attitudes may suggest that smart is not the popular choice. Help your children realize smart is the right choice.

It is also important to define what education is and where it happens. We are fortunate to have a school system that teaches important aspects of our children's education but not their total education. Many school boards are faced with the similar problem of what should be taught, who should teach it and how it should be taught. It is important to not assume your children are getting an excellent education at their school and understand this is not all the education they need. This is not to discredit the many wonderful teachers and school systems, but there is always opportunity for improvement and an opportunity to continue to educate beyond the walls of the school. Many teachers support the notion of more parent involvement in education.

We believed that education was well beyond school curriculum. We found that all experiences in life were teachable moments. Good and bad experiences could be learned from. We also thought of providing our children with experiences to learn various lessons. An effective education strategy is a way of life. It is a mind set or a philosophy you decide on.

An excellent education is much greater than the fundamentals of any school system. This is subject

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

matter we could write another book on, so we will only introduce this concept at this stage. What your children learn to help them manage their daily lives and prepare for their futures also happens outside of the classrooms. The influences from experiences from family, friends, community activities, travel, reading and many other experiences develop your children in ways you should think about. They will learn a lot from their experiences out of the classroom.

We were fortunate that our children liked school but we had to help instil the need for education. The attitude to want to learn is important. It is an attitude you should try and develop and help lead. We all know from experience that we are more likely to excel at things we enjoy. Try and convince your children to make the most out of their education and find ways to enjoy it and succeed. Unfortunately, there are many times and lessons that are not enjoyable. This is when your children need to understand how to succeed in the education system or learn what they need to learn and get the marks they need to get.

We developed an interesting way of thinking of liking things that you may think you do not like. A golfer carries 14 clubs in their golf bag. Many golfers will have a club that they will often say they can't hit well. We always taught our children that you like all of your clubs and believe you can hit all of them well. The same thinking applies to school. We would tell them to find something you like in the subject matter or convince yourself of a skill or some relevance in what is being taught. When they didn't like a book they read in

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

English they tried to convince themselves they were learning to improve their reading, comprehension, perspective or just getting the important marks. The key is to be creative in finding ways to like the things they are being taught.

Help your children learn to be inquisitive, challenge things and ask questions. It is important to not just take in information and accept it. Our children's teachers often commented on how involved our children were in class discussion and the teachers were often challenged by thoughtful questions. They added how they liked to be challenged in a respectful and intelligent way and how it inspired them.

A tip on making the most of your in school education time, came from our children. They realized there was a lot of down time in school. This was time when most children would talk, act up or accomplish nothing. Our children realized if they did their work in school it would free up time out of school. They used their school time wisely allowing them to enjoy their time out of school for other things they liked to do like sports!

Another strategy of making the most out of in class school time came from teachers. As our children completed their in class work with time to spare, their teachers would assign them additional work. This was a great way for our children to explore more interesting challenges and engage them more in education.

There are always exceptions but most people require education to get jobs and be independent. There is also a

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

clear relationship to pay and education/training/skills. We made sure our children understood this at an early age. They understood that to have a successful life would require an excellent education and to obtain an excellent education would require hard work. Their job at an early age was to do well in school – to work hard in school. They understood education as a job they needed to do well.

Important things to consider for your education strategy;

- Instil the importance of education consistently
- Help your children recognize what they learn in the classroom and text books is not necessarily right but a perspective and one of many options or approaches
- It is important to succeed in the education system and understand what you need to do to succeed. You do not have to agree with the system but you have to learn to succeed within it
- Ensure they are rested, fed and prepared for class. Teach them to listen and respect teachers and that they realize they are in school to learn and progress – make the most of it
- We got involved in their school educations during the initial years of school. We felt we needed to demonstrate our interest in their education and that it was a priority in our life. We attended teacher interviews right through to the end of their high school years, school meetings and were very instrumental in founding the parent council to engage parents in new ways in early school years

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

- We thought about where we lived and the schools our children would attend. We tried to do our homework on schools and we moved several times to ensure they had an excellent school education

Education – college and university

College and university educations have proven to be one of the best ways to provide your children with the opportunity to get started in a career and to become independent. Let's use the term college to include university and represent all education post high-school.

When our children started high-school we made sure they understood what college was all about and why they should set their goals to get into whatever college they wanted to go to. They were fortunate to visit many colleges during their early high-school years so they were excited to go to college. As we traveled on golf tournaments we would try and visit colleges. The important lesson they learned while researching colleges, in their first year of high-school, was the marks they required to get into their colleges of choice. They knew the importance of good marks at an early age but it really had meaning when they understood what good colleges required.

In addition to understanding academic requirements of colleges, they also understood the importance of community involvement and extracurricular activities as candidates for college. Once they understood what they had to do, they were motivated to do it and to

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

accomplish what they had to do in high-school. This is a very effective parenting strategy.

We also spent time with them to understand how children waste their college experiences by not being focussed on why they were there or with excessive partying and drinking. We were not interested in supporting a degree in partying and we made it very clear. Our view of college was to enjoy college life, further your education, broaden your perspective, eventually narrow the focus on what your talents and interests are and develop as a person. This approach helped our children prepare for college and make the most of it when they attended college.

You have to develop your children with a balance of rules and a self governing approach. We always had the approach of trying to determine the appropriate boundaries of the level of responsibility they could assume. We found that this was not done in isolation but rather with a number of other strategies which have been discussed in this book. As they developed we became more comfortable with their level of maturity and responsibility. This strategy proved successful as they entered college and could handle their independence well. They worked hard and remained focussed on doing well and set their priorities accordingly. They managed the distractions of those who partied and drank excessively and who wasted their more important college experiences.

One interesting thing our children have noticed at college is the children who have been pampered, who

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

have had everything done for them as they grew up – including their homework! The first exposure to independence can be overwhelming to many and many of the challenges faced are based on the fact that they always have things done for them.

All the sections in this book apply to the preparation and success at college. The disciplines and skills your children learn at an early age will help them prepare for college. If you help them become a good student in their first year of school it will be easier to continue this success. If you wait for the year of applying for college to try and get the marks you need to enter college, then it will most likely be too late to make the needed turnaround.

A recent trend is to take a “victory lap” which means repeating the last year of high-school. Some of the reasoning for this strategy is to give children more time to prepare for college. Unfortunately many of these students have delayed college because they don’t know what they want to do, don’t have the necessary marks or the funding. Many of these reasons for a “victory lap” can be avoided by considering college well before the last year of high-school.

You should start planning for the financing of furthering education to hopefully give your children the opportunity to obtain levels of education necessary for them to reach their potential, obtain their goals and have a successful life.

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation **Job and career discussion**

We felt it was very helpful to discuss jobs and careers at an early age. As you strive to develop independent children, one of the most important things they will need is a job and a career to provide for themselves. At an early age children need to understand why you work and can't be with them as much as you would like. They should understand the importance of work in a financial context and how important it is to your household.

A good starting point in preparing children for work is to develop a good work ethic. Our children were brought up with a good work ethic through the examples we set, experiences they encountered and the discussions we had regarding work. If you prepare your children with the right attitude, interest, education and skills, you will prepare them well for jobs.

We taught our children through the actions of other people. We would often have them to watch people work and learn from it. We had great conversations about how people did their jobs and the kinds of jobs people did. We pointed out good and bad examples for our children to learn from.

Ask your children what they think it is you do in your job. My wife was asked in kindergarten what her father did and she replied that he had a gun and caught bad guys. She clearly did not know what her Dad did as her dad was an insurance broker. Over the years she learned excellent selling skills from her dad. Our daughter was asked what her mom did when she was in kindergarten

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

and she explained how her mom drank beer and played golf. The day before she was asked this question, her mother happened to play in a corporate golf tournament and she had a client who produced beer. We learned from these experiences and subsequently took the time and talked to our children about our work. Through the years we have had many excellent conversations and it has clearly helped them understand the work phenomena which they know they will face and are preparing for.

We discussed our own jobs with our children, shared work related experiences and wherever possible included them in work related activities. They even worked on small projects relating to our work. They participated in the development of this book.

We are big believers in helping your children find their passion and talents and understand the right fit for them. A great way to help them find the right career for them is to help them understand themselves and the types of skills required for various careers. Another helpful approach is to help expose them to different interests and educate them on different jobs. They may be fortunate to develop one of their interests into a job. This is common for sports and music interests and more challenging for carers in other industries.

There are programs in some communities which encourage you to take your children to work and show them what you do. There are many ways you can expose your children to what you do if you can't physically show them your job. You can take the time and explain it.

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

We used an effective strategy of explaining to our children that school was their job. They needed to work hard at school and do their best. We used this approach to help them create an excellent work ethic in school and to learn a performance based assessment of themselves by earning marks instead of dollars.

An allowance program is another strategy which can teach your children about working and the value of work. As we made school the main job for our children, we did not pay a structured allowance. We expected them to contribute around the house by doing chores and keep their own space organized. Their school job kept them very busy.

We helped our children understand the importance of a resume. They learned the important components of a resume as goals, education, experiences, community involvement and interests. We helped them develop each component of their resume and keep track of this information and develop excellent resumes for college applications and work.

Entrepreneurial Skills and Dream

Discussing the entrepreneurial dream is a very effective way to help your child understand what is possible and the opportunities that exist for their future and if they have entrepreneurial tendencies. By researching entrepreneurial success stories you can teach your child many things. Even if they do not start their own business

Life Skills – Education and Career Preparation

or become entrepreneurial, they will learn important skills. Understanding the attitudes of entrepreneurs will help shape your child's attitude which will help them in many ways in their life.

Talk to your children about people who have succeeded as entrepreneurs. Discuss the products and services they have created and how this has changed lives and why it has succeeded. This will help your child believe that dreams are possible and it may inspire them to dream and one day to be a great entrepreneurial success story. Google and Microsoft are great success stories to research and discuss. They both started from ideas of several individuals. Google is a great story that children can relate to and appreciate.

Children have the ability to dream as well as anyone. By helping your child think about producing a product or developing a service; you may unleash a talent and develop an interest. As they use a product, they may start to think how it is made and how it could be made different and better. This exercise will help them develop inquisitive skills. This could also lead to an understanding of their talents and interests. You may identify interests and talents which you can nurture over the years.

Understanding and developing entrepreneurial skills is great development for your child. Leadership, risk taking, vision, determination, passion, commitment and the many other skills of entrepreneurs will help your child. These skills are valuable in daily life and within any business even if you are not an entrepreneur.

Section 3: The Road to Independence™

Concept

Our underlying theme of independence is an eventual goal and measurement of success as a parent. The Road To Independence™ is the journey you take to develop your children to be independent. The obvious meaning to most parents is to teach our children to cook, do the wash, get a job and look after themselves. Independence starts at an early age and has a much broader meaning in our minds. We have expanded the meaning of independence significantly to include doing things for themselves and many more important life skills and disciplines. We believe the foundation for independence includes basic life skills, character development, attitudes, experiences and activities all of which shape the individual. Our strategies are very broad and will help you along the long road or journey of many years to develop and prepare your child for independence.

We named this concept several years before our children were at college/university age. The essence of the concept was that our children would have to learn to be independent and it was our responsibility to prepare them. Although we named our strategy “The Road to Independence” in their teen years, we actually developed the strategy during their early stages in life. The key is to start preparing at an early age. We took steps from the time they were infants to help them

The Road To Independence - Concept

gradually develop the ability to do things themselves, giving them confidence and life skills to become independent. As they became teenagers we had fun with the concept and they understood what we were trying to accomplish.

It is a difficult thought to suggest you should start preparing your child to be independent of you at an early age. This is the longer term goal. As you raise your child at home you should consciously work on strategies to help them be more independent. As parents it is often easier to do things for your children without taking the time and patience to teach them how to do it for themselves. Our concept of independence is to prepare your children by raising them in a way that develops the skills and confidence to do many of the things we do for them as parents and develop additional necessary life skills in order to succeed.

There are many opportunities to teach your children about independence and doing the things you do for them. Once you make independence a conscious strategy you will find many situations and opportunities to practice.

Beginning this process early is important to prepare your children for independence and to establish the strategy of working with your children to develop skills. A starting strategy is to teach them to do all the things you do for them. It may seem harsh to say “do it yourself” or “you try” but there comes a time when they need to learn to do things for themselves and also feel

The Road To Independence - Concept

comfortable and confident to try new things on their own. The sooner they do things on their own, the better.

It is important to recognize levels of independence through the ages of their development. We are not suggesting total independence as your children will always rely on you for love, encouragement, understanding and help in many ways beyond financial assistance. At each age of development your child can develop skills and perform activities. Our approach was not to allow age to restrict our children's development but rather allow them to develop based on their abilities.

Simple actions at each stage of your child's development can help them develop their independence. As a toddler your child will fall over (and is not hurt) and your instincts are to rush to pick them up. At times you should be right there for them but consider letting them get up themselves. This applies to many situations when children are young. You need to be conscious of what you need to do and the times when a child needs to figure it out for themselves.

During the 2-5 years of age or pre-school age we focussed on teaching our children to do independent activities and be content on their own. This was a stage of independent development when they did not do most things by themselves but rather learned to feel comfortable in their own space and able to be comfortable doing things on their own. We introduced them to activities they would do on their own such as drawing and small projects to build things. This strategy helped them develop important skills at an early age

The Road To Independence - Concept

such as focus, appreciating down time, concentrated learning and focussed play time.

You may have an answer to a question but at times you should help them manage through the thinking to come up with the answer themselves. Help them develop thinking skills to consider a number of options and reasons for the decisions. If you don't have the answer to the meaning of a word – teach them to search the word or use a dictionary.

During the early school years they learned to take responsibility for their school education and therefore become more independent about learning. They learned the importance of education and placed it as a priority in their life. This is a very important step towards independence as education is one of the key elements for your child to become independent. If they succeed in school they will more likely become independent. As children learn how to learn they will develop in many other ways and on their own. Encourage your children to practice as a learning strategy. Practice will lead to improved learning and performance of skills. Just as continued running will improve your heart, practice improves musical abilities, sports, arts and academic performance. Once they understand strategies to learn they will become more independent.

We consciously tried not to do things for them at all stages of their development, from tying their shoes to making their beds to planning routes for a trip. On one trip I handed the maps to our children and asked them to get us to our destination. It was one of the most

The Road To Independence - Concept

memorable trips we had as we discovered areas we would never have found. It took a little extra time, some wrong turns, lots of laughs and all the mistakes we as parents have all made, but it was worth it. Over the years they often assumed the role of navigator for the driver and enjoyed being empowered with this role.

I remember the first time I asked my son to phone to order our pizza. He said they would not take a child seriously and it took some convincing to get him to do it. Once he did it and succeeded, it was never an issue to ask him to phone for a pizza again.

As our children reached their teen years, we started to think about the many things they would have to deal with on their own when Mom or Dad was not available. We developed an effective strategy for teaching and enjoying cooking by creating a “Nacho Night” on Friday nights. Our daughter was empowered with the role of “head chef” and we became “sous chefs”. We had lots of good teaching moments, great memories and good food!

If you take a moment and list the things you do for your children daily, weekly and monthly, you will develop a very comprehensive list of opportunities for them to become more independent. We have a lot of fun when we challenge our children to learn to do something on their own rather than asking us to do it. They will argue that they know how to do it and they are developing their “delegation and management skills”.

The Road To Independence - Concept

Here are some things to consider:

- If you rock them to sleep for too long they may not learn to go to sleep on their own
- If you feed them too long they will not learn to feed themselves. Many parents love feeding their children (putting the food in their mouths) but think of the impact on the child
- If you dress them they will not learn to dress themselves
- If you continue to tie their shoes they will not learn
- We read to them and evolved to having them reading to us at night and then having them read on their own
- If you continue to clean their room they will not learn to do it, or develop discipline and organizational skills necessary to keep a clean room

Everything you do for them is something they may learn to do. Be a part of these things, but don't do it for them all of the time.

Here are examples of situations which can be used as teaching moments for independence.

- Learning to walk is a big step towards independence. As parents we help them get started – hold them up while they practice steps – and eventually we let them try while falling and picking themselves up and eventually learning to walk

The Road To Independence - Concept

- Going to school or day care is time to develop independently of a parent
- Riding a bike – start holding them and being very protective of them falling then start to let them go gradually – eventually let go all together. You will see the look in their face of “I did it” and “I am on my own”. They are proud of this moment as it is a sense of accomplishment and feeling they can do it on their own
- Sleepovers and other times – take the time to explain the responsibility your child is assuming in these situations

Encourage them to:

- Schedule appointments for haircuts, doctor and dentist appointments on their own
- Do food shopping and/or create the list
- Purchase and return clothing etc
- Research purchases and understand warranties etc
- Shop for gifts they give
- Cook
- Clean up
- Do their own clothes wash
- Understand maintenance needs around the house
- Order a pizza and make inquiries at stores
- Earn money
- Manage money
- Develop a credit rating – obtain a credit card
- Create and manage a budget

The Road To Independence - Concept

Beyond teaching your children to do many of the things you do for them, help them learn and develop life skills to prepare them for independence.

Our child's perspective.

It's amazing how little things make such a huge difference. I remember the first time I ordered a pizza and it was terrifying. It really shouldn't be, but taking a step out of your comfort zone is difficult as a child although entirely necessary. I still have friends that are uncomfortable approaching a sales person in a store to ask a question or challenge a sales representative. Knowing and being comfortable with these kinds of situations also helps you realize skills that the people you are dealing with possess. Thanks to numerous conversations with my parents and experiencing many situations, I can identify good and bad customer service and numerous other characteristics that business people possess. This has allowed me to build my own character traits and learn from these experiences.

“It is necessary for us to learn from others' mistakes. You will not live long enough to make them all yourself”, Hyman George Rickover.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to think about developing yourself as a better parent and further developing your own strategies for parenting. If your child has not thanked you for your efforts, we will.

At times it may appear difficult to measure your success as a parent. You will see indicators through the years. It can be as simple as when your child shares, when your son opens a door for a woman or older person, a perspective your child has on an issue, when your child does something special for someone else, when they enjoy spending time with you or the fact they tried their best at something, succeed in school or get a job. You do not have to raise a world leader to be successful.

It is interesting how parenting can be a very rewarding role in your daily life and in a very reflective way. It is a great feeling when you look at your child and the parenting aspect of your life with pride and a great sense of accomplishment. It is wonderful to be able to reflect back on your parenting and recall the challenges you overcame, many special moments and happy times. Life does not get any better than that.

One of our goals in writing this book was to further develop strategies for parenting in an online application and as a social venture for others to participate in and benefit from. We realize there are many successful parents who could help other parents by sharing some of

their strategies and experiences and children who could share their stories. This initiative will develop as a resource of strategies for parenting. We have created www.StrategiesForParenting.com and www.TheRoadToIndependence.com to facilitate the sharing of strategies. There are many great causes which help children and we hope to position strategies for parenting as a social venture to help children and parents succeed. Please donate some of your time to share your experiences with others and encourage your children to do the same. By sharing strategies, we can make a positive difference in the life of children, parents and our communities.

Appendix

Strategies for Parenting Mapping

This section is an exercise we did not complete. We thought it would be a good way for some people who need to draw out things to do or make notes to help them get their ideas down in writing. The concept of mapping is to connect your thoughts with a series of key points. In our recommended mapping approach you can take your key roles as parents and develop notes to think about and strategies to try. This may help you map out a plan.

If you take the time to map out the many dimensions of a parent you will create a framework for strategies for parenting, plan on being a parent or ways to perform.

Here is a basic framework of examples of key roles as a parent to help you get started;

Provider – food, shelter, basic needs

Educator – teach, perspective, experiences in life, life skills

Mentor – influence, lead by example, role model

Friend – understanding, common interests, activities, special memories

Appendix – Strategies for Parenting Mapping

The next step is to identify strategies for each of your roles and how you will manage these strategies to develop your child.

Provider - Food.

Logically you need to feed your child each day and you will need to plan all aspects of providing food. It is important to manage many aspects of food from having food available to the scheduling of eating.

Do you know what you should feed your children to help them develop properly? There is much research available on nutrition which will help you begin to understand good eating habits and healthy choices.

Help your children develop an appreciation for food so they enjoy what you feed them and they don't waste it.

Develop a schedule for eating to determine when and where your children eat.

Determine how you will feed your child and develop the proper type of eating habits and manners.

Determine if you will spend time with them at meal time.

Determine your child's role in preparing food and cleaning up afterwards.

Appendix – Strategies for Parenting Mapping

Educator

We address this in greater detail in the book but you do have a role in education. The greater the role you play the better the education your child will have.

We consciously looked for “teachable moments” to teach our children right and wrong and perspective.

We also took responsibility for their education which made us accountable and involved in their education. Map out how you will participate in your child’s school education.

Map out your plan for reading.

Map out your toy plan for educational toys.

Map out the important things you want to teach your child (values, customs, skills) and the experiences you want to give them.

Mentor

This is also further developed later in the book.

You influence your child in many ways from eating, reading, exercise and telling the truth etc. It is important to recognize the impact you have and take responsibility for the influences you have.

Appendix – Strategies for Parenting Mapping

The type of environment your child grows up in, will affect the type of person they become. You are a big part of the environment and one of their most influential mentors.

Map out ways you want to influence your child

Friend – activities

Our role as a friend helped strengthen our relationship with our children.

There are many aspects to being a friend and each person may have different needs for friends. Understand the needs and determine how you can play that role.

We tried to spend time with our children doing activities that they would tend to do with friends. We were interested in the things they did and the influences activities had on them, therefore we planned to participate in activities with them - sports, crafts, movies, biking etc.

Plan your time with your children and identify time as a friend.

About the Authors

Jeff M Brown, B.A., CMA

Jeff is the founder of TeachingKidsBusiness.com and author of The Kids' Guide To Business. Jeff is a very committed parent who altered his career to work out of his home and was fortunate to have had quality time to understand and manage his children. Jeff recognizes the parallels of business, parenting and preparing children with essential life skills. His nature is to challenge the way things are done, innovate and create effective solutions. As an entrepreneur, professional accountant, experienced business person & professional parent (CEO of Brown Household) and interested observer he has developed a broad based on experience. Drawing from his experiences, Jeff has developed a very unique and effective way of developing strategies for parenting, life skills and preparing children for independence. Jeff offers over 30 years of business experience and 20 years of parenting.

Amey Harding

Amey is an accomplished marketing professional and experienced small business operator. She brings a very honest and sincere perspective to parenting and a good understanding of the qualities and skills children require to develop in order to be successful in life. As a team Amey and Jeff developed strategies for parenting.

Hayley Brown

Hayley has inspired many sections in this book and has contributed in writing content and editing. She is gifted in many interesting ways which has helped us learn to respond to a range of abilities and opportunities as parents. With a wide range of interesting talents Hayley has helped us add depth to our parenting strategies.

Tyler Brown

Tyler has contributed to this book as a role-model child and a privilege to parent. He has inspired sections in this book and helped us develop these effective strategies. His actions have allowed us to understand parenting from this perspective.

