

## **BASIC SKILLS AND POSITIVE REALITIES IN PARENTING** *- A Guide for Evaluation and Practice*

Parenting does not always come naturally. Some of us did not have our parents around during the formative years. In some cases negative examples were set.

The stresses of modernisation have affected the role of many parents.

The main road to recovery is for us parents to rediscover our roles through becoming more aware and practising certain skills and positive realities. These have been drawn from the literature, the scriptures and from experience. Hopefully this will help as you seek to become what most persons hope to be - a more effective parent.

### **Spirituality**

References have been made in the contents of this publication to spirituality. This is not meant to coerce. Rather, it is meant to help those who see spirituality as central, and those who share such a quest to voluntarily deepen their search.

Those who wish to apply the approaches discussed to their religion of choice may do so. Others may wish not to include formal religion in their lifestyle.

Your freedom of choice is respected. The rest of the material should, nevertheless, be highly useful to you as they are based on scientific principles.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

1. Score yourself from 0 - 10 on each *skill* and *ability to promote these positive realities* as part of an **initial evaluation**. 0 = dismally lacking (this applies to very few of us); 10 = perfect (this also applies to very few of us).
2. It may also be useful to ask your children and spouse to do their own evaluations of you - if you are brave enough!
3. Set a list of main goals for improvement.
4. Discuss your resolves for updating your skills with your spouse or partner, as well as with another parent. Seek their prayers and encouragement if you are a religious parent.
5. Take a few skills at a time. You will find that the increased pleasure and progress of your children will be a joy to your heart.
6. If there are family problems, or emotional or other difficulties in yourself or your children, seek professional help.
7. Meditate on your goals once weekly, focussing on the list of “enablers”.
8. At monthly, or other intervals, do a **follow-up evaluation** of your progress as in (1) above. Discuss your progress if possible with your spouse or partner, as well as with your friend who is also a parent.

**SKILLS**

**SCORING  
0-10**

<p><b>I. <u>Budgeting one's time</u></b> - "Sharing times" spent together with one's children. <b>Make necessary modifications in one's activity schedule to allow this.</b></p>	
<p><b>II. <u>Sharing</u></b></p>	
<p>(a) <i>Do fun things together</i> (e.g. movies, plays, eating together, playing games, outings, camps, sightseeing, visiting parks, galleries, etc.);</p>	
<p>(b) <i>Talk together</i>;</p>	
<p>(c) <i>Participate in the young person's activities and world</i> and let him/her share about his/her world;</p>	
<p>(d) <i>Let the young person participate in your world</i> and share about your world (e.g. job, childhood, interesting experiences, interests, values).</p>	
<p><b>III. <u>Teaching and enabling for life - "turn everything into a learning experience"</u></b></p>	
<p>(a) <i>Facilitate overall development.</i> The section "Making a Date with Myself to Grow" in <i>Simple Steps to Wellness</i> by the author can be used to help young persons at various stages in their wholistic development;</p>	
<p>(c) Teach male or female and general <i>responsibilities in the home and society</i>;</p>	
<p>(d) <i>Teach etiquette, self care, academics, values, spirituality, about life</i>, etc. The book <i>Simple Steps to Wellness</i> by the author is written for this purpose;</p>	
<p>(e) <i>Play together</i> ("wasting time") - <b>to play is to teach how to play</b>;</p>	
<p>(f) <i>Enable service in the community</i> as soon as the young person is able;</p>	
<p>(b) <i>Teach on environmental care</i>;</p>	
<p>(g) <i>Teach on emergency care</i>: such as first aid and disaster preparedness and management.</p>	
<p><b>IV. <u>Relating positively</u></b></p>	
<p>(a) <i>Encourage increasing independence</i> with age and avoid overprotection. Be like the eagle who backs the young one out of the nest. The eaglet struggles to fly on its own. So it develops its independence and coping skills. If it is not ready yet and if it falls the parent eagle swoops down and catches it. So it receives necessary protection. This protection becomes less and less and eventually the young eagle flies on its own;</p>	
<p>(b) <i>Share unconditional affection, love and appreciation</i>;</p>	
<p>(c) <i>Show affirmation</i> (praise);</p>	
<p>(d) <i>Display respect</i>;</p>	
<p>(e) <i>Model desirable behaviours and life styles</i>;</p>	
<p>(f) <i>Be approachable</i>;</p>	
<p>(g) <i>Listen</i>.</p>	
<p><b>V. <u>Encouraging planning and influencing for the future</u></b></p>	
<p>(a) <i>Facilitate planning for the future</i>;</p>	
<p>(b) <i>Create the best environment for development of the whole person</i> (body, mind, spirit, relationships, relating to nature);</p>	
<p>(c) Anticipate developmental and other stresses and <i>show empathy</i>;</p>	
<p>(d) <i>Be supportive</i> during hard times;</p>	
<p>(e) <i>Shape desirable behaviours</i> with positive and negative rewards;</p>	
<p>(f) <i>Provide consistent explanations and encourage self-discipline</i>;</p>	
<p>(g) <i>Encourage protégés to set clear and consistent limits in their behaviour</i>. Encourage respect;</p>	
<p>(h) <i>Expose them to other supportive male or female role models</i>.</p>	
<p><b>VI. <u>Utilizing enablers for effective parenting</u></b></p>	

	<b>SCORING 0-10</b>
(a) <i>Establish priorities for loyalty and time</i> - i.e. does my family come first? What are my priorities for my child?	
(b) <i>Plan activities for parents and children.</i>	
(c) <i>Seek God's enabling</i> - e.g. viz Bible study, prayer, commitment and being filled with the Spirit of God (if you are religious);	
(d) <i>Gain support from other parents</i> - share problems and ideas - encourage each other;	
(e) <i>Buy and read useful books;</i>	
(f) Be part of a formal or informal <i>parent support group</i> or a <i>family cluster</i> .	

**ENGAGING WITH THE POSITIVE REALITIES THAT MOTIVATE OTHERS**

There are certain basic positive realities that will guide all aspects of parenting. This is in contrast to the many negative possibilities that too many of us are in danger of focussing on. These will go a far way to make parenting effective. These are shared below. Again you can rate yourself with regards to how effectively you are dealing with them.	<b>SCORING 0-10</b>
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***AFFIRMING POTENTIAL***

It is vital to <i>be aware of your child's potential</i> . Encourage positive self-expectations in this regard.	
<i>Give him or her positive feedback about them</i> . For example:	
His or her capacity to <i>care, to understand</i> , to learn and to grow	
His or her capacity to <i>learn and to grow</i>	
His or her capacity to <i>love and to have good intentions</i> .	
All the various aspects of potential need to be assumed and nurtured.	

***BUILDING POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS OF SELF***

People usually try to live up to <i>positive self-expectations of one's ability</i> . Encourage this positively.	
<i>Affirm your child's willingness to try</i> .	
<i>Encourage expectations of eventual success with perseverance and dependence on one's spiritual potential</i> .	
<i>Encouragement and reassurance in both good and bad times</i> can also build positive expectations of one's self.	
As well there is the positive reinforcing effects of success in itself.	

***EXPRESSING APPROVAL - BUILDING ON THE POSITIVES***

<i>Reward effort by approval</i> . This is valuable when it comes from someone important in one's life.	
<i>Consistent approval</i> is powerful.	
<i>Consistent affirmations and appreciation</i> from a significant person in one's life is not to be underestimated	
As well as being consistent these should be expressed and even <i>in the most commonplace of circumstances or events</i> .	

***BUILDING POSITIVE SELF ESTEEM***

A positive self esteem does not come automatically.	
Affirming potential through encouraging responsibility, encouraging positive expectations of one's self and expressing approval, as described earlier, all serve to build positive self-esteem	
<i>Encouraging responsibility in the home, school, church and community</i> should also be seen as positive motivating reality as it too builds self-esteem.	

***SETTING A POSITIVE EXAMPLE***

Every child seeks to emulate his or her parents and to identify with them.

Also, there is the very powerful reality that children will take in what their parents say and do and how they think and feel. This eventually becomes part of their own psychological makeup.

Therefore parents need to:

a) *reflect on the example that they set;*

b) model as much as is possible the behaviour they require of their children;

c) make the necessary sacrifices to *display integrity and consistency;*

d) be *honest about one's weaknesses;*

e) seek to *grow constantly.*

**ENCOURAGING GOAL-SETTING**

It is vital to *help one's child develop a vision* of what he or she should and can be. This would be in terms of a specific career, one's character, traits of maturity, Christian motivation, daily living and good citizenship.

In this context, it is useful as you get to *know your child's aptitudes and talents* as well as *positive desires.*

*Move along with your child and help him/her to dream and strive.*

*One's own vision of life can be shared* with one's child in the context of stressing all these aforementioned factors.

**ENCOURAGING CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

Most important of all to share with one's child is the reality that *surrender to Christ and living in dependence* on his Holy Spirit allows one to develop one's full potential, purpose and fulfilment.

Few things are more effective than a parent's:  
*persistent prayers;*

*witness;*

*Christian example.*

**CONCLUSION:**

Do not expect to be the perfect parent or for your lack of experience or your shortcomings as a parent to change overnight. Success is achieved by small beginnings and persistence. Seek professional counselling for your children or the whole family as may become necessary. Willingness to seek help is a sign of health.

Just do your best - that is all. Your child will benefit and will respect you for your efforts.

HOW ABOUT PREPARING A PARENTING MISSION STATEMENT - TRY IT!

**Happy Parenting!**