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POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS

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By Glen A. Gerreyn

There tends to be a lot of anxiety about parenting in today's modern world. Parents are constantly asking themselves the dreaded questions:

“Am I giving my child the best chance at succeeding?” “Am I choosing the right school?” “Am I giving them the best opportunities?” “Can I keep them safe from the underbelly of the internet?”

Predictably, behind every great child is a parent who thinks they are stuffing the whole thing up.

The reality is that most parents are doing the best job they know how, and when they know better they do better (Thank you, Oprah!). There is an old folk saying: “We are only as happy as our saddest child”. Why does this ring true? Because, as parents, we are so deeply connected, entangled and intertwined with our children that, when they are not happy, we are also not happy. My hope is that, as I share five of my key parenting focusses, you will discover at least one salient idea you can add to your good parenting repertoire and help you recognise that you are on the right track.



1. Give them **VISION**

An ancient Hebrew poem said, “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.”

An arrow, however, is purposeless and aimless unless it is targeted somewhere. Likewise, you have to point your children in a particular direction for them to become effective. The place you point them to may not be their ultimate destination, but each step they take prepares them for their journey through life.

My foremost job as a parent is not to point out my child’s errors, even though most days this would be easy to do. Instead, it is to identify their strengths and help them to use those strengths to run their life — this being the far more difficult and perceptive task. This strength-driven approach elevates their wellbeing and provides self-confidence and fulfilment. From the time my children were born, I was always looking for emotional, character and physical traits that could unlock future fates. There are always hints as to the inclinations and tendencies a child might possess, but it takes an engaged and interested parent to identify and nurture their individual child’s development. And remember, their inclinations and tendencies may not be the same as yours. Let them run their own race and avoid trying to live out your misspent dreams through them.

Another key way to help identify a vision for your child is by exposing them to myriad different activities and experiences and then watching to see what resonates and engages their heart and soul. This will give them options to draw out unseen strengths.



2. ENCOURAGE them

I work with teenagers every day and one of the things that saddens me most is how many say they have never heard a parent say they are proud of them or that they love them. It seems easier to encourage and love a baby, toddler, child or even pre-teen. With all the emotional outbursts, screaming and hormonal rage of a teenager, compliments may not come as easy. However, as parents it is essential that we praise even the slightest hint of the behaviours we want to see flourish in our children. Some parents have said to me, "If I praise them too often, it won't mean much." But the reality is that much of the world is insecure and hell bent on ridiculing, mocking and taunting your teenager — especially in the vortex of social media. So, before they go out and face the world, make sure their cup is filled to overflowing at home with as much encouragement, hope and optimism that you can pour in. Keep talking with your children about EVERYTHING. Make no conversation off limits so when the time does come for them to bring some shocking news to you, they know you will listen without losing it! When teenagers feel the support from a loving parent, they know they can withstand the taunts from others and press on.

The best method of encouragement is to applaud the process rather than the outcome: honour the means, not just the trophy. Celebrate the early mornings and the late nights and how they listened to their coach/teacher and made the necessary sacrifices to achieve an outcome.



3. Be where **YOU ARE**

Have you ever attended a party and the person you were speaking to was clearly distracted and scanning the room looking for people they felt were more important to speak to? How did that make you feel? Pretty insignificant, right?

That is exactly how our kids feel when they are trying to talk to us but we are flicking through the channels on the TV or scrolling our feeds on our smartphone even if we are in the same room as them. It is becoming increasingly difficult today to be where we are.

Have you ever lost your phone and then ‘lost it’? By that I mean lost your mind or your sanity and you scream out, “Has anyone seen my phone?” Have you ever checked your phone when you were experiencing a lull or momentary pause, like at the traffic lights? Even though we know it is against the law when we are in charge of a car, we just can’t help ourselves. I know we own these devices, but sometimes I think these devices own us!

We are so distracted today by meaningless and worthless things while the important things are often ignored. We don’t know who our kids are hanging out with, but we know what someone we went to school with but never actually talked to, ate for breakfast this morning.

Our smartphones are incredibly powerful devices that can connect us with people all across the world and disconnect us from the person sitting right in front of us. They are powerful devices for global reach but harmful for daily presence and connection.

To be where you are, it may help you to start placing some boundaries around your smartphone use. A mantra my wife and I try to adhere to is “Phones down when the kids are around” and recently I have restricted my social media time to 4:00 — 4:30pm. If I don’t check it in that timeframe, then I don’t check it at all. Small adjustments to how we use our devices can and will improve our relationships exponentially.



4. Teach them how to **FAIL**.

I know a 16-year-old girl who has battled with depression because she could not forgive herself for a mistake she made two years earlier. It is essential to help our young people acknowledge that failure is part of the process.

The best way to teach our children how to fail is by sharing your failures with them. Share the stories of how things didn't go to plan for you when you were going through adolescence (or, for that matter, any stage of life) and yet you still made it through. You have been there before so show them that they are not alone and that they are strong enough to overcome any obstacle.

Don't be the one to go to the school office and attempt to sort out their problems for them. Talk them through some strategies and empower them to fight their own battles.

The new term for a parent who wants to clear all the obstacles and challenges from their child's path is called a "snowplough" parent. But clearing every obstacle and never letting them fail, fall or be disappointed does not develop resilience or grit. It's not what you leave to your kids that makes them great, it's the deposit you leave in them. Be a shining example to show them that failure is not fatal.



5. Make the house a **HAVEN**

Home should be a sacred and protected place. I know that extreme situations occur in families but, as much as possible, we should never tell our kids to “Get out”. Home needs to be a safe haven and a place of refuge.

I know my children are going to make mistakes, mess up and do dumb things. I know your children are going to make mistakes, mess up and do dumb things. How can I be so sure? Because when you and I were their age, we all made mistakes, messed up and did dumb things. But, no matter what they do, at any age, our children need to know that, when they come home, they will receive mercy and forgiveness. Yes, there may be consequences from their actions but in the end, the goal is for your child to be healed and restored. Then together as a family we can go out and face the world together. This family unit you have created is a tribe and there should be no obstacle so great that can destroy the connectedness and harmony of this family. It’s a choice we can all make to ensure our family bond remains unbreakable.

Lastly, just in case nobody has ever told you, let me say to every parent out there, You are doing a fantastic job as a parent. Your kids may, from time to time, ignore you and berate you, but when they are sick, hurt or in trouble, they don’t want their friends, they want you, their mum and dad. Nobody can restore and empower their heart and soul like you can. You are truly the most important people in their life, even though sometimes they may not show it.

I salute and applaud all the parents out there, especially the ones taking the time to read this far on a parenting article. No matter what field we work in, we should always take the time to educate ourselves in that area. This is certainly never more true than in the field of parenting — our most important life role yet.



Ignite Your Teen's Potential with My New Ebook!

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As someone who's had the privilege of speaking at 750 high schools across the globe over the past 20 years, I get it. Teens can sometimes lose their way and struggle with vision. As a parent of three teenagers myself, I truly understand what sparks passion and purpose in a young person's heart.

Drawing from ideas that have fuelled my TED Talk and resonated with over a million teenagers, I've distilled these insights into a powerful ebook designed to help your teen discover their path. Join me on this transformative journey as we unlock your teen's potential and guide them toward a future filled with inspiration and achievement!

"I was incredibly inspired by your speech. It honestly made me realise I need to stop waiting for the opportunities to come to me but instead manufacture them for myself, taking advantage of my skills and passions. You are changing the way adolescents view not only the world, but themselves. It no longer feels so much like a chore to get out my school books, I'm helping myself become mentally stronger while exercising my talents. I will forever remember the seeds of greatness analogy and shall use it in my daily life. Thank you again."

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