

How to Raise A Good Kid in A Difficult & Challenging World

First, realize your kids are not your own, they belong to God. You **must** first give your kids *back to God*. They only came through you (if you are a mother), to bring into this world. They have a life to live with a purpose and blueprint all their own.

You must realize they are fully developed souls within an undeveloped body. They are wisdom and love, and have their very own compass within to help keep them connected to their overall truth. So, be sure not to try to *force* your ideals and ways upon them that you have decided for your personal life. Your job is to raise them with love, provide guidance in the areas you are able based on their individual personalities, feed them, and provide shelter and security. We are merely helping them to find and align to their own path before you set them free to fly out of the nest.

These little people were given to you for a reason. Your life, lifestyle, and all that you bring to the table is essential and purposeful for them to develop into the person they were meant to be in this lifetime. Give them the best that you have.

- Teach them the basic laws of love: *do unto others as wish to be done unto, treat others in a manner that you would treat your most loving family member.*
- To believe in yourself, believe in the best for others - for as you do, you are truly bringing that back to yourself.
- Whatever you do to others, you do to yourself.
- Always do your best, but never worry about being perfect.

- Teach them each child is a miracle in itself, unique, and beautifully needed in this world.
- Teach them your basic morals and values for successful, happy, healthy living.

Remember, you cannot be everywhere your child is. This is the benefit of turning them over to their heavenly Father. He is All-knowing, All-seeing, and All-powerful. In this way, you have the peace of mind knowing He is watching over your child at every moment, when you can't, and your prayers are heard. You know your child is being guided and directed not only by you, but by their spiritual Father who created them and knows what is best for them, is all-powerful and can prevent and orchestrate people and things to care for and protect your child and will guide them into environments that are only for their good. This will not keep them from undergoing challenging experiences, but it ensures they are in alignment with their overall purpose and destiny!

Teach your child how to pray! Yes. As young as possible, teach them there is something more powerful than they, and all-knowing and loving. Teach them that they can call upon this higher-power and *wisdom*, and *comfort* at all times. Teach them that they can pray for their friends and enemies! Teach them that love overcomes all evil, and through prayer, their concerns and requests are heard and met. This gives them power when their parents are not present, which is like having an invisible friend and guardian. So many things can happen in the blink of an eye, and when they do, they can change the course of your child's life! If they know they have the power in every moment to change the dynamics of any situation they find themselves in, they will move about more confidently, without fear, and be a power-player in their own life and experiences.

Teach your little ones the power of thought and words. Teach them that they are creative beings, a spark of the highest Creator of all, which makes them also powerful creators every moment of the day! Teach them the power in their words, and words have power. Teach them the power of their imagination – and how

thoughts become things when spoken. This is a very powerful tool, but it is important to teach your little ones that this works in good thoughts and bad, so to learn to be a manager over their thoughts and their words.

Your little ones will go through various emotions through out life. Teach your little ones their emotions are natural and good. Emotions are intended to bring attention to something, or to alarm them that something is *off* that does not align with what they desire or believe. Teach your little scholars that they can embrace these emotions, but not to allow them to overtake them. Emotions are true feelings, but not necessarily reflecting the truth or reality. They are simply the reaction to something. Talk with your little ones about their feelings, teach them to ask why they feel this way, what has caused their feelings. Talk them through them to teach them how to manage their emotions so that they do not overwhelm and overtake them. Teach them that they are the master of their own kingdom within, and once they determine what the trigger was that set their alarm system off, they can have better understanding of themselves, possibly get a clearer understanding of what caused it, and also choose to move passed it in a more confident and enlightened manner.

Most importantly, know your children. Each is unique with their own personality and bring about a unique set of gifts, talents, traits, and thought processes and behaviors that will influence this world. They are not an accident, even if unplanned. There are absolutely no accidents in the giving of a life. So, by all means, ensure your little one that they are loved and wanted, unique and beautiful, and have something wonderful to share to the world. This is where we as parents help point out their gifts and strengths. Help them to discover their own uniqueness when others say they are weird or strange. Encourage them to embrace their quiriness, their differences, and so on. This will set your child up for success in all aspects of life.

Okay, let's get down to the nitty gritty!

Kids will test and try you. What do you do, you ask? Well, you don't allow them to mistreat or act out in a manner you do not wish to continue. Many people see the “terrible two's and three's” as the most challenging states of all in raising kids. That is not an understatement, but I can tell you this, it does not have to be the years your house turned into hell where you allow your child to “take control of the house or you”. I have seen in years passed that it was advised and healthy to allow your toddler to express himself because he/she just didn't know what they were doing. In other words, not to discipline. Well, I have learned from my own parenting, parenting others, grand-parenting, and seeing others' parenting that these years are very very developmental and what they learn here is essential. Therefore, it is important to teach your little toddler that you are still the boss. And although they are discovering their little emotions, the power of “NO”, and other developmental skills like learning their boundaries of what they can and cannot get away with and so forth, it is still essential for you to lovingly continue to demonstrate you are the *Big Cat Mama*, or *Big Dog Papa*, period! I tell you what, because if you don't, here, you will regret it when you see that child at 16 years old telling you off, cursing at you, disrespecting you in public, telling you “NO”, and doing whatever else the heck they want because you taught them that in those developmental years that they could do this without consequence. They know no other way. So, as your little one acts out, gently correct them. Get down to their level, meaning on your knees, look them lovingly in the eyes, maybe even gently hold both of their hands and tell them why it is *not* okay to behave in the manner they were behaving, or to do whatever they were doing that is not acceptable. Then you reiterate to them who they are, how they behave, what is right behavior, and how that behavior works for them. When you gently correct them while simultaneously reminding them who they are, and who they are not, this gives them clear direction for proper behavior and allows them to see clearly how they CAN do this! This allows them to make choices on their own knowing the right information. Keep in mind, this does not teach them conformity. On the contrary, it teaches them how to be their

BEST selves and prepares them to operate more successfully in the world with their unique gifts and talents and obtain better outcomes. So *know* your child, and teach them how to harness their gifts and talents and behaviors to work *for* them, and not against them.

Communication is Key! We have to realize our children are constantly learning. They are sponges, taking in information in their environments all day long. It is imperative to communicate with your kids and develop open dialogue about all issues they deal with on a daily basis. I get it, some of the new things in this age may be out of your jurisdiction, but the basics will always apply in every situation. Allow them the open space to share their feelings about what they are feeling, their questions, their concerns. Otherwise, they will go elsewhere to find answers and gain information. Remember, they are still developing and trying to discover who they are and what this world is all about. If they don't have a safe haven at home to get answers, they will get them where they can, and this is not always a good place, nor accurate information you want taught to your child.

I often had elders in my life tell me my children were too young to talk to the way I did. I always talked to them like people and not babies. They were toddlers and I got down on their level and spoke to them lovingly, as a mommy, and talked in a manner they could understand. If they didn't understand something, I explained it in a manner that was comprehensible for their age. As they became adults, these same elders always expressed their amazement of my children, how awesome and amazing and wise and loving they were, etc. It has been a blessing to hear how wonderful my children are, and the gift continues to bless as they continue it with their children, and pass it on to their friends who want to learn from them, and continue to come back to me asking me how I did it. I say all the time..... "I gave my children back to God. Me and God raised my children."

Parenting at a distance. Okay, so lots of parents these days are not

in the same household with their children, and when this happens, they feel, well, *powerless*. NO! No! No! Remember, YOU are the parent!!! Your child doesn't know anything about parenting other than what you tell them or demonstrate. You're the parent! Your demonstration of a mother is the only one they know. Your demonstration of a father is the only one they know. So, you need to do whatever it takes to reach them, to be in their life, to stay in communication with them. Yeah, they can be difficult and say things that may hurt your little feelings, but come on, you've been there. You know what they're going through. Work through it and focus on the end result. It's being the wiser, seeing the long stretch. They will thank you later. They can't see the forest through the trees right now. Especially as teenagers. So, it is your job to reach out, to do what needs to be done, to be that PARENT and *not a best friend*. That can come later. Yes, it's cute to be your daughter or sons best friend, but ask yourself, where do you therefore, draw the line when it comes to teaching and guidance? If they see you as their best friend and you kick it like friends and such, who is the adult? Who is the one who is going to say *NO*, or *this is not acceptable*, and so on? So you have to be the parents at ALL times. No I am not saying you cannot have fun, be your child's friend, best friend for that matter, and all of that. But I AM saying that you must make sure they are perfectly clear that when it comes time to draw the line, YOU are the final word, YOU are the parent, YOU determine what is right for them until they are old enough to know for themselves, and YOU determine what you will and will not accept in your home, etc. Otherwise, your child does not know. Yes, through the eyes of babes we learn, but that's being open and hearing them. That is not letting them dictate the final result or rules. And, most kids DO, believe it or not, want discipline, boundaries, and rules to abide by. No, boundaries and disciplines aren't fun and your child may buck up against them, but for the most part, I promise you, they will be so grateful for them later because of how they shaped them, and they will share and/or brag to their friends how you didn't allow it!!!

I remember that defining moment when my oldest was up against listening to her friends or listening to her mother. I was a single

mom and I was fierce about my children. I knew I was going to have more control over them than the streets, so I made sure they feared me more than.. well, anyone or anything else, especially in the city we lived in. But they knew I loved them. So in this scenario her friends convinced her to wear make-up to school, clearly against my rules. That was a no-go for me. So, they convinced her to put it on at school and just wash it off before she went home. Wanting to be cool and accepted by her new friends in this new school, she followed. Once I picked her up, I saw the remnants of make-up on her eyelids. When I asked about it, she lied. Well, I knew better, and I knew her, and I knew she was lying. Instead of going in at her as my anger wanted to do, I gave her the opportunity to tell me the truth. But I prefaced it with letting her know I am her best friend, I will be there when others won't, I will fight for her, I will be the last one standing for her defense, but the most important thing she wants to do is to never break this trust. She never wants to lose this friendship she has in her mother, unlike any friend who convinces her to do something she knows is wrong. In tears, she volunteered the information. I encouraged her honesty and did not want to punish her for telling me the truth, however, I did have to address the lie and the going behind my back so she knew this was not looked over. Lesson learned.

For a few years my children lived with their dad. But his parenting was quite opposite of mine, and I did not want all of my training to go out the window and they become different human beings. So, I made sure I was in touch regularly. Although as teenagers they did not like it most times, but I stayed “in the cut” whether they liked it or not, asking them what was going on, how they were, talking to them about their friends, school, their feelings, their goals, their dad, me, everything. I did not encourage negative talk but always discussed all sides of every story. In the end of every conversation they were lighter, their spirits were lifted, their energy was higher, and they felt encouraged to go on with joy and confidence. This helped my children learn to work through their feelings, issues they were facing, plan for their futures, pray and believe in their prayers,

have a forever connection to their mother, and to appreciate and see both sides of their dad and step-mothers perspectives without judgment. You see, a parent is crucial in a child's life, even a step-parent. If this remained negative or hostile, it would affect my children. It was important we discussed and worked toward a cohesive relationship with her as well. Also, a father is crucial for his son in helping him develop into a young man and pass down wisdom and experiences that will help him grow and make wise choices that only a man can teach. A Father is crucial for a daughter to help her understand the opposite sex, he will be her first experience of loving a man, and he will help her to develop the strong masculine attributes that will aid in her growing into a strong well-balanced woman. The same as a woman to her daughter. A mother is crucial in passing down wisdom to her daughter to help her become a woman and be the woman she uniquely is designed to be, and as a mother and wife, if she will be, that only a woman can teach. These life lessons are priceless. A mother's relationship with her son is also crucial. This is his first experience of loving a woman. This is where he learns how to treat women, how to understand, love and honor the woman in his own life as he grows into a man. This is where he learns the gentle and softer attributes that will help shape him into a loving and well-balanced man. So never underestimate your power no matter what the geographical distance or situation. You decide, and they will respond in kind, eventually. Never ever give up. You won't regret it. Love always conquers all!

Overwhelming Fear. I have talked with many parents about the fear they experience when their children go off to school, be it kindergarten, high school, college, or travel out of the country. I can tell you, I have felt this fear as well. But that was when I remembered a very powerful tool that will help not only your child, but you as well. That is, teach your children the habit of *following their inner voice*. Yes, this voice within all of us, when we listen, will guide us into all truth and safety! But the most important thing is to *listen* to it, and to *trust* it. It is easy to override it, to doubt it, to think WHY, or that doesn't make sense. But, these are only blocks that prevent that truth that is trying to

come forward to lead you to something good, or to prevent you from something bad. This truth is within every human being. It is known as instinct, truth, infinite intelligence, God within, our gut feeling, and so forth. Either way, it is *always* right, and it is always present. This has gotten me through some of *the most* scary and life-threatening experiences of my life, and my children's lives as well. I taught this to my children at a very young age, and I tell you what, they used it all through high school and when I couldn't be there, when they found themselves in those threatening, life-altering moments that come at the drop of a dime, they listened and every single solitary time, it has saved their life. I have taught this to many of their friends, and parents and it has never failed.

Don't teach what you've experienced, teach beyond. I was raised in an environment that may have been considered very limiting. But I wanted better for my children. I may not have known everything at the time, but I researched, I watched, I observed, and I prayed for better for my kids. I was led to wisdom and knowledge that helped shape my knowledge to raise my children beyond the ways I was raised. There definitely were things I shared with them that I learned and was taught, but if not for their training, it was for their awareness as to why I did what I did. I always allowed my children to be aware of why I was doing what I was doing. I did not believe in them not understanding or being kept in the dark, especially on big life matters. I did not believe in the school of thought *kids are to be seen and not heard*. I mean, to a point. I needed my kids to understand simply because I experienced the opposite and it caused me more heartache and inner turmoil not having a voice or having understanding to what was going on in our lives. I may not have given my kids choice in my adult decisions, but I certainly gave them insight and explained things to them so they understood. This way, everything that went on, they had peace with understanding, even when everyone else outside of our lives had no understanding. Just always keep in mind, every decision you make affects them. They can go through whatever life throws at them when there is love, communication, understanding, and support.

Extra-curricular activities. I am a full believer in keeping your kids busy and engaged in positive activities that can grow them and assist them in interacting with others. These are so good if you can afford it, or if it somehow can fit into your busy schedules. It is an amazing gift for your children to discover their abilities, their talents, to learn to work with other kids their own age, and to discover their strengths and personalities in the world around them. But don't beat yourself up too much if you are unable to. Whatever you do, always encourage your child's natural abilities, and encourage them to reach for their dreams. This can be done in the environment around you, it is not always a paid class they have to take or a far off location you need to drive them to. If you encourage your child to try new things and not to be afraid of trying, getting them involved in group activities or solo projects at a young age, even if it's sports or learning to play an instrument on their own time, this teaches and encourages them to follow their interests and not be afraid to reach out and try new things. So, if you are unable to, encourage them to follow their heart, and THAT will always get them to where they need to be.

So you love your kids and want to give them everything you've never had. Well, don't we all. But let's say this, you don't want to love them to the point of spoiling them. Yes, I said spoil. Even the bible speaks on *sparing the rod and spoil the child*. What does this mean? No, it doesn't mean beat your kids. What it does imply is discipline and a firm hand is necessary at times because otherwise your child can go their own way, as we covered above. But, let's say you don't want a firm hand at all, and this does not mean a physical firm hand, but a firm raising-up. But say you want to do just the very opposite and just love love love them to little itty bitty pieces. Love in and of itself is not bad. But when we give our children everything they want, we really aren't helping them. They have to learn the value of things and they'll never learn that if everything they desire is given. Yes, our heavenly father even says ask and it is given. Yet, he still requires us to work, have faith, have patience, appreciate the small things

before given the big things, timing, and so forth. We are given things in the manner we can appreciate them and care for them. In this, we are grown up in our responsibilities and as we do, we are rewarded. Don't you also want to prepare your children for adulthood? It's fun when they are young and cute and their little faces light up with sheer pleasure and exuberant joy when we bring them a gift, but what about later? Too often I have seen loving parents and grandparents give the little ones anything they desire, and let them act in any ol' way they desire while they are young, but sadly, these parents are greatly frustrated and at a loss when these adorable little tykes grow up to be spoiled, and sometimes bratty little young adults. Sorry, not so cute anymore. You ask, "Where did we go wrong?" *Train up a child in the way they should go and when they grow older they will not stray from it.*

Another killer is guilt. As I mentioned above, some parents may not have their children full-time, or living in their household. This, sadly, causes a lot of parents an enormous amount of guilt. But when you feel guilty and are trying to make up for life experiences that seem to have hurt and affected your child, it is not always the right move to start giving them everything, or letting them do or say or act in any way they choose. This teaches them that they can manipulate you, and they will. I mean, why not get a shirt or two out of the deal if the parents are willing to feel guilty and take it out on their kids, right? I've seen and heard it all too often. Most times, the child is very aware of what they are doing, wrapping their parents around their little fingers and pitching 'fake tantrums' and 'dramatic displays of emotions' which they have learned, gets them what they want. Don't fall for this, let alone create it. The best form of action is to *carry on as normal*. Let your child know it is *business as usual*. Teach them that life happens but they are still expected to maintain their chores, or homework, or responsibilities, or whatever. We allow our kids to go through the gambit of emotions and adjustments, but let's not get ridiculous here. Talk to them, stick to the plan, come up with a new plan, and go from there. Remember, they will only do what you allow them to do. Give them some space... communicate with them, then back to reality. Giving gifts and

overcompensating is just setting them up for failure in relationships, life, and creates a distorted expectation of reality, and they will have a big wake-up call in the world. Set them up for success, give them the real deal now. Life happens. Love them through it.

Responsibility is a major part of raising a responsible young adult. But it does not start in high school as an after-school chore, it begins as little ones. Teach them small things like learning to pick up their toys when their done with them, or when they make a mess, teaching them to clean it up (within their ability), and things like this. And as they grow, increase their chores and responsibilities. Kids LOVE responsibilities, it makes them feel useful and capable. It builds their self-confidence. Making their beds and cleaning their rooms for them doesn't do anything but make you worn out and satisfied with your own work. But what does this do in raising up your child? Teach them to be responsible for themselves, teach them to manage their own areas, teach them to take pride in their work and not sloppy work - letting them see their work is their thumbprint. Allow them to be the boss in their own projects and give them a few projects to manage in the house with the other kids, or even moms and dads. It'll be so much fun and they'll grow tremendously from it. Remember, you are raising adults, so it's always about the future.

The best thing you can do is give your child some basic, healthy morals and values to stand on until they get old enough to adopt a few of their own. This allows your child to have a reference point for which they make their choices when you are not around. It allows your children a sense of belonging to something that is greater and meaningful. When others are doing something that may seem fun and safe to them, your child can see where to draw the line for themselves, otherwise, they can be pulled by the nose into all kinds of situations from friends, by peer pressure, or simply not knowing any better. No child is perfect and will make some mistakes, but it causes them less heartache and challenges to have to undergo when they make less costly mistakes they will have to rectify or pay for later. Set them up and give them a good

foundation.

Teach them how to take the high road when the popular road or low road may seem much easier. Teach them not to return evil with evil, but with good. Teach your child that the good choices they make today, however difficult and unpopular, will come back and bless them later. These are investments in themselves, and investments you can give your child, even if you are unable to set them up financially. Teaching a child to know themselves and giving them a sense of value based on love makes them rich. And that love comes from you, in the home, and in your training.

Comparison is a natural thing for kids. But it is not necessarily a good thing to harp on as they grow. It is essential to curb this behavior early on by teaching them that strength, talent, uniqueness and beauty lies within. And to also teach them to value and appreciate others' beauty and strengths. It is vital, especially in a world like today, to teach tolerance among those who look or act different than they do. It is essential to teach them that there is always another side to every story, and not to be pulled into gossip of others, bullying others, hate toward others, and to reach toward understanding, knowing that could be them and how would they feel. Kids only know what we teach them until they begin to learn and form their own opinions as they grow. Give them a great head start. It is not weak to teach them love and understanding, and this will take them a very very long way in life all around.

See and speak the best and they will follow your expectation. There is a story in the bible that tells of a father who was dying and he placed his hand on each of his sons head and spoke over them. This is a very powerful tool. Often, even when I didn't know for sure, I would speak to my kids and tell them they were mighty, powerful, capable, and so on, whatever the moment called for. Or simply out of the blue. To this day, my adult daughters thank me for always encouraging them and telling them how great they were when they were younger because now they see the value when using it on their own children. This has a very

powerful affect on your children. I may not have had this growing up, but I read it and chose to use it, and it worked!

Never make a threat or promise you cannot follow-through with.

As a parent we find ourselves in awkward moments we never thought we'd find ourselves in. We become people we never knew we were or could become. This is parenting. Hopefully you become greater than you ever imagined and not worse, or become the Wicked Witch of the West you may have been witness to growing up, or the absent or monster father you knew as a child. Nonetheless, we will find ourselves up against some very frustrating and out-of-body experiences as we raise our children. In these moments you may be tempted to say things like, "if you don't stop it right now I'm going to knock your head off!" Or "if you ever do that again I'm going to drop you off a bridge!" Or as my mother liked to say "I'm gonna slap you upside the wall and down the other!" Well, mostly, thank God, none of these happen. But what we subconsciously teach in those moments is that our threats don't matter, that we won't really do them. So the child learns to overlook them, not take them seriously. We used to laugh at our mom, and sometimes she had to laugh too, although she was very frustrated and angry. So, as a parent, I learned to not give a threat I did not plan to follow through with. For example: if they don't pick up their toys, you'll wrap them up and give them to Goodwill or toss them in the trash or give them to another kid who can appreciate them. Then if they don't pick them up, you actually follow through with it, no matter how expensive the toys were or how much you don't want to. The most important thing here is to teach your child that you are a person of your word and you WILL follow through!!! I remember I used to always tell my youngest to be ready so we could leave on time. For whatever reason, she struggled with this. So, I finally told her if she wasn't ready when we were ready to go, I was leaving her. I didn't want to ever leave her alone in the house, nor really hurt her feelings so badly, but I had to bring it home. I kept giving her chance after chance after chance. So what'd I do? I followed through, I left her. Okay, we left, drove around the corner and came right back, but by that time, she was in tears, happy to see I came back, and I got

my message across. She got the point! Never had to do it again.

How did I raise amazing children as a single mother who had been abused, separated from her family, alcoholic parent, loss of a sibling, suicidal, and struggling financially? I gave them to God, I prayed for them, I trusted God, and I obeyed him. When I got dreams or feelings, I acted on them, I payed attention to the spiritual guidance our heavenly father was giving me. I realized I was merely the vessel in which they came into this life, my job was to help them be the best “them” as I could, building them up on my most holy faith, even beyond my own, and seeing and believing for them an outstanding future for them based on their dreams and hopes as they grew. And this continues through the generations as they have become wives and parents.

Above all, Love conquers all!

