

# CHAPTER 8: 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.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

1. Score yourself from 0 - 10 on each skill and positive reality as part of an initial evaluation. 0 = dimly 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 intervals, evaluate 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

<b>I. <u>Budgeting time</u> - Sharing times spent together. <u>Making modifications in one’s activity schedule to allow this.</u></b>	
<b>II. <u>Sharing</u></b>	
(a) Doing fun things together (e.g. movies, plays, eating together, playing games outings, camps, sightseeing, parks, galleries, etc.);	
(b) Talking together;	
(c) Participating in the child’s activities and world and letting him/her share about his/her world;	

(d) Letting the child participate in your world and sharing about your world (e.g. job, childhood, interesting experiences, interests, values).	
<b>III. <u>Teaching and enabling for life</u></b>	
(a) Teaching male or female responsibilities;	
(b) Teaching etiquette, academics, values, spirituality, about life, etc. The book <i>Simple Steps to Wellness</i> by the author is written for this purpose;	
(c) Playing together (“wasting time”) - <b>to play is to teach how to play;</b>	
(d) Enabling service in the community as soon as the child is able (see Chapter 15 );	
(e) Teaching on emergency care.	
<b>IV. <u>Relating positively</u></b>	
(a) Encouraging increasing independence with age and avoiding overprotection. Be like the eagle who backs the young one out of the nest. The egle 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 child and parent eagles fly together as friends;	
(b) Sharing unconditional affection and love and appreciation;	
(c) Affirmation (praise);	
(d) Respect;	
(e) Modelling desirable behaviours and life style;	
(f) Approachability;	
(g) Listening.	
<b>V. <u>Planning and influencing</u></b>	
(a) Planning for the future;	
(b) Creating the best environment for development of the whole person (body, mind, spirit, relationships, relating to nature);	
(c) Anticipating developmental and other stresses and <i>showing empathy</i> ;	
(d) Being supportive during hard times;	
(e) Shaping desirable behaviours with positive and negative rewards;	
(f) Providing consistent explanations and discipline;	
(g) Setting clear and consistent limits;	
(h) Exposing to other supportive male or female role models. The section “Making a Date with Myself to Grow” can be used to help children at various stages in their wholistic development.	
<b>VI. <u>Discovering enablers for parenting</u></b>	
(a) Establishing priorities for loyalty and time - i.e. does the family come first?	
(b) Activity planning for parents and children;	

(c) Seeking God's enabling - e.g. viz Bible study, prayer, commitment and being filled with the Spirit of God (if you are religious);	
(d) Gaining support from other parents - sharing problems and ideas - encouraging each other;	
(e) Buying and reading useful books;	
(f) Being part of a formal or informal parent support group or family cluster.	

**POSITIVE REALITIES**

There are certain basic realities that will guide all aspects of parenting. They will go a far way to make parenting effective. These are shared below. Again you can rate yourself.

**POTENTIAL**

It is vital to *be aware of the child's potential.*

*Give him or her positive feedback about it.*

A child has the capacity to care to understand, to learn and to grow

He or she has the capacity to love and to have good intentions.

All the above are to be assumed and nurtured.

**EXPECTATIONS**

People usually try to live up to *positive expectations.*

This includes an affirmation of one's good intentions and willingness to try.

This is especially so when *the expectations are stated positively.*

They are *rewarded by approval* from someone important.

**APPROVAL**

The power of *consistent approval.*

*Consistent affirmations of appreciation.*

A significant person in one's life is not to be underestimated.

As well as being consistent these should be expressed and even *in the most commonplace of circumstances or events.*

**SELF ESTEEM**

Self esteem does not come automatically.

*Encouragement and reassurance in different times* build self esteem.

As also do positive expectations and affirmation of potential and the ability for positive intent.

*Teaching responsibility by rule setting and by delegation of rules* should also be seen as positive as it too builds self esteem.

Of greatest importance is approval as well as the *positive reinforcing effects of success in itself.*

**EXAMPLE**

Every child seeks to emulate parents and to identify with them.

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

Therefore parents need to:	
a) <i>reflect on the <u>example</u> that they set;</i>	
b) model as much as is possible the behaviour they require of children;	
c) make the necessary sacrifices to <i>display <u>integrity</u> and <u>consistency</u>;</i>	
d) be <i><u>honest</u> about one's weaknesses;</i>	
e) <i>seek to <u>grow constantly</u>.</i>	
<b>GOALS</b>	
It is vital to <i>have a vision</i> of what one's child should and can be. Not necessarily in terms of a specific career (which they will choose), but in terms such as character, traits of maturity, Christian motivation and living and good citizenship. This <i>vision needs to be shared</i> .	
Also it is useful as you get to <i>know your child's aptitudes and talents</i> as well as <i>positive desires</i> .	
Move along with the child and to help him/her to dream and strive.	
One's general vision for your offspring should be shared with them in the context of stressing all the aforementioned factors.	
<b>CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY</b>	
Most important of all 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 that a parent's:	
<i>persistent prayers;</i>	
<i>witness;</i>	
<i>Christian example.</i>	

**CONCLUSION:**

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

Your child will benefit and will respect you for your efforts.

HOW ABOUT DECODING A PARENTING MISSION STATEMENT - TRY IT!

**Happy Parenting!**

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