

JANUARY

HELPING KIDS OUT OF BAD HABITS

PRIMER



homeroom

MARRIAGE & FAMILY MENTORING MEMBERSHIP

Do you love spending time with your kids?

Be honest, how much do you really enjoy your kids?

If you could double the amount of time you're around your kids does the thought fill you with delight? Dread? Something in between?

Today, so many parents blame themselves when they begin to avoid or even resent their kids. They wonder if maybe they are a bad person or not a kid person.

But there's a different possibility.

Maybe your kids aren't delightful.

Maybe your kids annoy you much of the time.

Maybe any reasonable adult would want to spend less time with your kids.

I know we're not allowed to think these thoughts out loud but denying reality never helps us overcome our challenges.

So this month we're going to face reality so that we can take our families to a better place.

We are going to equip you to help your kids take a step toward being more delightful.

Even more than that, we're going to give you the tools that, over time, will cause you to enjoy your kids more than you ever have.

Our kids need us.

Their maturity is directly tied to the amount of time they spend with us and other adults that love them.

Maybe the best gift you could give your kids at this stage is to make adults want to be around them more.

But before we get into the practical ways to make this happen we have to pause and deal with our beliefs.

There are five kinds of parents who, no matter how many tools they learn, will struggle to implement them.

Not because they are unable, but because they are unwilling.

Their beliefs will sabotage their efforts over and over again.

Who are these five parents you ask? They are...

1. PATIENT PAMELA:

Every time her kids act up Pam tells herself she just needs to be more patient. And Pam is patient...way too patient. Her kids have learned that their mom blames herself so they have no incentive to change. Pam even apologizes to her kids when her virtually endless patience finally runs out and her kids are gracious enough to forgive her. Pam's kids are in the process of training her instead of the other way around. Until patient Pam decides that her kids are the problem instead of blaming her patience she'll never implement tools strong enough to shape her kids.

2. GOOFY GREG:

Greg likes hanging out with his kids. They're fun. They amuse him. He plays around with them and acts goofy and doesn't like to get serious with his kids. He avoids confrontations. Greg's kids know that his attention is tied to how much fun he's having so that tends to be the basis of their relationship. But this makes Greg's kids not take him seriously if he

tries to shape them in any way. They just wait until fun dad returns.

3. INCONSISTENT IRENE:

Irene is juggling a lot. Her energy for her family and kids fluctuates a lot from day to day. Her kids have learned to collaborate their behavior, not to what they are doing, but to their mom's energy. If she's in a good mood they know they can get away with a lot. If she's in a bad mood they know the rules change.

4. SELF-HELP SALLY:

Sally really wants to be a great mom. She reads a lot about parenting in books and blogs and always feels that if she could just show her kids the right kind of love and attention they'd behave better. But as she has more kids and as they get older this seems to be breaking down. As her ability grows her kids behavior seems to be getting worse. Maybe it's just a phase but she's sure it's her fault. If she were just a better mom things would change. A few more google searches and she'll find the perfect answer.

5. BURNT OUT BRIAN:

Brian tries to be a good dad but other priorities dominate his time and his attention. He's tired when he gets home and just wants his family life to be low maintenance. For Brian, a sustained effort in training kids is just unrealistic. Who has the time for that? There's just so much on Brian's plate that, despite an occasional effort at family leadership, he can't seem to stick with following through on his good intentions.

These descriptions are not written out to make anyone feel shame. Every parent struggles deeply with our responsibilities and we are all weak at many parts of our roles. What we want you to pay attention to are the beliefs of these parents. Are there beliefs in these five profiles that you share?

Take a few minutes to discuss what beliefs you resonate with above and what beliefs you feel you don't hold.

OK, now let's talk about the beliefs that are most helpful when working to train kids out of bad habits.

Kids can be trained.

Training is good for kids and not an act of parental selfishness.

Behavior, even at a young age matters.

It's OK for parents to set a culture in the home and to train their kids to embrace that culture.

Long-term frustration as a parent can be a threat to the family.

It's worth the time and energy to train our kids.

It's understandable when adults choose to invest more in our kids when they have better social habits.

Parents owe their kids intentional training but they don't owe their kids endless patience.

Take a minute and rate how much you believe the above points on a scale of 1-10.

Talk together about where you and your spouse align on these beliefs and where you might disagree.

These are hard conversations but necessary.

Our beliefs often determine if the tools we implement will work.

Next week we'll give you some tools that when applied consistently and lovingly will really help your kids make progress.