

# LIVING VALUES

An Educational Program



## An Introduction to Living Values Parent Groups: A Facilitator Guide

[Contents](#) | [Parent Values Activities for Ages 0- through 2-year olds](#)  
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Dear Parents,

Greetings of peace. We know you love your children and are interested in exploring and developing values. You are the most important teachers of all.

While we have a Facilitator Guide for Living Values Parents Groups we do not have a separate book for parents at this time. However, as some of you have been requesting information, we will be happy to share segments from that book with you. You may click on Parent Values Activities for Ages 0- through 2-year olds, Peace, and Parenting Skills below. Let us know how you enjoy the materials and what your results are. Or, if you would like to connect with the LVEP Coordinator in your country or region to find out about Living Values Parent Groups in your area, [click here](#).

All good wishes to you,

The Living Values: An Educational Program Team

These selected book segments from *Living Values Parent Groups: A Facilitator Guide* are for viewing by educators and people interested in LVEP's Living Values Activities.

- The Contents page is included to give viewers an idea of other materials within the book.
- Parent Values Activities for Ages 0- through 2-year olds
- Peace unit
- Parenting Skills

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- For a list of Trainings presently scheduled around the world - [click here](#) or go to <http://livingvalues.net/events>
- To contact the LVEP Coordinator or Contact Person in your country or region or to request information about future trainings - [click here](#) or go to <http://livingvalues.net/support>
- Health Communications, Inc. will be publishing five of the LVEP books in the Fall of 2000.

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## PARENT VALUES GROUPS

### SECTION 2

#### Parent Values Activities For Parents of Ages 0- through 2-Year-Olds

A peaceful, loving attitude is a special gift for children from the time they are in the womb. Some parents are aware of the child's ability to absorb while in the womb, and they start teaching before the child is born by talking or reading aloud to the child or playing music. Research has shown that infants recognize the voices of people who had been talking to them; infants also had relaxed responses to the music they had heard while in the womb.

It is said that mothers can distinguish the different personalities of their children displayed even within the womb, and that each child knows whether he/she is wanted. In this light, parents are encouraged to think of the embryo as a conscient being with an ability to absorb love and peace.

Once born, there is constant interplay between the child and the caregivers. The infant needs to be touched, held, nurtured, cooed at, and tended to in a consistent, loving, and patient manner. The bonding between the parent and child is essential not only for a good relationship, but also for the lifelong well-being of the child.

Infants and toddlers are especially responsive to the attitude and emotions of their primary caregivers. They respond in a healthy way emotionally and physically to loving care, and poorly emotionally and physically to irritation and peacelessness on the part of the caregiver. They become distressed when the parent is grieving, depressed, or angry, and they are more stable when the parent is unrushed and happy.

Simply knowing the importance of the quality of what we give to an infant allows more attention to that process. Filling the self with contentment, peace, and love allows the baby to experience more of those qualities. (**Parenting Skill #7, Time To Be**, Section 3, covers this point in more depth.)

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to consider the following values activities as the parent/child relationship develops:

- Play with the baby, and treat the child as an individual. Make time to play daily with your child. Enjoy the child, and yourself.
- Play peaceful and happy music that naturally creates the emotions you want the baby to experience.
- Tell the baby nursery tales and rhymes.



- Use the words *peaceful, loving, cooperative, content, sweet, and happy* with your baby and toddler. Label your own positive feelings for them when you are experiencing those emotions.
- Do not only comment on physical appearance, such as telling the child, “*You are cute.*” or “*What a darling outfit.*”
- Verbalize their positive qualities and ways of being. Notice when they are being gentle with a toy or a pet.
- Choose safe, peace-giving toys -- toys that are fun and allow the infant or toddler to experience his or her own creativity.
- Play peek-a-boo with puppets. Have the puppets give lots of love, too. Have a few quiet, peaceful moments with a star puppet, with God, or with an angel.
- Choose carefully the videos and cartoons. Most cartoons are not suitable for children under three -- they are violent. In the parent groups, caregivers can share which programs have friendly cartoon characters, and funny, nurturing characters. Limit the time in front of the television to one or two hours a day. More than four hours a day limits a child’s development in several ways.
- Do not expose the infant to hearing violence on television, radio, or within the community, or to arguments and fighting of parents. Be aware of the child when older siblings or adults are watching movies. Is the child being exposed to images, noises, and words too grown-up for her or his age? Be aware of the impact of the environment. A child under the age of three can not place events in time and space, but does record the emotional impact of events.
- If the baby has an older brother or sister who is also quite young, be careful to give attention to that child as well. Parents might post a note on the front door when guests are coming to see the baby. Ask guests to notice and attend to the older sibling first. As parents, involve the older sibling in holding the baby and helping with small tasks. Give older siblings eye contact and chat with them at least half the time when you and they are with the infant.

### **Can I Use the LVEP Values Activities With 2-Year Olds?**

Yes. Facilitators, parents, and caregivers can easily use many of the activities in *LVEP Values Activities for Children, Ages 3-7* with 2- year olds. Simplify the language, give a little more help, and they respond wonderfully.



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### PEACE

#### For Parents of 2- through 7-Year-Olds

##### At Group Meetings

- Review the Peace Points in *LVEP Values Activities for Children, Ages 3-7*, so parents can hear how peace is explained to children that age.
- Continue with the *Imagining a Peaceful World* exercise.

Present **The Importance of Play and ‘Us Time’, Parenting Skill #1**, in Section 3 during the first session on the value of peace. Ask parents to share their experiences playing with their children the next session. Ask, “*How is it going? Are you enjoying it? How are you finding ways to make time? Is it easy to get into the spirit of play? Do you notice any changes?*” Proceed with one Parenting Skill presentation and discussion at each session.

- Make and play with *Peace Finger Puppets*. See Values Activities (3-7).
- Have one parent read “The Star Story” (in Appendix in Values Activities, 3-7) during the group session. (At home, they can follow up on this story with the children at nap time or when tucking them in at night.) Do the Peace Star Exercise.
- Review *Arms Are for Hugging* (Values Activities, 3-7) and teach the conflict resolution skills. Have the parents pretend to be children and take turns resolving conflicts as the parent.
- Parents may have a favorite peace song they sang as a child. Sing it for the group.

##### At Home

When children bring home their Peace Finger Puppets, parents may wish both to admire and to talk to the Peace Puppets. Perhaps the Peace Finger Puppets could come out and play when there is a conflict at home – they might have some good ideas.

- Set up a Peace Corner. It could be in a corner in the bedroom or the house, and a bed sheet could be used to create a tent. You could decorate it together, using pictures of whatever makes you feel peaceful or gives a warm feeling inside. The Peace Corner could be used for peace visualizations before nap time or to sit together with little ones and sing a song and play. Perhaps the Peace Finger Puppets could live there, too. This could be a place to resolve conflicts when the children are quarreling.



- Sing peace songs together while you do things. Sing as you take a walk or swing in a swing.
- Let the children know when they are “making peace.” Give them a peace prize of a kiss or a hug.
- When you make cookies, tortillas, or chappatis, roll some out so you and the children can make peace symbols with it. Examples are: doves, peace signs, or ?
- Include peace in your prayers with the children.

### **For Parents of Children 8 Years and Older**

#### **At Group Meetings**

- Review Peace Reflection Points from *LVEP Values Activities for Children, Ages 8-14* and practice visualizing a peaceful world.
- If group members are comfortable with each other, the facilitator can ask them to sing their favorite peace songs. Whoever knows the song can join in.
- Present one **Parenting Skill** from Section 3 at each session, beginning with **The Importance of Play and ‘Us Time’, Parenting Skill #1**. Proceed with one Parenting Skill presentation and discussion at each session.
- Show parents the activities in Values Activities (8-14). Look at *Time Capsule* and *A World of Peace Versus a World of Conflict*. Do those activities with parents if they wish.
- Form a circle. Go around the circle, asking parents to complete the sentence, “*I feel most peaceful when . . .*” Then ask them to complete the sentence, “*I think my daughter (or son) might feel most peaceful when . . .*” Continue to go around the circle until they have said something about each one of their children.
- Review *Conflict Resolution* and *Arms are For . . .* lessons. Have the parents pretend to be children and take turns resolving conflicts as the parent.

#### **At Home**

- Play peace songs your children like. Sing peace songs together – perhaps as you walk or ride.
- Let your children know when you appreciate their being a “giver of peace” or a “river of peace.” Acknowledge their positive efforts toward communication during a conflict resolution session with which they may have been involved.



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- Share your feelings about peace with your children, making your comments appropriate to their age.
  
- Invite them into the kitchen. Make peace symbols together out of bread or cookie dough, or decorate a cake with peace symbols. Perhaps they can do this with friends.
  
- Both caregivers and children can take turns in the evening selecting favorite peace points from their culture, religion, or belief system. They could present peace points for one minute before dinner or ?
  
- Ask your teenager to share his or her peace visualization. Listen intently.
  
- Discuss violent movies with your spouse. Are you, as adults, able to give these up? If yes, discuss whether you want to limit your children's access to these at home. If you are unsure, observe the mood of your children after they watch the next three violent movies. Observe your own thoughts and mood after watching a violent movie versus a peaceful, humanizing movie. Discuss with your spouse again. If you agree to renounce violent movies, talk to your children and share that decision with them. Let them know, *"Whatever we watch, we have those emotions running through our minds. There is no benefit in violent emotions going through our minds if we want to help create a peaceful world."* If you decide to implement this policy at home, stick to it. The protest won't last long. If older teenagers choose to see violent movies with their peers outside the home, stay detached and content and listen to their experience.
  
- Ask your children what inspires them about peace? Listen to what they say.
  
- Visit a place where peace can be seen in action – perhaps a museum about a peace visionary, a center for non-violence, or perhaps a shelter where they care for people.
  
- Ask yourselves, *"When do we feel most peaceful?"* Help each other create more of those moments.





### SECTION 3 Parenting Skills

These parenting skills can be taught in response to situations which may be creating obstacles for the parent in imparting values. Or the group leader may choose to teach one skill or awareness at each of the sessions, depending on the needs of the parents.

**Parent Concern: "I don't have enough time."**

#### Parenting Skill #1 The Importance of Play and 'Us Time'

##### For Parents of 0 through 4-Year-Olds

As most parents will agree, children of this age require an inordinate amount of attention. Time to cuddle, hold, play, and attend to the child is invaluable. It is said that play is the work of the child. Play is the child's opportunity to experience freedom, joy, and self-expression. It is a time when children can feel "full of themselves." Children work out their feelings in play, and if there have been traumatic experiences, play is healing. Play is a time of learning and growing cognitively, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and physically. As a parent, playing with your children creates a cooperative, loving, and close bond and adds to the joy within the relationship.

Enter into their world. Play at their level and pace. Join the world of pretend. When they pretend to give you a bite of food, pretend to give them a bite. Play with clay and blocks, with dolls and trucks, play peek-a-boo, and roll around on the floor. Play with balls, rolling them initially. When a child structures a game and is enjoying it, do not come along and make it harder so he or she is not successful. Simply be -- accepting, reflecting, enjoying.

##### For Parents of 5- to 9-Year-Olds

Yes, it's hard to find time in this busy world for play and values activities. But, ask yourself:

- Why did I have children in the first place?
- Why do I love them?
- What do I wish I had done more of over the past few years?

Finding some time every day to play with your children is so important. That precious time is when relationships are enjoyed and the feelings of love grow. The children who get "Us



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Time” get that full attention and close eye contact which tell them they are valued and valuable.

Ask yourself:

- What do I enjoy doing myself that I can do with my child?
- What would be fun for both myself and the child?

There’s an interesting saying: “Cooperation follows love.” By playing every day with your children so they can count on getting your full, undivided attention for even 15 minutes a day, minor negativities will simply disappear. Play games you enjoyed at that age or would have liked to have played. Play pretend games, play outside, play with balls and dolls, play with the simple enjoyment of enjoying your children. Introduce them to the common games of your culture – perhaps cards and board games, soccer or circle dances. Don’t get competitive yourself, but model graceful winning and losing. (Winning a game with a child about one-third of the time is fine.) Teach them things; have them experience themselves to be successful. Take them places that are free. Go on a walk, to a park, to a lake or the ocean.

Plan how you can build in 15 minutes per day with each of your two children. If you have six children, can you devote an hour to play or Us Time? Us Time can also be a time of just listening with your full attention. Use daily routine time to interact with your children. For instance, converse in the bus or car or as you walk to the store.

### **For Parents of 10- to 18-Year-Olds**

The same applies to older children as it does for younger children, so ask yourself the questions listed above.

Finding quality time every day to be with your children is critical to the success of your relationships with them. Even giving 15 minutes of your full attention, chatting with them about their day, stopping what you are doing to really be there make a difference. It is said that a 13-year-old needs as much attention as a 5-year-old. With peer pressure what it is today, a key safety net is a good relationship between parent and child. If the communication channels are open and the feelings of love and closeness are there, some of the turbulence of teenage years can be avoided. Additionally, when the child is in conflict, he or she is more likely to come to you for advice than to seek out peers. Find something that both you and your child like doing, even if it’s a walk around the block. By consistently giving them the regard and love involved in Us Time, they will feel better about themselves, and they (and you) will navigate the teenage years more easily.



**Parent Concern:** “He always seems to do things to get my negative attention.”  
“She doesn’t like praise.”

**Parenting Skill #2**  
**Positively Building Behaviors Through Praise**

**For Parents of All Age Groups**

Children love the attention of parents. However, if they can’t get your attention by doing something positive, they may seek your negative attention. Negative attention is better than no attention at all. At least with negative attention they know they have made an impact, they have had an effect, they are alive. The problem with giving more than 20 seconds of negative attention -- such as screaming or bawling out a child -- is after a short period of time, the negative behavior increases. It also serves to build into your relationship more dynamics of blame, guilt, anger, and resentment.

It takes less time and less emotional energy to pay positive attention and positively reinforce behaviors.

- What do your children do well?
- What do they do consistently without being reminded?
- Do these areas receive your praise?

Children usually do well in the areas in which they receive positive affection and praise. People like attention, love, and respect. Children tend to do the things that earn those responses – if those positives are available.

Praise is usually a positive reinforcer for most children. When they experience something positive for a particular behavior, that behavior increases. You can tell if your praise or affirmation is a positive experience for your child by watching if the behavior increases. However, there may be other responses to watch for. For example, some children don’t seem to like praise and look sour when they get it. They may have found the praise embarrassing. Others don’t seem to accept it. They simply do not believe you – perhaps you said it was “*great*” and they do not think so. A few children occasionally get worse immediately after praise, such as a boy who usually hits his sister being praised for being “*such a terrific young man*” when he stops for a few minutes. So why does he immediately hit her again? It is likely he is accustomed to getting so much negative feedback in that area that the positive feedback is anxiety-provoking. He elected to finish the anxiety as soon as possible.

A few simple rules for giving affirmations, praise, and positively building behaviors make the process rewarding for both parent and child.



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### 1) Give specific praise and affirmations.

That means use descriptive words. For example, a 5-year-old will appreciate and believe your saying, *“You made the back of that ‘B’ straight and just the right size.”* He can observe the “B.” However, he may not take as much benefit from your saying, *“You have the best printing in the whole wide world.”* A 3-year-old girl with a just-done painting is quite happy with a description accompanied with smiles and loving eye contact: *“Wow, look at all the colors you used -- red and blue and purple! And there are all sorts of circles and lines!”* It is also reinforcing to children to have their efforts recognized: *“You listened to Guillermo when he really needed you to listen. That was being a friend.”*

### 2) Give specific praise, and then add a quality that will build on values.

For example, *“I liked the way you just helped your little sister. You were giving happiness.”* Or, *“You didn’t hit when he called you a name. You stayed in your self-respect and power. Good for you!”* Or, *“Thank you for putting away your things so quickly. That was great cooperation.”* Or, *“I like the way you thought about it and were able to stop and say ‘arms are for hugging, not for shoving.’ That was choosing peace.”*

Children remember when you say they have these qualities. As these qualities become part of their self-perception, their self-esteem grows.

### 3) The praise must be genuine.

The person receiving the praise will know if it is not sincere. Having delight in the person, appreciative eye contact, and respect are invaluable indicators of sincerity, easily perceived by 2-year-olds or 18-year-olds. Of course, the manner of delivery needs to be different depending on the age. Cooing is great for babies, gushing for most 2- to 4-year-old girls. Boys tend to prefer praise delivered in a matter-of-fact way, especially after age 9. Many teenagers are like soft-boiled eggs: hard on the outside, soft on the inside. They may not seem to notice your praise -- may shrug it off the hard exterior -- but you know it has been effective when that behavior increases, when they start hanging around you more, and when the hard facade fades.

### 4) Praise always leaves a positive feeling within the receiving person.

Ensure that your praise does just that. That is, do not end praise with a “spoiler.” For example, how does the husband feel when the wife says, *“Honey, you did a great job cleaning the garage. It looks so organized. I don’t know why you don’t keep it like that all the time. It’s always such a mess! . . .”* That was a spoiler! Or when the husband says to the wife, *“What a delicious dessert that was! Why can’t you make something like that more often?”* Or when the parent says to the child, *“It was fun working with you today.”*



*You concentrated and finished your homework quickly. If you'd only do that all the time, it wouldn't be such a hassle every day. You are usually so irresponsible.*" The praise started out great, but the comments turned negative and the positive feelings were ruined.

**5) When a new behavior is first beginning, praise it immediately.**

It is appropriate to provide immediate feedback for a new positive behavior. Then, as the behavior becomes a habit, gradually reduce the praise. Occasionally you might praise the continuing effort. *"I appreciate that you've been remembering to tell me where you are going every day."*

**Parent Concern:** "All they want to do is watch TV."  
"They love these violent videos."

**Parenting Skill #3  
The Balance of Discipline and Love**

Almost all parents recognize the importance of a healthy diet. They want their children to have nourishing meals and develop good eating habits. They carefully choose the food the family eats. Food for the mind is important as well. The diet of what children watch on television affects their minds and attitudes. Research has shown that more than four hours of television per day is actually harmful to children. They do not develop as well physically or in expressive language, creativity, or social skills. Television can be addictive; it can be a "mind robber." One can sit in front of TV and simply have the mind filled. Emotions we choose to ignore can be dismissed, and we do not have to interact with others or use our mind to find something to do. Many children, consequently, have limited time for the essential tasks of childhood which are critical for physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social growth. It is important for children to play and exercise, to create and invent, to relate and express.

In the same way that some sweets are okay in a diet, a bit of television is okay, depending on the content. Violence teaches violence. Part of becoming a parent with the balance of discipline and love is learning that it is appropriate to have sensible rules and to tell the children what is right and wrong. Talking about right and wrong actions is most often accepted when the parent is able to share that information calmly and with love. It is amazing how children accept sensible rules. They may fuss for a few days, but you will see positive changes. It is wise to monitor the television and videos to which children are exposed, just as it is wise to monitor the environments in which they are placed. Give small doses of the best of television. There are a few beautiful programs that are inspiring, funny, creative, and humanizing. There are informational ones that are interesting and educational.

Allow your children the opportunities to build forts, climb trees, play sports, dance, do



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puzzles, and read. Read with your children story books and wonderful tales before bedtime. Talk with them and enjoy your children. This does require more time on the part of the parent, but because of your encouragement and extra effort, your children will learn to entertain themselves, be more creative and positive, and play more successfully with others.

**Parent Concern: “He gets so angry with his teachers.”  
“She feels so sad when she gets rejected.”**

### Parenting Skill #4 Active Listening

Sometimes parents feel helpless when their children feel badly about peer problems at school, or when they are upset with friends, coaches, or teachers. Caregivers often jump to sympathize, admonish, or give advice. Or, they get angry with the child for being angry with an authority figure. Think about when you are really upset with someone, and another person jumps in, immediately telling you what to do or how silly you are being. Chances are you don't feel better. But, a quiet chat with an understanding friend allows us to process what happened. Listening on the part of a patient, loving person is an invaluable gift. Reflecting the feelings of children allows them to accept and “own” their emotions. As emotions are accepted, they gradually reduce in intensity. For example, when someone really listens, a child will frequently move from anger at an authority figure to talking about how his or her feelings have been hurt. The process of being listened to allows children to feel valued, which allows them to accept their own hurt and to look at the overall situation with more understanding. And, after having been listened to, occasionally one small sentence of advice is accepted. Or, this is also an opportunity to say, “*What other way could you have handled it?*” As children are encouraged to think and generate alternatives, the likelihood increases of their being able to act in a fashion that does not cause sorrow to themselves or others next time.

One of the most effective tools of listening is called active listening. Active listening is reflecting back the content and emotions that the other person is communicating -- without sounding like a parrot. It requires taking the time to really listen and having an accepting, loving attitude. The listener's reactions are not interjected, nor are questions asked. It does require practice. Example: A child crying over being called a name: “*She called me ugly.*” Parent: “*It really hurt your feelings to have her call you a name.*”



**Parent Concern: “There’s been so much change and the kids feel so insecure.”**

**Parenting Skill #5  
Establishing a Ritual**

Children, especially little ones, often feel insecure when there is change. Divorces are very difficult for all. Moving, having the parent switch to different work hours, death of a relative, etc., can make very real differences in the life of a child and in a family. Explain to the child what is happening. For small children, keep it simple. It is important to explain to children as young as 18 months why one parent or grandparent is not there. For all children, keep it healthy, i.e., do not label your now-separating spouse as a liar or cheat.

With a change, some children become withdrawn and depressed, others whine or become aggressive. When there is turmoil, the usual routines can stop. Re-establish routines and develop rituals. A routine may be making the beds in the morning, having a certain drink, saying a blessing before breakfast. Or perhaps a snack after school, or a chance to play with Dad before or after dinner. A ritual may be a set bedtime, a bedtime story told on the bed with the children cuddled around, and maybe a goodnight prayer. These can help immensely. Keep the rules consistent. Children feel reassured and secure with routine.

**Parent Concern: “I say ‘no,’ and he keeps at me until I give in.”**

**Parenting Skill #6  
Think Before Saying No**

Sometimes we say “no” quickly. We are busy and don’t want to be bothered. But frequently the parent feels guilty later on when the child continues to want to do it, and it seems like it would be fine at that later time. When the child asks to do it again and the parent gives in, the child has learned that asking repetitively works. Some ask 40 times before the exasperated parent gives in! Think before you say no. Would it be good for the child? Can you take a few minutes now? It may take two minutes longer to let the child stir the cookie batter if he or she wants to do that, but it helps the child develop age-appropriate skills, he or she feels proud of the accomplishment, and a feeling of cooperative helping grows. If you do not have the time now, and you would like to say “yes” to the child’s request, think about when you would have time. Can you do it in 30 minutes? If your answer is “no,” stick to it. Children listen well to parents who say what they mean, stick to what they say, and do what they say. Keep your promises.



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**Parent Concern: “I want my child to be peaceful, but I’m not so peaceful myself.”  
“I’m just out of energy.”**

### **Parenting Skill #7 Time To Be**

To teach values effectively means we have to have and apply them. To be perfectly honest, this is difficult at times. Most of us want to be peaceful and loving and happy. However, most of us have an off mood or an off day when we feel turmoil, depression, or anger – time when we don’t feel good within.

Take some time to be. Be gentle to the self. Have some time with your spouse to keep your marital relationship healthy. Have some time to do something that is nourishing for you. Spend a few silent moments in the morning and evening thinking about the day and recharging the self. Parenting is imparting to your children a way of “being.” You may not realize how they are adopting your way of communicating and being until they are much older. Parenting is one of the most demanding tasks in the world – and one of the most valuable.

**Parent Concern: “They don’t do anything I ask them to do.”  
“Sometimes they all drive me nuts.”  
“I worry about her constantly.”**

### **Parenting Skill #8 Staying Stable and Loving, and Communicating**

#### **For Parents of 0- to 7-Year-Olds**

Sometimes it is hard to be patient. Life in this world today places demands on all parents. Being a single parent compounds the demands and the responsibilities. The children constantly want attention, and some do not seem to want to do anything alone. Children will seemingly find a way to fuss, manipulate, or pretend they cannot do something to get the attention – all when you don’t feel there is any more to give. Parents often rush, tell children what to do as they quickly pass through a room, and go on. After 15 requests to do something, most parents become frustrated. Often parents find themselves speaking a lot louder than they wish. Many complain, “*Why do my children only listen when I scream at them?*” Perhaps it’s time to get some extra rest, but it may also be time to look at what is happening.

Many children have learned they can ignore parents who are speaking in a normal tone of





voice, as the parent soon goes off on his or her own way. The children can simply continue to do what they are enjoying without interrupting the activity. However, they remain alert to the parent's voice tone and know when they had better start complying with that request. They know at which tone a threat will become a reality.

Sometimes the more we rush, the worse things get. The next time you want your child to do something, pause, get within a couple of feet of your child, look at him or her with friendly eye contact, and say what you want done. You might gently touch her or his shoulder as you ask. When the task is done, make a positive remark or thank the child for doing it so quickly. Children will figure out that you are paying attention to what you say to them. If the task is not done, return to the child, get close physically, and chat in about what you wish them to do. Follow through.

As a rule of thumb, think about what you realistically want them to do at that time, communicate that clearly and positively, and follow up. As they improve in follow-through, you can gradually stop positively affirming every time, but occasionally remark how responsible they are being and positively recognize their contribution.

Sometimes children may not want to study, eat meals, or do their chores. They may not want to go to bed on time, or they may wish to watch six hours of television a day. They may be upset over the death of a relative, a change in schools, or an upcoming move. Sit down and calmly explain, in simple terms, what is happening or why something is important. Children can understand things when they are very young. Listen to their concerns.

When you are teaching them to do something, do it patiently, pay attention to the interaction, and ensure they feel successful when it is done satisfactorily. Plan a few extra minutes so that if something is spilled or something needs to be redone, you can be patient. Notice their skill level so you do not make the task too difficult. Their feeling of success is extremely important in their own perception of their capability. When you do new tasks together, such as learning letters and numbers, make it fun. Use different methods, have them draw it, trace it, draw it in the air, sing it. When they ask to play school with you, you have created a great attitude for learning.

Slowing down in between the moments . . . being stable and loving . . . gets more done . . . and it's a lot more fun.

### **For Parents of 8-Year-Olds to Young Adults**

At times it's very difficult to traverse the stages of growing up with each of your children. We hear about the terrible 2's and the teenage years, but it seems we are unprepared for the worry we experience over their feelings of rejection, difficulty with peers, poor reading



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skills, poor choices of friends, illnesses, etc. We are not prepared for the irritation and despair we feel over their sloppy rooms, strange manner of dressing, and lack of interest in the “right things.”

Worry and irritation only make the situation worse. With worry comes heaviness. Irritation infuses an angry, demanding tone into the relationship. It is easier to stay stable and loving when we recognize it is just a phase the child is going through, it can be successfully dealt with, and we can do that by staying content within the self and giving regard to the child when possible. It seems that each child has a lesson to teach us. Think about your own childhood. How would you have liked your parent to act in any given situation? Ask yourself, what is the lesson to be learned from this child? The difficult or rebellious stage will only be prolonged by our anger and despair. Detach. Try to see the child as who she or he is within and ignore the outside.

It is possible to get beyond your reaction to you son or daughter dressing as a punk rocker. You can continue to treat him or her like a respected human being by seeing the positive qualities inside. With detachment from the situation and a focus on love, it is easier to send good wishes and to maintain a successful relationship. In the atmosphere of love, a person can more easily do what is good.

Watch the amount of corrections and negative comments on your part. They can destroy the relationship and increase the unhappiness of both you and the child and his or her feelings of unworthiness. Do not nag. Instead, discuss it, and find a solution together. Provide small, logical consequences, when necessary. Often, you can ask the child what a small consequence should be. For example, if young teenagers are piling their clothes on the floor, you might want to discuss with them your feelings, and generate possible solutions together. One solution might be that it is time for them to do their own washing and ironing for a week. Together, decide on a plan that is acceptable to both of you. Try it for a week. Talk again, and see if you are both happy with the results. If not, problem solve again.

Sometimes teenagers make mistakes. (Adults do as well!) When there is a behavior you are really concerned about, such as stealing, it is time to really think, and talk. Think about your values and what you want for your son or daughter. When you are calm, and can be serious but loving, sit down with her or him. Tell him that you love him very much and you are very concerned about the behavior. Then tell him why. For example, from a father to his son, “To me, integrity is the mark of a man. You are getting older now, and I want to talk with you about why I think honesty is so important. When you are honest, you are . . .” Punishment sometimes appears effective for a few days, but the long term result is more resentment, anger, and retaliation. If you communicate lovingly when your pre-teen is having a problem, if he has a problem as a teenager, he is much more likely to come to you for advice.

Spend time, play, talk, and choose well your rare words of advice – when the ears are most receptive. Good luck!



**Parent Concern:** “They’re always fighting. It disrupts even the fun activities.”

**Parenting Skill #9**  
**‘Time Out’ To Think and Communicate**

**Time Out**

Time Out is a method used when children behave inappropriately. They are asked to go to another room or sit alone for a short time. It is not considered punishment; it is simply considered the withdrawal of positive reinforcement. The positive reinforcement is the parent’s love and/or attention.

The principal reason for implementing Time Out is that when it is done properly, there is no need for punitive measures. This fits in well with a values-based approach as the goal is to get out of the cycle of feelings of inadequacy, blame, shame, resentment and retaliation. In fact, when Time Out is done with a values-based approach, soon there is no need to use this method as the child has begun to think about his or her own behavior, developed more social awareness and is making better choices. This values-based Time Out is being called “Thinking Time”.

Thinking Time is effective with children as young as 18 months. The time out period can range from part of a minute up to 15 minutes. Longer than 15 minutes has been found to be ineffective, as a cycle of resentment is activated.

A way to introduce Thinking Time as part of a values-based approach is for caregivers to meet with the children and say: *“Families are for giving happiness and love to each other. Sometimes we give happiness to each other and are responsible, and sometimes we give sorrow. When we do that, we need to think about what we can do instead. So, from now, when someone is giving sorrow, your dad and I (or whoever are the caregivers) will give you this signal (or say \_\_\_\_\_). That means that you are to take some Thinking Time and sit over there for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes to think about what you could do or say that would give happiness instead of sorrow.”*

For young children, you may want to have a Peace Bear in the corner that will “help” the child think. For little children, start with one minute and gradually increase the time until the child sits for three to five minutes. Sometimes little children do not Time Out easily. Make time-out less “scary” in their eyes. Practice doing a Time Out when they are feeling good. Lead them gently by the hand. Practice filling the self with peace or a pink bubble of love. When you do ask them to think for a moment, be calm rather than angry, make the



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Thinking Time place very close to where they are, make sure it is well-lit, decrease the time to a few seconds of his or her being quiet, and then gradually increase the time.

For a teenager, the bedroom is often the best place for Thinking Time. For an older child, start with three to five minutes. If a teenager is starting to be rude, you may want to say: *“You seem upset, would you like to take a few minutes to cool down?”* Or perhaps, *“How about a few minutes in the Peace Tent.”*

It is important to “Time Out” the child before you are annoyed -- that is, when you first notice inappropriate behavior. Time Out should depend on their behavior, not on your mood. If you do it calmly, they will “Time Out” much more easily. The parent may want to set a timer.

After the “Thinking Time,” help the child create an alternative behavior. Then, you can peacefully ask, *“Where you able to think of a way to give happiness? What could you have done instead of hitting your brother?”* Or, *“Were you able to think of a way to do that differently?”* Positively remark on the child’s alternative. The insight and wonderful alternatives that a 2-year-old can produce are remarkable! Give the child a hug or a special smile when you see that new behavior.

### Communicate (Steps for Conflict Resolution)

When the parent has time, it is good to have children communicate when they are in conflict. It teaches them to express their feelings and generate win-win solutions. When children are in conflict, sit down with them. The parent could start by saying, *“I don’t like hitting or name calling. You can use words to say how you feel and what you like and want. Mark, I want you to start by telling your sister how you feel . . . Okay, Anne, what did he say? . . . Good sharing how you feel. Anne, how did you feel? . . . Mark, what did she say? . . . You both listened well. Now, Mark, tell Anne what you don’t like. . . Anne, your turn. . . Mark, what would you like Anne to do instead? . . . What did he say, Anne? . . . Good. Now Anne, what would you like Mark to do instead? . . . What did she say, Mark? . . . Good. Now, can you both do that? If it is a fair suggestion, stop there. If not, ask them to generate another solution. Then, ask them if they can do that for a certain amount of time. Set a short enough time so that they will be successful. Pay some positive attention to each during the practice time. At the end of the time, tell them both what specifically you are pleased about.*

To summarize:

Ask each child, *How do you feel?*  
 Each child listens and repeats it back.  
 State, *What would you like \_\_\_\_\_ not to do?*  
 State, *What would you like \_\_\_\_\_ to do?*  
 Each child listens and repeats it back.



Ask, *Can you both do that?*

(Set a short amount of time for them to do that, and praise their success at the end of the time period.)

Both of the above methods focus on developing communication and thinking skills that move children from conflict to peace. The methods also take the parent out of the unenviable position of playing judge and place the parent in the position of a loving, peaceful parent.