



Breakthrough Parenting Basics

10 Important Techniques

1. TREAT EVERY FAMILY MEMBER WITH RESPECT

The number one quality of a well functioning family is that each member is respected. Too many families resort to taking their frustrations out on each other when they are unhappy. Family members who fight and argue are not showing respect for each other. They may **say** that they “love” each other, but they don’t **act** that way. The best way to build self-esteem in a family is to show that each family member is cared about and appreciated—this especially applies to children! The goal of your family should be to raise every person’s self-esteem by treating them with respect. If a lack of respect is a problem in your family, you can turn the situation around quickly by learning advanced Breakthrough Parenting methods.

2. SOLVE PROBLEMS WITHOUT DRAMA

A necessary quality for respect to occur in a family is for parents and children to solve their problems together. The key to a successful family is the use of the principle of participation or shared decision making. It is sad but true, that many families do not solve their problems efficiently because they quickly move into drama. Sometimes the problem escalates to such a degree that people don’t even know what the original problem was in the first place. An angry dramatic episode can destroy self-esteem and respect.

Use the following six steps to routinely solve problems. Solving problems this way is logical; moving into drama is illogical.

- Identify the problem
- Analyze the problem
- Explore possible solutions
- Make a plan
- Do it
- Evaluate the results

If you are having a dramatic episode, **STOP**. Let everyone calm down. Figure out what the real problem is by receptively listening to each other, use assertive I-statements (see below) and the principle of participation to find the best solution to the problem.

3. THINK DISCIPLINE NOT PUNISHMENT

Punishment is greatly over used. It doesn't solve the problems -- it creates problems. Punishment does not explain what TO DO, rather it focuses on what NOT TO DO. Punishment causes people pain. Pain = Drama. Endless drama lowers self-esteem and greatly interferes with people using logic to solve problems. Punishment uses shame and embarrassment. It causes resentment, anger and depression. It is a poor tactic in any relationship. Thinking that children need to be punished is an old, inefficient and needlessly authoritarian way to correct a child's behavior.

Use discipline instead. Discipline means to teach. Teach how to solve problems, not escalate them. Involve your children in figuring out solutions to problems. Explain to them a better way of thinking and a better way of doing things. ***Children are programmed to want to get along with us. The reason that they don't is most often caused by us not knowing how to get along with them!***

4. USE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

There are two essential techniques for effective communication – receptive listening and assertive statement sentences. Most parents command and question their children to get their children to obey them. They don't realize that the way that they speak to their children invites rebellion, not cooperation. Using assertive statement sentences avoids this. A statement is a fact. A fact is the truth. It is hard to argue with the truth. Communicating clearly and truthfully enhances communication and problem solving. It makes people want to participate and cooperate. Avoid questions and commands and go for the gold—the I-statement. The I-statement has the extraordinary value of being clear and therefore minimizes struggles. For example:

- I am interested in knowing what your plan is for cleaning up your toys (finishing your homework, paying your bill, taking a bath. etc.).
- I am confused by this grade on your report card.
- I see that you are almost finished cleaning your room. We need to leave in 10 minutes. I'm sure that it won't take you that long to finish.
- I would like clarification on the details of this trip that you are planning on taking.

Or just use a simple statement:

- It is 8:00 and time for bed.
- Your friends are welcome to come over after we finish the game at 3:00.
- You are doing a terrific job on your painting.
- The gate was left open and the dog got out.
- What a beautiful birthday card you made!

This way of communicating shares information, it invites a conversation and active problem solving. Go for the gold and learn the power of the statement sentence.

5. CATCH THEM BEING GOOD

Want better children? Use positive words and phrases many times each day. Go out of your way to **Catch Them Being Good!** Catch them being good is the most important method you can use in disciplining children. It effectively points children in the direction that you want them to go: toward responsible, rational thinking, loving and confident behavior. You will not only have better children, but your children will have a better parent!

Catch Them Being Good has a feel-good quality to it, which is wonderfully beneficial. It promotes good physical health and great mental health. It creates a positive feeling tone between parent and child. The whole family becomes happier.

However, Catch Them Being Good is far more significant than that!

Everything that you know how to do well, you know how to do because someone, maybe several people, Caught You Being Good! Maybe it was a smile, a gold star and a pat on the back or an "A" on your paper. Catch Them Being Good is the essence of how we learn to be confident in what we know and do. It raises self-esteem like nothing else.

Catch Them Being Bad has the opposite effect. It creates a negative feeling tone, discouragement and low self-esteem. *It points children in the direction that you don't want them to go.* It causes children to be less responsible, leads to poor thinking, unloving behavior and insecurity. Who wants THAT for their children? Catch Them Being Good is the way to go. It can change power struggles to cooperation unbelievably fast!

6. CONTROL YOUR STRESS RESPONSE

If you are angry, frustrated, depressed, anxious, flipped out, having heart palpitations, ready to bust a gasket, learn better stress management techniques. Don't take your stress out on your children, or anyone else.

There are 15 stress-busting techniques in the book *Breakthrough Parenting: Moving Your Family from Struggle to Cooperation*. It is one of the best investments you will ever make for creating peace in your family.

The first and most important step in stress busting is to realize that all of ***your emotions are no one else's fault***. Stress is an inside job. Your emotions are your way of responding to what is going on outside of you. You have many choices over what to do about your emotions.

If you are in chronic stress, take a look at whether you are actually solving your problems, or turning them into drama and then blaming someone else for the problem. You are not powerless or a victim. It is up to you to make better choices. There is no substitute for solving your problems.

7. RESOLVE CONFLICT WITHOUT ESCALATING IT

Conflict is a good thing! We wouldn't grow without having conflict. Conflict presents an opportunity to solve problems.

If a family is in endless conflict, it is probably because the parents of the family have not learned positive and healthy conflict resolution methods.

These methods involve solving problems by receptively listening, using I-statements, using the principle of participation, and getting agreements about who is going to do what and when.

Pay attention to the 4 "C's" for resolving conflict.

- **Contain**-don't make it worse.
- **Confront**-speak up and say what is on your mind.
- **Collaborate**-seek agreement about how to solve problems.
- **Compassion**-receptively listen to the other person's point of view. Identify with where that person is coming from.

These represent the key elements for solving problems when there is conflict. And remember, in most instances, it is okay to agree to disagree! Sometimes the resolution of conflict takes time.

8. BE YOUR CHILD'S STEWARD

The old way of thinking about being a parent was that the child was the parent's property. Parents unilaterally decided how to treat the child, and determined what the child's life was supposed to be like. Children showed "respect" for their parents by being obedient.

The parent used fear to control their children. They expected their children to think and act the way they were told, and they were not considerate of their desires or feelings.

A modern way of thinking about a parent's role is that of being the children's steward; their agent, guardian and protector. The steward manages every aspect of the children's care until they are able to do it for themselves. They are also responsible to see that the children are fully prepared to take over their own lives as fully functioning independent adult human beings.

Parents counsel children about the best way to do things and provide many experiences to help children consciously make choices and learn how to accept the consequences of those choices. In doing so, children become good problem-solvers and decision-makers while still being supervised.

The methods that stewards use are designed to help children grow up to be in charge of their destiny; a destiny that the stewards cannot fully predict.

Therefore, the stewards pay attention to helping children develop such qualities as being eager to learn new things and being adaptable, emotionally well-adjusted, skillful and socially responsible. Children learn that they are free agents who have the power to decide well or to decide poorly.

9. ACCEPT PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND ACTIONS

Self-mastery is the ultimate goal. When children consistently behave with the principle, "I alone am responsible for my thoughts, feelings, and behavior," they will have attained self-mastery.

There is one insight that stands out as having incredible transforming power over how children turn out. Children need to be guided into understanding that as an adult, *you alone are responsible for your thoughts, feelings, and behavior.*

As an adult, you choose what to think, feel, and do. You decide how to react to circumstances outside of yourself.

When you learn how much you have a choice over the degree of pain and pleasure you experience in your life, you move into being conscious of your choices. This is when a person achieves self-mastery. Understanding this is one of the greatest breakthroughs a person can experience!

Every choice has a consequence. It takes many years for a child to understand the full impact of this insight, yet it is one of the greatest gifts that a parent can give to a child.

You cannot choose NOT to choose. It is common for people to give away their responsibility for making important decisions and then complain that the person to whom they gave their power did not treat them as well as they would like to have been treated. They forgot, or simply did not realize, that the power originally resided in themselves. They gave up their power over the outcome when they decided to let someone else take charge.

Life offers us numerous life-altering choices. A life-altering choice is one where our destiny is forever affected; after the decision is made there is no turning back. These decisions become our fate and affect the quality of life we will have. They define our lives and forecast our future. There are hundreds of these kinds of choices that will affect the quality of our life. Examples of life-altering choices are:

1. How much education to pursue
2. What career path to follow
3. Whether to marry
4. Having children
5. Living within the law or breaking the law
6. Choosing a healthy lifestyle or following a destructive path
7. How to manage money

A compassionate steward helps children learn to make wise choices by providing them with the tools that they need. The best place to start is with the key insight that the power for deciding lies within them, not someone external to them.

10. R=TLC--KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE GOAL

How do you want your children to turn out? Responsible? People who can think on their feet? Smart and educated? If you want your child to have high self-esteem, use a "Can Do" mentality that demonstrates confidence. You need to build this daily. As parents, our goals are to instill in our children a strong sense of integrity, morals, and compassion. In order for us to be successful at these methods with our children, we must first consistently demonstrate these traits as parents. What is the ideal final result of a discipline situation?

THE GOAL: Our formula for success is **R=TLC**.

R stands for **responsibility**. No one can be responsible without the following three character traits.

- **Thinking**-having a rational problem solving logical mind.
- **Loving**- this starts with good self-esteem and then extends out to others with moral and ethical behavior; and
- **Confidence**-the ability to stand up and be counted, to take action on what you believe is right.

Breakthrough parents are modeling these traits of character daily and cultivating them in their children.

THE BEST METHOD: The best method for achieving the R=TLC is Tender Loving Care! (See Catch Them Being Good.)

If you follow this formula you will enable your child to live a self-actualized life. The more you guide your child with the skills and concepts found in the formula R=TLC, the greater the probability that you will enable your child to attain self-mastery and self-actualization.

Children are beautiful jewels that have been entrusted to our care. As parents, we have a choice to polish our jewels to their natural brilliance or to dim them.

By appreciating and working with the multi-faceted talents of our children, we enable them to reach their greatest potential.

~Jayne A. Major, Ph.D.

AJM/BJA 25-Feb-08

Breakthrough Parenting® is a registered trademark of Breakthrough Parenting, Inc.