

Children who grow up in families who teach their children to share the load, work together, and care for each other are more likely to become successful adults.^{1,2} To make this happen, we must be intentional about how we raise our kids in order to teach them these life skills.

The Heart

The place to start to bring more success into your home is in the area of your child's heart. One of the greatest needs of a child is to feel *loved* and *connected*. A child needs your love for your family to function well and for them to grow into productive and happy adults.

LOVE is *valuing* someone independent of their *actions*. This is the LOVE you need to show your children. Spend time with them enjoying who they are and valuing who they are, even if they mess up. Avoid words that put actions and value together like, "I can't believe you scribbled on the wall - You are such a screwup!" or "Only an idiot would draw on walls."

Within the Home

Another area where you can bring success to your family is inside the *interactions* in your home. Our children learn many life lessons by just growing up together. They learn how to care for each other, and how to work together as a team within their family. You can start now by:

- **Listening and communicating.** A key to successful families is *communication*. As parents, we teach our children much of their empathy, care, and compassion. This gives us a chance to make a difference, either for good or bad. *You can teach your kids good listening skills, an important part of communication, by listening to them, by not jumping to conclusions, by asking them follow-up questions, and by not interrupting them.*
- **Routines and schedules.** *Routines* help keep children grounded and feel secure. A routine is something you do again and again until it is expected. The routines help set expectations and behaviors.
- **Family nights and outings.** Another important part of successful families is spending fun time together.
- **Limits.** Part of a successful family is having limits. Children like to know the adults in their lives care enough for them to set rules. These limits need to be set with wisdom and enforced consistently.
- **Roles and responsibilities.** Families also have to share the workload in order to live successfully together. When children learn early on to share household tasks, they're learning to be responsible adults.

Outside the Home

There are also important life lessons that happen outside of the home that teach your child to live successfully through:

- **Social connections.**¹ It's important to teach your children social connections. They need to be able to communicate with people outside of the family in healthy ways.
- **Community connections.**⁶ Children need to be a part of their community. All of the skills they learn within their families can also be applied outside of the family. When they are a part of their community, they learn empathy and compassion for those less fortunate, and how to care for others.
- **Spiritual connections.**⁸ Research has shown that successful families are guided by a moral or value system. This is found in their spiritual beliefs and their connection to church. Being spiritually connected means that children have a firm foundation of truth on which to stand in a sometimes confusing and chaotic world.

Our families are much too important to exist without a good plan for their success. Our children are much too valuable to leave their success to chance. Family is who you can **ULTIMATELY** be yourself around!

Resources include:

1. Vaillant, G. & Waldinger, R.J. Harvard Study of Adult Development. Harvard Medical School. Boston, MA. Found at <https://www.adultdevelopmentstudy.org/>, accessed 1/16/2019.
2. Lythcott-Haims, J. *How to Raise an Adult*. 2015. St. Martin's Press. New York, NY.
3. Umberson D, Montez JK. Social Relationships and Health: a Flashpoint for Health Policy. *J Health Soc Behav*. 2010;51 Suppl(Suppl):S54-66.
4. Hamilton, D.R. *Why Kindness is Good for You*. 2010. Hay House. Carlsbad, CA.
5. National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse. The Importance of Family Dinners VI. New York, NY: September 2010;i,5. Found at http://www.casacolumbia.org/templates/publications_reports.aspx, accessed 8/1/2011.
6. HealthPrep. Fun Activities That Will Strengthen Your Family Bond. Found at <https://healthprep.com/family-pregnancy/10-activities-that-will-strengthen-your-family-bond/>, accessed 1/16/2019.
7. Australian Government Department of Health. The building blocks of healthy family relationships. Found at <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/mental-health-matters/family-relationships/building-blocks-healthy-family-relationships>, accessed 1/16/2019.
8. Krysan, M. Moore, K.A. & Zill, N.U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Identifying Successful Families: An Overview of Constructs and Selected Measures. May 10 1990. Found at <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/identifying-successful-families-overview-constructs-and-selected-measures>, accessed 1/16/2019.