



The 4 Minute Parenting Guide:

What Kids Need From Their Parents

Over the past 30 years, I've journeyed in multiple roles alongside families as they navigate the challenges of the teenage years. I've seen first-hand the difficulties that arise and how easy it is for kids to hit a rough spot that can leave them with a lifetime of consequences.

These experiences have had a profound impact on me as they conveyed the true magnitude of the challenges every child faces during middle and high school, as well as the unique opportunity parents have to make a life-changing impact during this brief window of time. ***The choices our kids make between the ages of 12 and 22 will have disproportionately high consequences for the rest of their lives...***

"Parents- I've watched your kids hang on your every word and seen the life-giving inspiration and confidence that you uniquely can offer when you praise and acknowledge the good things they do. They are hungry for it...and for your involvement in their life. Please take this fleeting opportunity to give them the time, training, and affirmation they need to succeed."

It's far too easy for us as parents to think that our kids are getting the preparation they need to navigate life's challenges, both now and when they're on their own.

Unfortunately, they aren't. They aren't getting it in *school*. And they certainly aren't getting it from their *friends, television, movies, or social media*...in fact, what they're getting is just the opposite of what parents would hope for:

- Messages that consistently tell them that the most important goals in life are to *get rich, have fun, and feel good*.
- **Moral standards** that are increasingly relative to one's personal beliefs.
- Movies, games, music, and television glamorizing **sex, money, appearances, drugs, violence, and alcohol**... these influence kids' behavior by imprinting them with vivid messages and imagery that *suggest these things represent success, while ignoring their destructive consequences*.

It's critical for us as parents to understand that both teens and adults encounter significant problems in the key areas of life because they've **never had the training necessary to successfully navigate them:**

"Parents –your voice is unique in your kid's lives...it offers the power and clarity needed to be a lighthouse when uncertainty surrounds them and the path ahead is hard to navigate."



The 4 Minute Parenting Guide: 8 Easy Ways To Impact Your Kids Forever

- 1) **We need to *teach, train, and play an active role in our kids' lives*** as they wrestle with critical topics daily. Just one poor decision can have significant consequences. We must be the ones to step up and help them - not the internet, social media, TV, or their friends. Our families don't need big, luxurious homes or parents with impressive job titles, *they need us*...in the context of our families, '**LOVE**' is spelled '**T.I.M.E.**'. Research suggests that ***simply having dinner together at least four times per week has an impressive list of benefits for our kids.*** Hug them. Smile at them. Let them know ***you are on their team.***

"Parents –be generous with your love and support. Your hug or smile can be their safe harbor in a stormy world - filling them with a feeling of security and confidence that will last the rest of their lives."

- 2) **We need to help our kids make wise choices when it comes to what they *see, hear, and experience.*** *Studies consistently show the profound impact that TV, music, and videos have on teens...simply hearing or seeing material related to sex, drugs, alcohol, and violence can dramatically increase their odds of engaging in these behaviors.*
- 3) **Our kids need to hear three things from us on a regular basis*:**
- "I love you... and I will always be here for you, no matter what."
 - "I'm proud of you... especially for your _____" (e.g. character traits).
 - "You're really good at _____ (describe things they excel at)... and I'm excited to see how God will enable you to use those gifts to help others."

"Parents- If they don't get this from you, they'll miss out on a lifelong source of motivation that fuels them when difficulty comes. Be sure to tell them today and tell them often."

- 4) **We need to help our kids understand how to make wise choices about *dating.*** Teens should focus their time and energy on school, athletics, and hobbies. Dating can be part of this, preferably not earlier than high school, just don't let it overtake their life. Instead, they should go out with groups of guys and girls who are like-minded until they're mature enough for a relationship that could lead to marriage (only dating those who could be a potential spouse someday).
- 5) **We must emphasize how essential *relationships* are in our lives.** Help them understand why they should *never go to sleep* when there is **tension** between them and a *friend, family member,* or especially their **spouse**. Teach them to *always think the best of people, even when they disappoint them (there is likely a good reason for their actions, so encourage your kids to talk through it with someone who has hurt them).*



- 6) **Teach them that *friends* rub off on them.** Explain how this can be for better or for worse, and the stains can be permanent. A close friend of mine learned this the hard way after getting arrested on a felony charge in middle school *simply for being with a group of kids who committed a crime.*
- 7) **Money is the #1 driver of *relationship problems*, a top driver of *divorce*, and often a key factor in our *priorities getting out of order*.** Teach your kids how *credit cards, debt, payment plans, taxes, savings, and insurance* work as well as *how businesses make money*. Have them sit with you when you *pay bills* and give them jobs around the house to earn money for things they want. Help them understand that:
- **Small purchases add up quickly over time**...carefully *evaluate every purchase*, shop for the best deal, and ‘sleep on it’ for a night before making large purchases.
 - Studies show that after meeting average thresholds for food, clean water, safety, and shelter, ***additional income does not bring additional happiness.***
 - **Research shows that spending money on ‘experiences’ with others *provides more happiness and satisfaction than spending it on ‘things’.***
- 8) **Parents need to be the spiritual leader of our family.** Be sure to integrate God into daily discussions and pray at meals and bedtime. Robert Lewis says, “*Our kids are watching a movie 24/7 about how to live life and for better or for worse, we are the stars...*” Incorporate gratitude in your prayers and throughout each day’s conversations...not only for the *food, home, and clean water* that would *change the lives of most people on the planet*, but ***more importantly*** for the fact that ***God, the creator the universe, loves us*** and wants to have a ***relationship*** with us that starts on earth and lasts ***forever.***

“Parents- use everyday situations and car time to talk with your kids about the importance of consistently making wise choices, because small improvements will add up to big benefits in their lives.”

Chad Richard spent 20+ years as a successful executive in Fortune 500 companies identifying challenges in people’s lives and then developing solutions to effectively meet those needs. After seeing widespread challenges in core areas of life, he realized he would rather use his experience to make an impact on people’s lives. Chad founded Trailmap For Life®, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization that specializes in identifying challenges in life, then provides the training, tools, and best practices to enable people to manage those areas well.

**From “Raising a Modern Day Knight” by Robert Lewis. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997, 2007.*