

Five Life Principles to Improve Yourself and Your Family



Principle 1

Small and simple things, done consistently, over time, cause BIG things to come to pass



A. Concentrate on one right thing, done over time, for consistent improvement

B. Intend to be consistent for as long as it takes

C. Being consistent is not the same as being perfect

D. Break the goal into small steps

E. Make sure that the step you take is about you and not others - make sure it is something you can control

F. Focus on today only- that is all you have to work with.

G. The end result will be exponential growth. 1+1 will not equal 2.

What is the one, right thing you need to focus on now? _____

What are the steps you will take:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Do something
Do a little
Do

Principle 2 - Be Present

Be Present Vision Statement

Write out a Presence Vision Statement –

Describe how you want to respond to your children, how you want to feel being with them and how they feel being with you. It is all about creating a feeling! Use “feeling” words not doing words. This statement should describe your vision of being “present” with your children. Write this statement in the present tense. Avoid using negative terms such as don’t or yell, rather create your statement using positive terms. Make it short and concise. Rewrite until it is less than 3-4 sentences long. You will want to be able to recite it by memory.

EXAMPLE – Everyday I find ways to be present with my children. It is satisfying to me and I feel happy. My children feel nurtured.

2. Begin your day by reciting your Presence Vision Statement aloud. I find the bathroom the perfect place for this activity. The objective is that when you find yourself becoming distracted you will remember your vision and return to “seeing” opportunities and then practicing “being present”.

Practice Being Present

Practice “being present –

Pick at least one family time to practice “being present”. Focus on the activity at hand. Don’t allow yourself to think about other events, activities or projects that you may have coming up. See what being present feels like. You only have to give it three minutes or less.

Some ideas to get you thinking:

- When your children brush their teeth before bed, go into the bathroom with them, sit on the toilet and make a comment to get a conversation going. Make any random comment. For example, “When I was little I hated the taste of tooth paste” or “When I was ten I hated wearing socks”. The conversation isn’t what counts, it’s about you being with your children and focusing on what they are saying.
- When you tuck them in bed sit down by them, rub their back or arm and if it feels right get a mini conversation going. Say any random thing as, “When I was a kid I loved thinking about fairies”. Don’t think about the unwashed dishes, your favorite TV show that is coming up or how tired you are. Just enjoy three minutes with your child.
- Dinner time is a fabulous time to practice “being present”. The cool thing about this “presence” exercise is that you can get all of your children at one time. :) Again, it is all about focusing on your children for three minutes and maybe getting a random conversation going. For example, “Guess what I saw today” or “Did you know...”? Don’t talk about bills, homework or who did what, when.
- You can be present without saying a word using “random touches”. Catch your child just sitting somewhere. Maybe they are watching TV, lying on their bed or lazily sitting in a swing. Sit down or stand by them; place your hand on their knee or shoulder head or back. Sit or stand there quietly for three minutes and then give them a squeeze or pat and go on your way. You can even just reach out and touch them as you pass in the hall; the key is to look them in the eye and smile.

Write down the family event you are going to use for the next week to practice being present.

After the first week you can choose a new family activity to practice with or continue with the same activity or use what happens each day. But for the first week just stick with the one you have chosen to begin with. **This is a simple practice but it isn't always easy. But it is by small and simple things, done consistently, that great things are accomplished.**

If you are a list kind of person track your progress for one month using the chart below. If you aren't a list person just keep track of your one "present moment" each day in your head. The goal is to "Be Present" with at least one child, per day, for five out of seven days. Make sure that each week you are "present" at least once with each of your children. You are going to be surprised at what a difference it will make in your relationships.

| | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Week 1 | | | | | | | |
| Week 2 | | | | | | | |
| Week 3 | | | | | | | |
| Week 4 | | | | | | | |

Articles on Being Present:

The Power of Being Present <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=13426>
 Comments from those practicing Presence <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=4403>
 Advantage of being Present part 2 <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=3636>
 Practice Being Present <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=1042>

Cure for a Busy Life <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=8355>
 Advantage of being Present part 1 <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=3619>
 Really Being Present <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=1160>
 Valuing Self and Being Present in Life <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=8121>

Principle 3 – Simplify

It means to make something simpler or easier to do or understand.

In a study titled “Life at Home in the Twenty-First Century,” researchers at U.C.L.A. observed 32 middle-class Los Angeles families and found that all of the mothers’ stress hormones spiked during the time they spent dealing with their belongings.

Every item we own must be managed. The more stuff we have the more time it takes to manage it.

When simplify our lives we can make room for more family time and relationship building. If you feel yourself overwhelmed, bogged down, depressed then looking at way to simplify your life may be very helpful.

Here are some possible places to look to let go of things and to simplify. There are many other possibilities.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|
| a. dishes | b. cups | c. towels |
| d. toys | e. clothes | f. paper |
| g. calendar | h. books | i. unfinished crafts |
| j. outside activities, classes, etc. | | |

Everything we possess that is not necessary for life or happiness becomes a burden, and scarcely a day passes that we do not add to it. ~Robert Brault

Simplicity is making the journey of this life with just baggage enough. ~Charles Warner

Today's complexities demand greater simplicity." L. Tom Perry

The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak. ~Hans Hofmann

Just think about your home, one room at a time, each closet, drawer, box and cubby hole. If it seems right to you, decide which room you can do something about now. Is it the whole room, a drawer, a closet or just an item? It doesn't matter how much. What matters is that you begin and then do a little something on a regular basis.

Maybe you need to let go of some things on your calendar. Are there activities that are no longer serving you and your family? What is causing you to feel "too busy" to do the things in your life that matter most?

Where will you begin and what will you begin with?

You can make time for family and relationships by simplifying.

Principle 4 – Inspire

“Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change.” Wayne Dyer

How you present anything makes all the difference. If we want anything to be successful, if we want systems and traditions that last then we need to make them special so our family will want to participate. We want our family to be inspired enough to want to try something new. It helps others buy in to our ideas and when they buy in they take ownership for the outcome.

- Don't demand, lay down the law, or announce that this family is going to get their act together. Force and manipulation don't work – the work it takes to make it happen isn't sustainable. The palms together example.
- Plant seeds of thought and let them grow. Take the time you need to present ideas. Begin by just having conversation.
- Make it sound intriguing, inviting, interesting
- Involve others in coming up with ideas.
- Make special - Even the mundane can feel special. If you are folding clothes with a child put on music and sing. If you want to have a serious conversation with your spouse, have hot chocolate. If you want a child to clean his room pop in every 10-15 minutes and tell a good joke, help pick up a few things and give a random touch.
- Everything is an experiment. If it doesn't work try something else.

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What is one thing you would like to change or implement in your family?

List three possible ways you can introduce this new idea to your family.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Remember – everything is an experiment. If it doesn't work go back to the drawing board and try again.

“A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.” – Lao Tzu

Principle 5 - Planning for the Important Things

Getting the most important things accomplished each day requires the determination of parents who are clear on what those things are in their family.

Every family is different. What matters most in each family will differ. But as fathers and mothers consider the feelings they want to have in their families, the values they want to teach and the relationships they want to have with their children, it will help them determine what activities are vital to bring those things to fruition.

Once a decision has been made as to what the truly important things are, then we can look for systems to help us put them into practice on a consistent basis.

Let's look at an example:

Family A has decided that one of the things that they want their children to experience is a strong sense that they are loved and that there is time for them and that they have a safe place to express their feelings.

With this in mind, mother and father decide that each day they will spend at least 3 minutes with each child at bedtime. They call it "The three minute Cuddle". During these three minutes they lay by their child or sit on the bed. They tell their child they love them and they hug, tickle backs or talk quietly. Then it's a kiss goodnight. Since family A has 6 children this can be a challenge as 3 minutes per child translates to 18 minutes minimum. They have also noted that their teen daughter requires more than the allotted 3 minutes.

However, because they know what they want they are committed to the time it takes to settle each child, give them some physical and mental attention and provide a safe place for them to share joys and fears.

At first Family A found it easy to do this, but then life began to get in the way. Dad had a church meeting in the evening, mom often felt overwhelmed by the amount still on her plate at the end of the day and both had a show on television, once a week, which they wanted to watch. Add to that, the fact, that by the end of a busy day both felt tired and ready for a break!

At this point mom and dad decided they needed a system to keep them on track. They recommitted to the plan and began looking for ways to make it work. Here is what they came up with:

Each Sunday evening just before bed, mom and dad look over their weekly schedule. They do this every Sunday. If one or the other of the parents has to be gone in the evening for a meeting the other parent takes care of the bed time routine. They have also decided that on the nights they are both home they will divide and conquer. :) Each parent takes three children.

Two children, the smallest ones share a bedroom. One parent has both of these children. As they are ages 2 and 4 the 3 minute cuddle usually does last 3 minutes. It is often accomplished on one bed, with both children. Sometimes it is with the 2 year old first; all the while reminding the 4 year old it is his turn next. Then it's kisses and lights out.

Because the 3 minute cuddle with the 14 year old often stretches to 30 minutes, whoever has the two little's has the teen also. There is a large gap of time between when the little's go to bed and the teen.

The other parent manages the 7, 10 and 12 year old. That parent begins with whoever is in bed first and rotates from room to room. While they are waiting the other two are free to read but have to stay in bed.

This system has worked pretty well. Sometimes, when family members are ill, or unavoidable circumstances arise it has to be changed up and doesn't go as well. Occasionally it is shortened by emergencies. Sometimes it just feels "messy". But no one panics because Family A has been doing this now for 4 years and everyone knows it will smooth out again. The parents are as consistent as real life allows and their children have learned to trust that the 3 minute cuddle will happen regularly.

It has required some sacrifice to make this plan work. Mom and dad gave up their television show at first. Now they record it. :) They have had to be absolutely consistent with Sunday evening planning, even if it happens at 11pm. They have learned to be flexible if new circumstances arise but they have also been protective of their evening hours so that at least one parent is available.

7 Steps to Planning for the Important Things –

1. Know what you want

2. Take responsibility to make happen what you want to have happen in your life. Don't blame time, other people, money or circumstances for your failure to prioritize, plan ahead for what you want to have happen and then to make space for it to happen

3. Prioritize. What matters most to you? What can you let go of to make space for those things? Is what you are doing creating the feeling you want in your family? These are the questions you have to ask about everything you have on your calendar and all the items you have on your to do list. You have to be able to let go of a lot of good to make room for the best, the truly important.

4. Create space for what matters most. Bravely let things go. Clear out your calendar. Learn to graciously say no. Set boundaries.

5. Write it down. Put it on your calendar. Put it on your to do list. (You have a sand pebble water rock sheet in your workbook)

6. Honor your plan. Keep your family time sacred. Keep the world out. You are the guardian of your family's time.

7. Be consistent. If you fall off the wagon, as soon as you can, get back on. (Jenny and my reading) Perfection is not what is needed, just a plan followed through with, over time.

Your FREE copy of the Family Chunk Clock – A tool that can help you prioritize what the important things are in your family. You don't need to create and use a chunk clock, although many parents have found it really helpful in managing their lives so they can make space for what really matters.

<http://home-school-coach.com/family-chunk-clock/>

Connect with Mary Ann Johnson
The Home School Coach and Family Connection Mentor

Thank you for joining me letting me share what I have learned with you!

The Blog <http://home-school-coach.com>

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Join me for Happiness Shift Group Mentoring Fall Session

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<http://home-school-coach.com/?p=16291> until September 21st.
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