

# *WEEK I - 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.

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**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 it 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>

## *WEEK 2 - For Summer Fun Remember:*

- Fun should happen in regular life
- Keep it simple
- Consistency matters
- Structure time or it won't happen
- Make it special by being present, being together, and letting go of expectations

You have three Rockin' Spark Station Idea Packets. Look through them and choose at least one activity, for each of the next three months, that you can do as a family. Mark a date on the calendar and then honor that family time. Make a list of what you need and then get the items together. Share the activity with your family, maybe at a dinner time and let everyone enjoy the anticipation.

Activity 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies we need: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Activity 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies we need: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Activity 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supplies we need: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## *WEEK 3 - The Spark Station: It's about creating an environment and connecting with your kids!*

Don't wait for the perfect time, the perfect place, or the perfect contents. "I have always been waiting for that perfect day in a perfect world when I had the perfect station...which day was not coming anytime soon! After going to your class, I threw together some fun things in some clear Tupperware containers, and voila! Our temporary Spark Station. How liberating! It was wonderful! We had a great school day together." Elizabeth Little

Regardless of the method by which your children are educated - home school, public school, charter school, etc., you still want to influence their education and their love for learning. Love of learning happens best in the home. We also want to have more of those wonderful and elusive moments of connection!

The Spark Station is a tool which creates great excitement and anticipation for learning and gives parents a place to practice five principles which can be **family changing!**

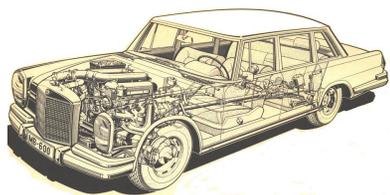
### **What is the Spark Station -**

- It is a container of some sort which is used to create a special time and place where you and your children are together.
- It is not the same as a storage space where you keep all of your learning materials, games and craft items.
- It is managed in a specific way to create a sense of anticipation for your children.
- The nature of the Spark Station enhances a child's interest in learning. Nothing is required. Children are inspired!
- It is most effective with ages 0-12/13 but can have application for older youth if used really well.
- It tends to help create a desire within families to be together. It helps parents practice presence.
- It is designed to allow children to play and learn in a stress free atmosphere where their interests are honored.
- It is just plain fun for both children and adults.

## **There are a number of uses for the Spark Station –**

- **The Spark Station** – a space used during family learning time or school time to enhance your child’s desire to learn and your ability to stay present with them.
- **After School Station** – a space to unwind from school, reconnect with family in ways besides videos games, and TV.
- **Just before Bed Station** – a space to help the family gear down for the night.
- **Dad and Me Station**– a space to help dad spend some quality time with younger children.
- **Family Home Evening Station**– a space used after your lesson for added anticipation, fun and excitement.
- **Sunday Station** – a space used to help keep the Sabbath day holy.
- **Love of Learning Bag** – a space used while traveling to keep children occupied, happy and learning
- **Love of Learning Letters** – A way for grandparents and those far away to influence and share with the children they love

It’s about creating an environment of anticipation and connecting with your kids!



## What Makes it Work

The Spark Station is like a really fine car - It doesn't matter what's inside. Without wheels and gas you aren't going anywhere!

### **Wheel 1 – Rule 1 – Structure time and be consistent**

Have a set time that you and your family use the Spark Station every week. It isn't available any other time, NO MATTER WHAT. Then be consistent. If you use it every Tuesday and Thursday then be sure you use it on those days so your children can count on it.

### **Wheel 2 – Rule 2 – Make it special**

By using the Spark Station only at certain times you make it something special that children can look forward to. When you pay attention to your children's sparks and put things in the Spark Station that speak to their current interests it becomes a very special place where your child matters.

### **Wheel 3 – Rule 3 – Keep it simple**

When you add an item remove an item. This rule keeps The Spark Station from becoming a mess so that it isn't usable. Don't over load it. A few activities, well thought out and engaged in beat something that looks like a storage space.

### **Wheel 4 – Rule 4 - Regular planning**

With just 30 minutes a week and knowledge of what already interest your child you can keep the spark station fun and exciting.

### **The gas – Rule 5 – Be Present!**

Being present means that you are engaging with your children, you are in the same space with them. It means focusing on them and not thinking about all the other thing that you have to do. It doesn't mean getting them settled and then going off to do your own thing. It means, being together as a family. You learn together, play together, and have fun together. When you are present, whether we are talking about using "The Spark Station" or any other family activity, it helps with management and order. It does not however, mean micro managing everyone's activity or efforts.

## Tons of Awesome Ideas, Content and Recipes

### CONTENTS

- I. What Can I Put in the Spark Station?
- II. Fun Recipes

### I. What Can I Put in the Spark Station?

It is important to put age appropriate items in your Spark Station. If all of your children are under 5 then an electronics kit wouldn't be a good choice. When you have a mixed group of ages then you need items to tempt and satisfy each age. You know your children best and you will know what age appropriate for each one is.

microscope/slides  
crystals and directions for making them  
fossils  
globe  
colored sand  
plastic model of man/woman with internal parts  
bug kill jar  
fish pump and plastic tubing  
rock tumbler  
compass for telling north  
holographic items  
platform scale  
barometer  
materials for invisible ink (recipe p. 00)  
a box of old socks, scrap material, buttons, yarn etc.  
a working camera (a cheaper digital is best unless you are committed to developing the film regularly)  
dominos

telescope  
shells/coral  
color wheel  
free standing solar light  
skeleton  
pedometer  
garden outdoor thermometer  
pulleys and weights  
electromagnet  
compass for drawing a circle  
tuning forks and mallet  
balance scale  
doll house and accessories  
boomerang  
fishing pole and magnetic fish  
tub of balls, all sizes and textures  
seeds, yarn bits, macaroni etc for collages  
rulers/yardstick/protractor

tub of small cars  
tracing books  
a money till  
sewing or lacing cards  
sticker books  
pipe cleaners  
lacing beads  
Kaleidoscopes  
child's tool box  
doctor set  
barn and accessories  
bean bags  
rain gauge  
educational toys  
books of art works  
melody harp  
dice, all sizes  
dress up box

graph paper with large and small squares  
a tape player that records/tapes  
maps both marked and those you fill in  
child's Atlas  
brain teaser puzzles  
Dover edition educational color books (human anatomy, birds, butterflies, dinosaurs, costumes, etc.)  
juggling balls (have a book handy on how to do it)  
rocket and launcher  
empty food cans  
packets of seed (those that germinate quickly in water or soil are radish, bean, marigolds, peas)  
bendable light sticks  
gyroscope (there are a number of kinds.)  
bubble blowing supplies  
tubs of colored rice with spoons and measuring cups  
geometric shapes in magnets and wood  
plastic gears or gear box  
butterfly net or materials to make one  
spinning tops (this is a physics item!)  
Yo Yos (this is also a physics item!)  
measuring cups and spoons  
stencils of letters and numbers in all sizes and fonts  
glitter  
scissors  
three sided Puppet Theater or the materials to make one  
rain stick (a musical instrument)  
small drums  
recorder and music book

preschool toys with a cause and effect  
wire and weights  
white board and markers, eraser  
play money  
Chinese Jump Rope  
minerals and assorted rocks  
directions and materials for "Cat's Cradle"  
rainbow glasses  
magnetic or wooden letters  
kaleidoscope  
binoculars  
iron filings  
stethoscope  
magnifying glass  
colored pencils  
calculator  
play foam  
poster paints  
age appropriate puzzles  
flash cards of all types  
paper of all types  
drawing supplies of all types  
magnetic darts and board  
magnets of all shapes, sizes and power  
maracas  
thumb cymbals  
flower press or materials to make one  
CD player with all types of music

Spirograph  
finger paint  
sand paper  
3-D puzzles  
blocks  
board games  
quiet books  
dot to dot books  
empty food boxes and  
modeling clay and tools  
box of corn starch  
color books  
glow stars  
Lego's  
felt markers  
crayons  
Lincoln Logs  
stamps/stamp pads  
stickers  
Frisbee  
Tinker Toys  
prisms  
Play dough  
glue  
tape  
Jacobs's ladder  
plaster of Paris  
harmonica  
kazoos

adding machine (an old relic, fabulous fun and uses math!)

basic tools (hammer, nails, wood scraps, screws, screw driver, pliers)

a box containing old cameras, radios, clocks, etc (to take apart)

old typewriter (if you are fortunate to still have one of these old relics around use it. Kids learn the computer very fast but there is magic in banging away on typewriter keys and hearing the ding)

paper dolls (it is fun to show children how to make their own)

## **Kits**

1. Don't want you to fill your Spark Station with them. A kit can be a great thing and kids love them. The problem is in the fact that they come with directions which parents expect to be followed. There usually isn't a lot of room for experimentation. Kits work when parents let go of the outcome. A perfect bar of soap isn't as important as mixing and experimenting and deciding what to do. Failure can sometimes be a great learning tool.

Kits can stifle creativity. For example paint by number is never going to be as effective in getting a child to think as a blank piece of paper and tubes of paint. The finished product may be more eye appealing with the paint by number but that isn't the point, is it! We want some creativity, some thinking, some problem solving going on. However if you have a budding artist who wants a finished product that they can hang up with pride then a paint by number may just be the thing.

Also, some kits aren't worth what you pay because the contents are skimpy and you can put them together more cost effectively yourself. So you have to really decide if the kit is worth the cost and if it will allow your child to expand knowledge and creativity.

One last comment, you as the parent need to let go of the cost of the kit. You can't say, "I paid \$15 for that kit and you aren't going to ruin it." If you can't let go of the cost, don't buy it. You also have to let go of the outcome. If you have to hover to make sure that it gets done "right" then kits are not a good choice for you.

2. Don't abandon kits altogether. One of the items in the closet could be a telescope but suppose that you have a child that is just wild about putting things together. In that case a telescope kit might just be the perfect thing. I saw one on the internet for \$14.00. What a great way to get a child started on experiencing some engineering.

3. A lot of what we consider just play is actually science or math, etc. I am astounded by the amazing and inexpensive kits that are offered for sale but even more astounded in what categories I found them. Let's take chemistry for example. When I typed in Chemistry for Children I found a site which had all kinds of scientific equipment from professional to things for kindergartners. The kits listed in the section for Chemistry included: How to brew your own root beer, a Make your own chewing gum kit, cheese making, an elementary grade chemistry set, perfume kit, soap making, a candy factory, and creative cosmetics. Isn't that amazing?

A kit might get your child involved in something that will move them beyond the kit to further experimentation. Let's say that your daughter is all about hair and makeup. Let's say that she is twelve and can't keep a thought in her head that isn't about boys, friends or how she looks. You are ready to go nuts because you can't get her interested in reading or anything of value. But you remember that inspire and not require is important not just in education but in your relationship with your daughter.

So you add a cosmetics or perfume kit to the Spark Station without saying anything. Maybe she misses it for a few days because she is sulking and won't really get anything out of the Spark Station. Then her younger sister spies it and begins to inspect the contents. The next thing you know your twelve-year old is helping her read the directions and they are off.

At the local health food store or nearest book store or library you have picked up a book on herbs, medicines and home made items that includes make up, hand lotion, potpourri and perfume. It is available in the Spark Station or on the coffee table. That just might extend her interest beyond the kit.

It is always good to remember that the above scenario is what we want to have happen, what we hope happens, and that our children move from interest to a desire to know more. Remember that once the Spark Station door is opened you have to walk away from it emotionally and let your children do their thing. She might not use the kit. So you will have to keep adding things, thinking and praying until she does find something that sparks her interest. It is after all, about her educating herself, when she is ready.

4. Another thing to remember is that you can get great ideas for your Spark Station by looking at kits. What would you need to have on hand to do certain projects without buying a kit? Take a terrarium for example. One week you could add containers, a bag of dirt and some plants to the Spark Station. Put them in when no one is looking. I am absolutely sure your kids will figure

out something to do with the plants. Maybe they will ask for a suggestion and you can show them a terrarium because there will be a book in the Spark Station that tells all about them!

### Kit Possibilities

brew your own root beer  
pocket microscope or telescope  
terrarium kit  
robot kit  
electro magnet kit  
static electricity ball  
dissecting kit (did you know that you can buy a frog to dissect for about \$5.00.  
soap making  
cosmetics kit  
candy factory (your kitchen is just one huge kit!)  
construction kits that use straws, pennies, magnets etc.

telescope  
ant habitat  
solar system kit  
solar powered car  
plasma ball  
perfume kit  
elementary chemistry set  
camera making kit  
candle making  
human powered light bulb  
magnetic levitation kit

kaleidoscope kit  
barometer kit  
telegraph kit  
electronics kit  
clock kit  
radio kit  
crystal growing kit  
bath salts kit  
battery kit  
color mixing lab

As you can see the possibilities of what can go into your Spark Station are practically endless. You, like me, may just want to dash out and get it all. I mean really, it is so exciting isn't it. That is the same excitement we want our children to feel when they use the Spark Station. However, remember the space that you have set aside and don't go overboard. Also remember that you want to rotate your items frequently to keep the Spark Station fresh and interesting. So add to it a little at a time. When you add something new, take something out. That way you don't need to totally redo the contents all at once. It is important to keep the management of the Spark Station simple so that no one is overwhelmed and we keep it going long term.

Using the Spark Station in this manner allows parents to exert influence on the content of our children's activities without crossing the line of structuring content. If we'd like to introduce our children to biology, for example, we can add items to the Spark Station on that subject. Because of the interesting and engaging nature of the system we are using they will be more likely to engage than if we told them we wanted to teach them about biology.

## II. Recipes

### Bubble Blowing Liquid

6 oz. Ivory Liquid  
9 oz. glycerin  
2 Tbs. sugar  
2 gallons of water

### Play Dough

2 c. white flour  
1 c. salt  
½ c. cornstarch  
1 Tb. Alum  
1 Tb. Oil  
2 c. colored water

Put all dry ingredients in a large pan and stir together well. Add all liquid ingredients and stir well. Place on low heat stirring constantly until it looks like clay. You will be able to tell. Take it out of the pan and knead. Keep in a container with a lid.

Alum is a must have ingredient. It is a drying agent and keeps the dough from becoming sticky. This will keep a very long time if kept in an air-tight container.

You can use baby oil or cooking oil. Eventually the cooking oil will go rancid but usually the clay has been played into oblivion long before that. Baby oil will scent the clay.

### Goop

Mix corn starch and water until the mixture is liquid but not thin. Pour out onto a table or counter and let the kids go at it. When it is squeezed in the palm it is a dry ball. When the hand is relaxed it drips through the fingers. As this is played with it becomes drier and drier. A small amount of water can be added if it gets too dry to flow into liquid. When you are finished put what is left into a jar or bowl and let it dry. It will look like a dry riverbed floor and can be reconstituted for later play.

### Pudding Finger Paint

Mix pudding per directions on the package. Pour onto a table top and let children use their fingers to draw pictures in the pudding. They can lick their fingers and have a wonderful time.

## MOVING FORWARD THIS WEEK

1. What container do I already have on hand that I can use for my families Spark Station?
2. How can the Spark Station best serve your family?
3. When will you use the Spark Station? How many days? What days? How much time? Remember that this is all about “flexible” structure.
4. What are the elements of your morning routine? How much time are you dedicating to this consistency exercise? How many days each week will you do this consistency exercise. Are you using specific days or just the number per week?
5. When can you regularly include your husband by asking for his advice, thoughts and other input? Choose a time that you can manage on a regular basis. Remember to tell your husband the parameters of what you need and he will be more willing to participate: how much time you need, how often do you need this time, what will you talk about during the time.
6. Choose a time and regular event to practice being present. Do it every day for two weeks. Make a commitment to yourself!

7. Create a Presence Vision Statement. Use only positive words. (Do not include should, shouldn't, no, not, don't haven't, won't, always, all, every, but, aren't, never, try, cannot for example.) Here is an example: I enjoy being with my children and having conversations. It is relaxing and enjoyable to hear what they have to say.

8. Make a list of what you have in your home right now that you could put into your Spark Station today.

9. Where are you going to store your Spark Station if it is not a drawer, cupboard, closet, etc.?

10. What can you think of right now that your child does that bugs you, causes a mess or they seem really interested in.

Part I <http://home-school-coach.com/creative-homeschool-ideas-making-learning-fun/>

Part 2 <http://home-school-coach.com/treasure-hunt-your-house-part-two/>

Part 3 <http://home-school-coach.com/treasure-hunt-house/>

*HAVE FUN!!*

# WEEK 4 - SPARKS – The fire for inspiration

Children are not vessels to be filled but fires to be lit. Plutarch



## What is a Spark

Spark [spärk] noun 1. A spark is anything that a child says or does that lets you know they are interested in something right now.

## Jump Start your ability to “see” your children’s sparks by:

- **Making Time for your family**
- **Asking yourself some questions**
  - \*What activity do you have to make them stop doing, to get them to eat or go to sleep?
  - \*What activity are they doing when they seem most engaged and alive?
  - \*When they get to choose what to do on a free afternoon, what activity do they choose?
  - \*What did they really love to do when they were 3 years old? 5 years old?
    - \*What are they currently doing that bugs you?
    - \*What do they do that is making a mess?
    - \*What do they collect?
- **Having conversations**
  - \*Share your sparks and they may share theirs
  - \*Say “You are really good at this”
  - \*Say “You seem really interested in this”
  - \*Say “This seems to make you happy/excited”
  - \*Say “Have you ever thought off”
  - \*Say “I had a really great day today”
  - \*At dinner ask “what was the best part of your day” and have each one share
- **Being Present!**

Child's Name					
Spark 1					
Spark 2					
Spark 3					

**There is more to learn!**

Visit <http://home-school-coach.com/store-2/rockin-closet-idea-subscription/> for monthly help on how to take a spark and make it burn.

**Articles showing examples of the magic of a child's sparks for inspired learning**

- <http://home-school-coach.com/inspiring-learning/>
- <http://home-school-coach.com/sparks-learning-magic-fun-children-familiar-conversations-joy-family-life-parents-mentors/>
- <http://homeschooling.home-school-coach.com/sparks-love-of-learning/>
- <http://home-school-coach.com/learning-style-in-children/>
- <http://home-school-coach.com/teaching-chemistry-identifying-sparks-kids/>
- <http://home-school-coach.com/effective-way-make-learning-interesting-kids/>
- <http://home-school-coach.com/how-to-make-learning-fun-meaningful-kids/>
- <http://home-school-coach.com/the-art-of-responding-inspiring-kids-to-learn/>

## *WEEK 5 - Making Time For "Family"*

### **Four things are required to find time for your family:**

- Being committed to family time
- Clearing out some good to make room for the best
- Setting aside time
- Consistently honoring that time

### **Let's Prioritize**

- Important and urgent – A church lesson, work, taking a meal to a sick friend (pebble)
- Important but not urgent – reading as a family, family prayer, playing a game together, school time (rocks)
- Not important but urgent – laundry, mowing the lawn, dessert for a church dinner (sand)
- Not important and not urgent – Facebook, email, your favorite TV show (water)

**"There always will be items on your "to do" list. The trick is to figure out which are priorities. You must first attend to what's both urgent and important. But to be truly effective you should spend as much time as possible doing important things that aren't urgent. Otherwise, you can spend all day in the thick of thin things."**  
**Steven Covey**

“...because something is good is not a sufficient reason for doing it. Some of our most important choices concern family activities.”

“We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they... strengthen our families.” Dalin H. Oaks

## *To Do List:*

1.		14.	
2.		15.	
3.		16.	
4.		17.	
5.		18.	
6.		19.	
7.		20.	
8.		21.	
9.		22.	
10.		23.	
11.		24.	
12.		25.	
13.		26.	

“Life seems but a quick succession of busy nothings.” ~Jane Austen

Day	Day
Rocks:	Rocks:
Sand:	Sand:
Water:	Water:

## *WEEK 6 - The Daffodil Principle –*

*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**

# *WEEK 7- Process vs End Result or Kids Don't Think Like Adults!*

## **Why kids can be so fun to work with**

- They love learning new things.
- They aren't intimidated that don't already know how to do something. They are just excited to learn.
- The process is more important than the outcome and
- They are so easy to please.

## **It can be more fun for you if you:**

- Check your motives!
- Mentally prepare for messiness
- Know it won't look like yours
- Don't "fix" their stuff
- Are clear that someone will do it backwards, upside down and not correct.
- Remember that little kids don't do things in a balanced manner. They aren't even aware that all the glue, glitter or pipe cleaners are on one side.
- Remember children are proud of their creations unless an adult points out the errors. Don't spoil it!!
- Don't fix their project so it looks "good". If you do it is no longer theirs. It is yours. Don't be selfish.
- Remember failure is a great teacher. If an experiment or project goes south you can talk about what went wrong and what would make it go better next time. Kids will have fun despite the failed effort because for them it is all about the process.
- Remember success is not determined by how it turns out. It is always determined by the level of engagement and fun that your children have. I guarantee they will learn things too.

## *WEEK 8 - Reading and that “Family” Feeling*

*“You may have tangible wealth untold;  
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.  
Richer than I you can never be –  
I had [parents] who read to me.”  
— Strickland Gillilan*

Remember, if time isn't structured then it doesn't usually happen. If we don't honor the time life will creep in and take it over.

What day/days will you read as a family? \_\_\_\_\_

Now write it on your calendar!

What elements will you incorporate into your reading time? Blankets, pop corn, piling on mom and dad's bed.

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# *Classic Books To Begin With – A List of My Personal Favorites*

Little Britches, Moody (this whole series is fabulous)

Understood Betsy (shows the journey of a child who has lost her love of learning, to becoming a confident love of learner. This is one of my all-time favorite books)

Little Men (Great book on teaching leadership)

The Little House Series (virtual textbooks on values)

Farmer Boy, Wilder (the whole series has wonderful lessons to shape and heal families)

Laddie, Stratton-Porter (starts a little slow for some readers, but the treasures in this book are worth it!)

Cheaper by the Dozen, Gilbreth (parent-inspired excellence!)

Dinotopia Series (My son, when he was nine spent hours pouring over this book)

Little Boy Blue (My mom read this to us and we would cry and beg her to read it again)

The Highwayman (Another narrative poem that we begged our mother to read to us)

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (I personally loved ALL of the OZ books and there are over 20. Many are hard to find today but worth the search.)

Animal Farm, Orwell (As a youth I hated and loved this book)

White Fang, London, The Last of the Mohicans, Cooper (my friends all thought I was odd for reading these two books while they were reading love stories)

## **Children's Classics**

Aesop's Fables

Charlotte's Web

The Emperor's New Clothes

The Goose that Laid Golden Eggs

Jack and the Beanstalk

The Little Engine That Could

Little Red Riding Hood

Andersen's Fairy Tales

Chicken Little

The Gift of the Magi

Grimm's Fairy Tales

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

The Little House Series

Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Dr. Seuss books

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

Hansel and Gretel

"Lincoln, The Man of the People"

The Little Red Hen

"Paul Revere's Ride"

Peter Pan  
Pinocchio  
Puss in Boots  
Rip Van Winkle  
Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories  
Snow White  
The Three Little Pigs  
Twas the Night Before Christmas

### Youth Classics

Alice In Wonderland, Carroll  
Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin  
Black Beauty, Sewell  
The Chronicles of Narnia series,  
"In Flanders Fields", McCrae  
The Diary of a Young Girl, Frank  
Gulliver's Travels, Swift  
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Twain  
Joan of Arc, Twain  
Journey to the Center of the Earth, Verne  
King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table  
The Lord of the Rings series, Tolkein  
Paul Bunyan and Other Tall Tales  
The Real George Washington, Parry  
The Secret Garden, Burnett  
The Swiss Family Robinson, Wyss  
Where the Red Fern Grows, Rawls  
To Kill a Mockingbird, Lee  
Because of Winn-Dixie, DiCamillo

Peter Rabbit  
Pollyanna  
Rapunzel  
Robin Hood  
Sleeping Beauty  
Tales from the Arabian Nights  
The Ugly Duckling  
The Wind in the Willows

The Pied Piper of Hamelin  
The Princess and the Pea  
Rikki-Tikki-Tavi  
Rumpelstiltskin  
The Song of Hiawatha  
The Three Billy Goats Gruff  
Tom Thumb  
Winnie-the-Pooh

The Anne of Green Gables series, Montgomery  
Ben-Hur, Wallace, Johnson  
The Black Stallion series, Farley  
Lewis David Copperfield, Dickens  
A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Twain  
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Stevenson  
Heidi, Spyri  
The Hobbit, Tolkein  
Jo's Boys, Alcott  
The Lonesome Gods, L'Amour  
National Velvet, Bagnold  
Old Yeller, Gipson  
The Phantom Tollbooth, Juster  
The Real Thomas Jefferson, Allison  
Stuart Little, White  
Tom Sawyer, Twain  
The Hundred Dresses, Estes  
Caddie Woodlawn, Brink  
Tuck Everlasting, Babbit

Brightly: Of the Grand Canyon, Henry  
Eight Cousins, Alcott  
Flatland, Abbott  
Frankenstein, Shelley  
The Hiding Place, Boom  
Island of the Blue Dolphins, O'Dell  
Little Women, Alcott  
Moby-Dick, Melville  
"O Captain! My Captain!," Whitman  
Oliver Twist, Dickens  
The Real Benjamin Franklin, Allison  
Robinson Crusoe, Defoe  
Summer of the Monkeys, Rawls  
Treasure Island, Stevenson  
The Bird's Christmas Carol, Wiggins  
The Giver, Lowry  
A Wrinkle in Time, L'Engle

# *WEEK 9 - Energy and the Family Part 1*

## *Energy of Thoughts*

Everything in this universe is made up of the same stuff. It is just present in different forms and shapes. Everything is energy. In our lives we can facilitate the flow of this energy or we can block it. We allow the flow of energy to increase and to vibrate at a higher frequency when we are:

- \*Grateful
- \*Think positively
- \*Take care of our bodies
- \*Serve others
- \*Feel love
- \*Have compassion
- \*Have trust and faith
- \*Are kind
- \*Forgive self and others
- \*Have abundance thinking, rather than scarcity thinking
- \*Look for the good in what we are experiencing, even when it isn't what we want

When we are feeling happy, successful, and grateful our energy levels rise. We feel light, buoyant.

We can block the flow of energy or decrease the vibration of our energy by:

- \*being ungrateful
- \*feeling burdened
- \*thinking negatively
- \*abusing our body in some way
- \*feelings of selfishness
- \*jealousy
- \*lack of forgiveness for self or others
- \*hate
- \*fear
- \*anger
- \*greed
- \*resentment
- \*gossip
- \*creating negative stories about what we are experiencing

When we are stressed, angry, selfish, feel resentful etc. our energy levels drop. We feel weighed down.

## *Thought – Emotion – Action/Response – Result Cycle*

The results you are experiencing in your life are generated by the thoughts that you choose to hold in your mind. **Thoughts create emotions. Emotions cause action and actions give us results.**

This is why it is extremely important that you learn to manage the images and thoughts you hold in your mind. Your mind will create what you focus on. Another way to say it is – what you focus on you get more of!

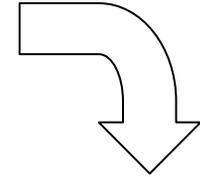
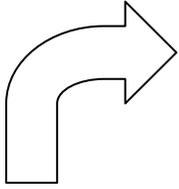
You can cause an interrupt in this process at any point. For maximum effect, cause the interrupt at the Thought level.

If you find yourself in a bad place emotionally, behaving poorly to those around you, stop and work your way backwards. What were you feeling that caused you to behave this way? Then ask yourself what thought did I have that caused me to feel that way.

You will eventually ask yourself, when you feel negative emotion, “What was I thinking that has caused me to feel this way?”

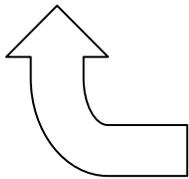
The goal is to get to the place where you have a thought and realize that it is negative you immediately change it and have a different action. This is the place where you save yourself and those around you a lot of grief because you are choosing your feelings and actions and not just letting them happen.

**Thoughts**

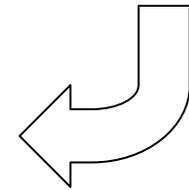


**Results**

**Emotions**



**Actions**



**CAUSE AN INTERRUPT**

# *Getting On Top of Negative Thoughts*

Use this tool to find the “REAL” message behind your negative thoughts. Remember that every negative thought you have about yourself and your life is a lie even if it appears true. It comes from a source of power that desires your failure and destruction. The exact opposite is what is really true. All people have weaknesses and they are really our strengths in embryo. (Hebrews 11:32, 34 and Ether 12:27)

Write down your negative thoughts daily. For each negative thought write down the opposite and then answer the questions below. Do this for at least 30 days and you will begin to see a change in how you feel each day about yourself, your family, your relationships and your life

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1.                      Strength-
2.                      Strength-
3.                      Strength-
4.                      Strength-
5.                      Strength-
6.                      Strength-

7. Strength-

8. Strength-

9. Strength-

10. Strength-

**I feel powerful as I manage my thoughts because...**

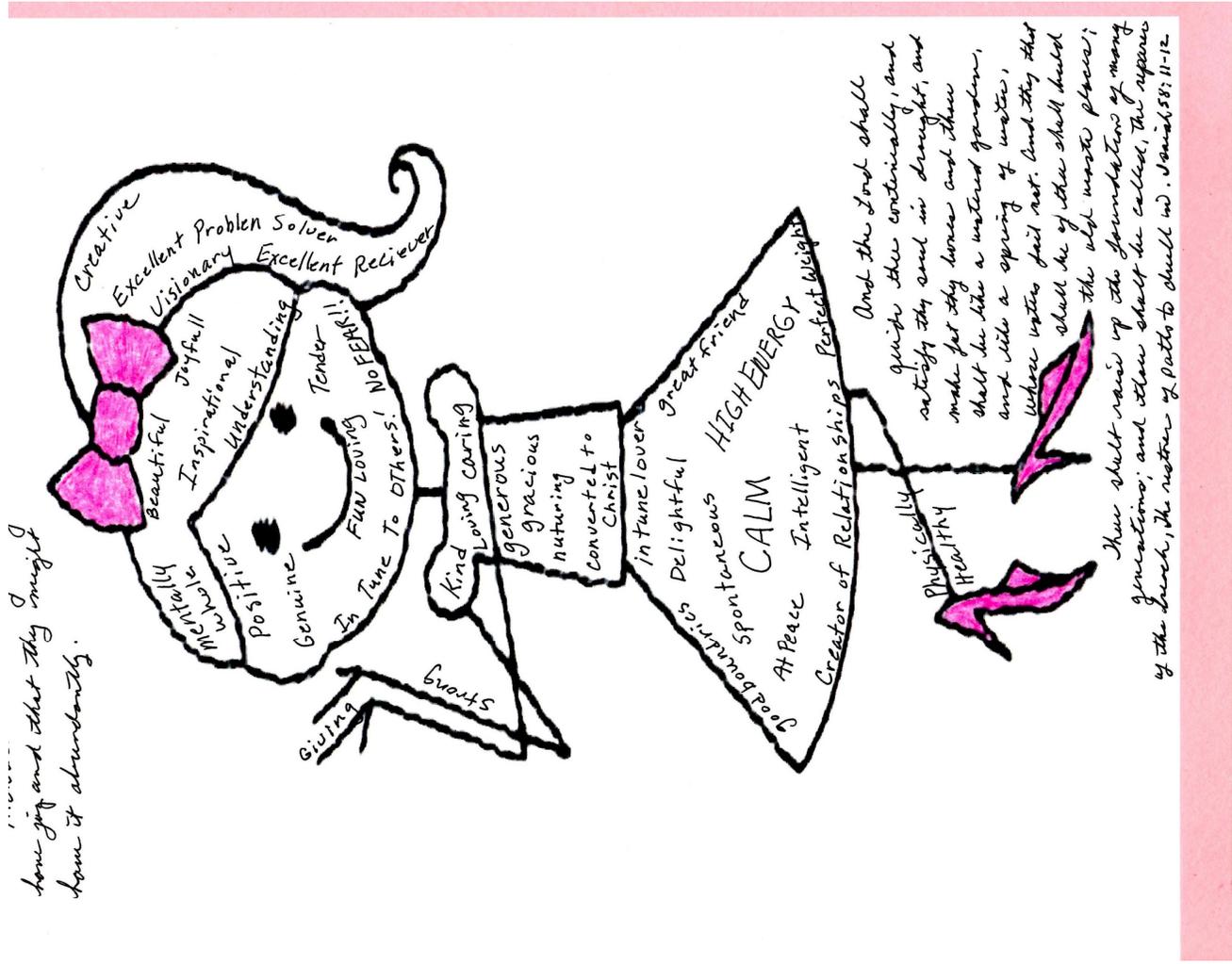
**I feel confident in clearing out damaging comments because...**

**I feel capable in overcoming negativity because...**

**I feel peaceful in my mind because...**

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# Create a "Who I Am" Poster





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## *WEEK 10 - Energy and the Family Part 2 - Energy of Things*

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 requires some of our energy to manage. The more stuff we have the more emotional energy, as well as physical energy, is required to manage it.

Keeping things simple for better results is a principle. It applies to all people, cultures, religions, etc. When we keep our lives simple we vibrate at a higher frequency and that allows our energy to be more positive. 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

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?

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*You can increase your energy by decreasing your possessions.*

## *We Can Share Positive Energy with Our Children*

If you are down you can get up by accessing your child's energy. They are up and far more energetic than we are. It is a gift of being young. Even children who live in poverty, in third world countries can be seen smiling, playing running jumping and experiencing joy. If the body of a child is not in distress through starvation or illness then it is full of energy.

If you are feeling down, angry, ready to yell, then get some positive energy from your child, even if they are the one that is causing you the difficulty. This is even effective with your teen age children. Just remember that when you are dealing with an older child to respect their energy space and not to just barge in. : ) Try sharing positive energy before you discipline.

You can share energy by:

- Random Touches
- Drive By Snuggles
- Patting a back, head, or shoulder
- Sitting next to a child so that your shoulder or thighs touch
- Put a hand on a knee while sitting
- Rub their back
- If it is an infant or small child hold them in a rocking chair

You can do this same thing in reverse. If your child, especially a teen, seems to be down, discouraged or angry give them some of your positive energy. No one wants to be talked at when they are feeling low, especially teens. Just use some of the above ideas and remember to respect your child's energy space.

# *Ten Ways to Raise Your Vibration and Increase your Energy*

1. Become conscious of your thoughts and your words – see page 31 and page 33-34
  2. Increase your gratitude – see page 39
  3. Eat well, drink water, exercise
  4. Be aware of what you watch, listen to and read
  5. Meditate. There are many books on Meditation but I recommend 8 Minute Meditation by Viktor Davich
  6. Actively develop your spiritual life
  7. Forgive, Heal and let go of the past.
  8. STOP complaining
  9. Take responsibility for how your life looks and feels.
  10. Keep going!
- 
- Remember you attract things that vibrate at the level you do!
  - The higher you can keep your vibration the more energy you will have, the more able you will be to manage stress, the more positive people and circumstances you will attract and the happier you will feel.

# 10 Gratitude Exercises

1. Come up with own Happiness commandments.

I began by asking myself what makes me the unhappy and then I came up with three commandments for myself. I post them where I can see them and be reminded of what kind of thinking leads me to happiness. Mine are:

- Be a Pollyanna
- Clean the ditch
- Let go of suffering

**2. A Gratitude Journal** – “I wrote down a few lines every day for years. I never missed a day no matter how tired I was or how early I would have to start the next day. Before I would write, I would ponder this question: “Have I seen the hand of God reaching out to touch us or our children or our family today?” As I kept at it, something began to happen. As I would cast my mind over the day, I would see evidence of what God had done for one of us that I had not recognized in the busy moments of the day. As that happened, and it happened often, I realized that trying to remember had allowed God to show me what He had done.” President Henry B. Eyring

Dr. Emmons and his colleagues found scientific proof that people who practice gratitude through activities such as keeping a gratitude journal are more loving, forgiving, and optimistic about the future.

They exercise more frequently, report fewer illnesses, and generally feel better about their lives. In subsequent studies Dr. Emmons also reported that people who regularly kept a gratitude journal and were in the habit of recognizing and expressing gratitude for their blessings reported feeling closer and more connected to people, had better relationships, were more likely to help others, felt less lonely, felt less depressed, slept better, and were more pleasant to be around.

Sonja Lyubomirsky wrote in her book, The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want, “The practice of gratitude is incompatible with negative emotions and may actually diminish or deter such feelings as anger, bitterness, and greed.”

Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 95.

**3. Journaling.** This is similar to the gratitude journal, but in this case, detail, in writing, one positive experience each day. This will help you find meaning in the activities of the day, rather than just noticing the task itself.

**4. Dedicate a few prayers a week to only gratitude.** Ask for nothing; just be grateful for what you already have.

- If you can't walk – do you have a wheel chair
- If you can't see – can you hear
- If you feel you are too old – you are yet alive and can serve
- If you don't feel accepted – you have the opportunity to reach out to others
- If you are single and alone thank him for family, friends and your home teacher
- If you are having trouble with your spouse thank Him for the opportunity to develop more Christ-like traits through forgiveness and taking personal responsibility
- Thank Him for His goodness to you.
- Thanking Him for all that He gives you, be specific and detailed
- Thank Him for His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.
- Express thanks for the Savior's great example, for His teachings, for His outreaching hand to lift and help, for His infinite Atonement.
- Thank Him for friends and family. Be specific and detailed.
- Be specific in thanking Him for His goodness
- Thank Him for leaders and teachers
- Thank Him for those people who have blessed your life that day

### **5. Control negative thinking**

Ray L. Huntington, a professor at BYU said, “Studies have shown that focusing on the negative in times of adversity—using derogatory or critical words as we talk to ourselves or others—can darken our mood and, much like a virus, infect the moods of those we interact with. Consciously choosing to fill our minds with thoughts of our blessings and feeling appreciation for those blessings can change the way we feel and brighten our spirits during difficult times.”

## **6. Add More Thank-You's to Your Vocabulary**

Saying “thank you” to someone brightens your day by affirming your positive feelings. It also lifts the spirits of those who are deserving of your thankfulness. Use people’s names that check you out at the grocery store, people who help you on the phone and anywhere else you happen to be and see a name tag. Tell them thank you. Thank your spouse and children for what they do, no matter how small.

## **7. Take Time to Write Thank-You Notes and Letters of Appreciation to People Who Have Blessed Your Life**

John Kralik, an attorney with a struggling law practice and personal family problems, determined to reverse the cycle of negative thinking through writing and sending one thank-you note each day of the year—365 thank-you notes in total. His note-writing endeavor taught him a valuable lesson: blessings can be easily overlooked unless we are consciously thinking about them each day. To that end, note writing helps us identify, remember, and express our blessings.

## **8. Live in the Present Moment and Give Thanks for Small Blessings Encountered Every Day – I call it Being Present!**

It is easy to get caught up in tomorrow: what needs cleaned, shopping that needs to be done, the upcoming holidays. And while it’s healthy to plan and prepare for future events, if you are too consumed with the tomorrows, there is a chance that you will miss something small and wonderful that is happening to you in the present moment. Look for blessings in the now or the present moments of your life.

**9. Random Acts of Kindness:** Return the shopping cart to the stall, smile at people, pick up something some one has dropped, tell someone how nice they look, even perfect strangers, move over and let someone sit down by you.

**10. Philanthropy –** Learn to give no matter how much you have. Give a dollar or two. If you have more, give more. Do it outside of your tithing and church contributions. The act of being able to give helps you feel well off and increases feelings of gratitude. Money in my car and a note – No matter what has brought you to where you are I care about you and so does Heavenly Father. I put \$50 in a savings account every month so that when I am prompted to do so I can give. Remember that these were directions to me and if you ask you will receive your own and they will probably be different from mine.

## *Cleaning House – A Forgiveness Exercise*

Have you ever wanted to say something but then bit your tongue and held onto it? Have you ever stood your ground and let it all out only to see that the situation didn't feel better and wasn't resolved? This could also include conversations with yourself about how you have felt about something or how you have acted in a situation. This clearing exercise is used to finish that conversation in a way that brings peace and clears out negative emotion from inside your body.

When you want to communicate but don't, the feelings associated with the conversation do not leave the body. They are pushed down and stored in the body as negative energy. Here they stay, causing other problems, until they are released. There are other times when you do have the conversation but there is no resolution and you feel that it was unsuccessful and you ruminate over it again and again until you finally stuff it down and again, there it is held until you release it. There are also times when you have the conversation, with others or yourself, and you are left feeling like a bad person for having said anything.

This exercise is used to release the energy associated with these unfinished and unsatisfactory conversations. By doing this exercise you can create "open space" inside yourself that can then be filled with positive feelings (energy) such as love, patience, charity, understanding, gratefulness, thankfulness, forgiveness and more. The reward that you receive for doing this important work is greater inner peace.

The more conversations that are finished and released, the more peace a person can experience. There is a sensation of lightness or freedom. Some have experienced a relief of the feeling of heaviness felt in different parts of the body, e.g. shoulders, back, chest, etc.

Results vary depending on a person's willingness to "let go" of the emotions and energy held in connection with the unfinished conversation. It is unhealthy and damaging to the body and spirit to store negative emotions and energy. Our bodies were not built to store unhealthy emotions and energy from regret, anger, shame, embarrassment, grief, etc.

When you hold negative energy for another person or even regret for not saying something kind or being kind to another person, you are hurting them. Energy is always radiating from you and can affect others no matter how far away they are from you. Cleaning up your own emotions is very responsible and loving work!

**This exercise is not done with the person face to face!** It is, instead, done with the other person's higher self, or in other words, an image in your mind of them in spirit form. It is unhealthy, as well as unkind, to dump your negative emotion and energy on another person or living thing. It causes damage. If it is toxic in you it will be toxic in them. Using this exercise in the correct way works effectively without harming the other person and still freeing you.

### **What to do:**

1. Find a private place to do the exercise. Some good places are in your car, a park, an empty field or even your home when you are there alone. If you are a person who prays, ask for support during this process.
2. Speak out loud to the person you are visualizing. Tell them “(name of person if you know it) I want to finish a conversation with you. I want to speak to your higher self. Would that be OK?” Hear the “yes”. Tell them how you honestly and completely feel about them and what is happening in your relationship with them. (You may write it all down before hand or you can just say what comes to you) At first this may feel uncomfortable. Stick with it! There is no right way to say it. Just say how it feels to you. Sometimes it may not make sense. This is normal. Be expressive! Say all the words you have to say. Keep talking to the person until the whole conversation is out. **DON'T HOLD BACK!**
3. If emotion comes up while you are speaking, let it out. **DO NOT STUFF IT BACK INSIDE!! LET IT OUT!!** Even if it feels awkward or embarrassing, let it out. All of it! Be free to cry if you need to.
4. When the conversation is complete, you will ask for forgiveness by saying...”(name of person if you know it), Will you forgive me for holding this ‘name of emotion or emotions’ against you?” Then imagine this person nodding their head “yes” and saying to you, “Yes I forgive you.” Now, tell them thank you.

This particular part of the exercise can be difficult if you feel that they have wronged you and that they should be asking for your forgiveness. I can assure you that if you will do this it will be magnificent in your life. I have even done this with my abuser from childhood and it has made a HUGE difference in my life. This exercise is, after all, about you, not them. You are freeing yourself!

5. The second person that you need to talk with is your Higher Power. Using the same format, have a conversation with them and then ask forgiveness for holding on to these emotions and hurting the other person and yourself by doing so. Imagine your Higher Power saying, “Yes, I forgive you.”

6. Next have a conversation with yourself. Again, use the same format. Ask yourself for forgiveness for holding on to these emotions and feelings and holding back your personal progress and growth. I imagine my higher self saying “yes, I forgive you” and then I say “thank you!”

7. Take a moment to be still. Let the rest of the emotion leave your body and imagine that the conversation between you and them is now fully expressed. If you are sitting there and feel that there is more coming up that you need and want to say begin again and continue talking to the other persons higher self. Again ask for forgiveness. Then repeat with your Higher Power and your higher self.



**Important keys to this exercise:**

The experiences you share may be recent or in your past. The age of the experience is not an important piece. The person you are speaking with may be living or deceased. This is also not an important piece. What is important is that you are fully expressing it, the emotion is leaving your body and you are letting it go.

Sometimes the conversation you need to have is with yourself, caused by actions you have taken that have caused you to feel angry or ashamed of yourself. The process is the same when you are conversing with yourself, as it is when you are doing this work about another person.

Drink a lot of water. This will flush the toxins that have been broken up out of your body. Emotional experiences and stories have toxins attached to them. When you hold on to these emotions and stories the toxins affect your health. This is a great reason to finish the conversation!

You may feel physically exhausted. This is normal. To clean your own inner house takes energy. Give your body a moment to recharge.

Use this tool each time you feel a negative emotion between you and another person. The more you do this the less negative stories you will have and the better you will feel. You may experience a higher level of confidence and a new level of clarity. Don't be surprised if you find yourself bolder as you move forward. You may experience a renewed level of inner strength.



**Message from Mary Ann:**

I have been using this exercise for quite a while now and I can tell you from my own experience it has been life changing. I need my pound of flesh less often; that desire to make sure the other person knows how they have wronged me and that they need to make a change. I am far more charitable, kind and loving. I choose happiness over struggle more often.

If you fear that doing this exercise will allow others to walk all over you or that you will just have to put up with others poor behaviors, I want you to know, I worried about that too. What I have found is that others are kinder to me, they are more charitable, they are also making subconscious changes.

I have been able to do this exercise with a number of people that have hurt me significantly (my childhood abuser, for example) and caused me to feel significant grief and loss in some way. I have also done it with those I live with daily, that just cause me irritation at times. In either scenario I have been freed and have felt peace. I do this exercise for me and for them.

I believe that because what I am sending out into the universe, energetically, is better, what is coming back to me is better. Despite your worries and misgivings, just put it on for a few weeks and see how it feels.

## *WEEK 11 – 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 women 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/>

# *WEEK 12– Put Down Emotional Weight*

**Emotional weight** is what we generate when we have things that we know we should do or take care of, that we put off. It is any those things that we get up every morning and determine to carry for another day.

## **Cost of emotional weight –**

- Saps your feelings of happiness
- Depletes your energy
- Feels heavy both physically and mentally
- Creates feelings of overwhelm
- Stress
- Illness
- Feelings of anger and then take them out on others
- Weight gain

These are just a few of the possible outcomes of carrying lots of emotional weight, over time.

## **Five Steps to Put Down Emotional Weight -**

**1. Just begin!** Commit to one or more actions you can take immediately and in the short term. Exercise your power of choice over the situation, whatever it is. Choose to get things moving right now.

This is the key to taking care of all the Big issues in life. It doesn't matter if we are talking about our relationships, our money problems, our need for more education, the need to learn to care for ourselves, getting control of our thoughts and emotions, overcoming an addiction, cleaning our house, ...it doesn't matter. The process works. You have to choose something and then do it.

**2. Break whatever it is into smaller steps.** You don't have to clean the whole room for it to appear, feel and actually be cleaner. You don't have to implement all your new ideas or learn everything that is required for a task, in order to feel satisfaction. You don't have to clean out your whole emotional house to begin feeling better and lighter.

**3. Accept the time line. You can't always fix or do everything at once.** Just pick one thing on your list that feels weighty and work on that, one step at a time.

If you are talking about your home you may not be able to clean the whole house but you can pick the one thing that is bugging you the most and begin there. If you are talking about a room just pick one thing in the room and begin there.

If it is a relationship or an old emotional hurt just determine a step that you can take. Maybe it is as simple as a conversation or as big as going to counseling.

Time and consistency are required to take care of most things. Commit to giving any issue time and then be consistent. Don't allow discouragement and don't quit! Time doesn't equal failure. It equals eventual success.

**4. Understand how real progress happens.** By small and simple things are great things brought to pass. Whether we are talking about cleaning house, healing emotional wounds, getting our finances in order or going back to school real progress comes from building on a solid, consistent, 1% improvement or movement, over time. However, we tend to live with and accept the 100% devil who says that if we aren't doing it all right now, in just the right way, then we aren't going to get a good result.

Don't believe the 100% devil; just plan to move forward or improve 1% at a time, consistently. When you understand that this is true you are able to take that first step that allows you to put down emotional weight.

**5. Celebrate,** take the time to acknowledge you. Fill yourself with recognition for any accomplishment, of any level.

**What Emotional Weight Are You Carrying?** Make a list of those things that feel the heaviest right now.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Pick one item from your list.**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What is one step you can take to get moving in the direction of putting this emotional weight down?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**After you have completed that first step make a list of other small steps that you can and will take to accomplish the whole thing. : )**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

When you are feeling overwhelmed, as you apply this process, you will no longer feel buried beneath a huge mass of tasks, you will no longer feel engulfed and everything will no longer look dim and dark. Rather, all will be bright again; you will experience a sense of inner expansion.

Just begin. You can't really fail, although you might have to make some adjustments. It might take a bit more time than you like. You can find time even if it is only in 10 minute blocks. I assure you that the relief you will feel from starting is wonderful. There will be a sense of satisfaction. By taking small steps and applying consistent effort over time, you will get the whole room in order.

# *Contact Mary Ann Johnson – The Home School Coach and Family Connection Mentor*

**Thank you for joining me for A Happiness Shift!**

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

**Facebook** <http://www.facebook.com/HomeSchoolCoach>

**Twitter** <http://twitter.com/maryhomeschool>

**E-mail** [fcmentor1@gmail.com](mailto:fcmentor1@gmail.com)

**Join me for Happiness Shift Group Mentoring Fall Session** from Sept. 24 through Nov. 12 You can get all the details at <http://home-school-coach.com/?p=16291> until August 31st. Page is password protected – Happiness Shift

**Remember to Use your Rockin' Spark Station Packets**



