

10 Things to Teach Your Kids About Overcoming Failure

Former United States President Harry Truman's father struggled his whole life to eke out a living as a farmer. Unfortunately, a drought hit and the farm had to be foreclosed on.

Many years later, a reporter asked Harry why his father was a failure. Harry replied, "How can my father have been a failure when his son is president of the United States?"

We can fail in a lot of areas. Work. Investing. Sports. You name it. But we can't fail our children and their future.

How do we avoid messing up? By spending as much time as possible with our kids and making them a priority. By loving them and using encouraging words. By hugging them whether they feel comfortable with it or not. Harry loved his father because he was a good dad.

Here are the 10 things to teach your kids about overcoming failure:

1. Not everybody gets a trophy. Somewhere along the line we became a society that preached instant gratification. Like a giant carnival, our slogan became "everybody wins all the time." We know it's not true. It's also a terrible example to set. Losing is every bit as important in human growth as winning. Rewarding your child for doing nothing will teach him just that. Nothing.

2. Everyone has different talents. Maybe your daughter wants to be the next Carrie Underwood. Then you hear her sing. Your son wants to be Derek Jeter, he can't hit the ball off a tee. There are just some things we aren't cut out for. It's best to learn that at an early age. The good news is that they are a champion at something. Guide them towards where their gifts

lie.

3. Have class. What is one of the most flattering descriptions a person can hear? "He sure has a lot of class." "She sure was a great sport about it." Are you teaching your children how to fail with dignity? How a person accepts failure is an easy indicator of the character within. It also almost guarantees future success. Respect is gained outwardly and inwardly. Coach Tony Dungy is prime example of class.

4. Learning from mistakes. "I think and think for months. For years. Ninety-nine times the conclusion is false. The hundredth time I am right." Who said that? Albert Einstein. Mistakes humble. They can hurt. Yet without them, we are stagnant. Every mistake we make is an educational experience. Every success is built upon a foundation of errors and corrections.

5. Teaching others. When we fail, we gain experience. It's important to share that knowledge. Use it to mentor others experiencing similar difficulties. Instill in your children the responsibility to share their mistakes in hopes to save another from making the same.

6. Leave it all on the field. Boxing legend Joe Frazier once said, "If I lose, I'll walk away and never feel bad because I did all I could. There was nothing more to do." The most common phrase in sports has to be "leave it all on the field!" Explain to your kids to never cheat themselves on effort and they will always gain from it. No matter the outcome.

7. Perseverance. Determination wins many victories. We should not allow our children to give up on themselves. Maybe your son has brought home two straight failing test grades in math. He thinks there is no way he will ever get it. Help him pick himself back up and try again. Perseverance will eventually lead to positive results and a lifelong lesson never to be forgotten.

8. Know how to win. It might sound obvious, but knowing how to win is the easiest way not to lose. For instance, your son is selling popcorn for the Boy Scouts. He knocks on 200 random doors and sells 20 packages in four hours. A lot of effort for little gain. The next day he sets up a stand in front a busy grocery store. Uniform on. Charm intact. He sells 200 packages in a single hour. Which was the most successful tactic? Game planning is an essential part of a successful life.

9. Definition of success. Looking into the future, what do you wish for your son? I'm guessing happiness tops that list. He's a respected and honest man. Has a loving wife and a family of his own. I highly doubt you would look into the future and hope he has an awesome car. He has seven hot girlfriends. He's shallow and in it for the money. Yet that is exactly what is marketed at him. Eternal failure. Society teaches shallowness to be equal to success. As a parent, it is up to you to define success.

10. Sense of humor. There are times in life we are going to do really stupid things. The ability to laugh about it sure makes those moments a lot easier to deal with. When you make mistakes in front of your kids, set that example. Don't curse and scream at the sky. Just shake your head and laugh. It happens.

Sound Off: Tell us about a time when you were able to teach your child from either your mistake or theirs.

Huddle Up: One of the times I failed in my life was ... From that experience, I learned...

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Does Emotional Eating Keep You in Bondage?

Is food your hiding place?

When emotional eating had me bound years ago, God revealed that food had become my hiding place.

I ran to food whenever I experienced feelings in my heart that I didn't want to feel.

I used food to stuff down my frustration whenever I didn't express my opinion for fear of others rejecting me. I used food to mask that disappointment in myself when I refused opportunities because I was afraid of success or failure.

But over 10 years ago, God invited me to turn to Him as my refuge instead. From the safe place He offered the scared little girl inside of me, I discovered that I no longer had to be insecure or afraid.

I was free to be me!

The enemy had convinced me that if I didn't turn to food, that I would be left without comfort. But that was a lie!

Instead, I learned that through the Holy Spirit, I had a built-in Comforter. He would never leave me nor forsake me. If you have been using food as a hiding place, then your Rescuer is here!

Meditate on the comforting Scriptures below for reassurance. God wants to become your shelter, your refuge:

“The Lord your God is in your midst,

a Mighty One, who will save.
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will renew you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing” (Zeph. 3:17).

“For You have been a refuge for me, and a strong tower from the enemy” (Ps. 61:3).

“There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and from rain” (Is. 4:6).

“The Lord roars from Zion,
and sounds His voice from Jerusalem,
and heaven and earth quake.
But the Lord is a refuge for His people,
and a stronghold for the children of Israel” (Joel 3:16).

“I will abide in Your tent forever; I will seek refuge in the covering of Your wings. Selah” (Ps. 61:4).

God is waiting with open arms to provide shelter for you when you are hurting. The question is: Will you embrace Him?

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of God’s healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

For the original article, visit .

Why Fathers Need to Frequently Affirm Their Sons

As a man, I understand two things very well: affirmation and respect. I don't just enjoy hearing or feeling those particular things in my life, I yearn for them. I need to hear words of affirmation from my wife, my father, my friends and my Heavenly Father.

Without it, I feel directionless and purposeless. I long to be respected as well. Gaining and getting consistent respect from my wife is very important to our marriage. I still long for my father's approval and respect even though I don't see him that often anymore.

And of course, I strive to be well respected and wanted by my work.

If it's so important and desired by me, a fully grown man, why wouldn't it be important for my son to hear?

Age Does Not Matter

I'll be honest, even though affirmation is such a big deal to me, I didn't think my young son would like it so much. I didn't even think he would understand what I was telling him. Why? My son was only 1 1/2 years old. That's right, he could only say a couple of words himself, but he could understand a few words and phrases.

And to my surprise as I would put him down at night, I'd say the following words, "You did a good job today." He didn't say thank you and still doesn't as he nears the age of 2, but he always shakes his head yes and looks me straight in the eyes with a full smile.

It didn't matter that he was under 2 years old, he understood

a father's affirmation.

What Should This Mean to Fathers?

I realized that day and everyday since that my 2-year-old son is a lot like me. He may not be a man, but he is a son of God who wants and desires to be loved by a father. Just as you seek approval and affirmation from your father and heavenly Father, so our boys (even young boys or toddlers) seek affirmation from us.

This means that no matter what age your son is, you must be more aware of affirming him. Don't let moments or opportunities pass you by! Don't be overshadowed by your needs and journey to personal approval that you forget to affirm your son.

Start enforcing and applying affirmation to your son or sons today!

How Can You Affirm?

Take a moment and think about yourself. When do you like or need to be affirmed? When do you like to hear "good job" or "well done"? What does it mean to you? Explore these areas of your heart and apply them to your relationship with your son. Remember, age does not matter!

Here are a few phrases you can start using today:

- "You did a great job today."
- "Thank you for your help."
- "Thank you for being a good boy for Mommy."
- "I appreciate your help in cleaning up."
- "You are a good boy."
- "I love you, son!"

When was the last time you affirmed your son? Strive to be a better father this year and seek to affirm your son or sons everyday!

What is one way you affirm your son or sons?

Maturity is a blog built on establishing spiritual maturity in today's man. The goal is to assist men in building better marriages and help them grow in maturity and explore different aspects of manhood. features new weekly blog posts, daily social-media updates and a powerful resources page. Stay up to date with the Maturity blog communities on Facebook and Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

7 Ways to Make an Impression Upon Your Children

To impress means *to sharpen; to teach; to be pierced*. To impress something upon someone means to speak sharp statements to them with the intention that they will be quickly remembered and obeyed.

The idea of impressing your children is to make a distinguishable mark upon them. It means to inculcate or repetitively drill into the mind.

Children have a way of remembering our mantras—those pithy statements we make that have substance. It's always a great acknowledgement when someone quotes something I have said or have written, but nothing compares to hearing my children repeat something I've said. Wow! I love it when that happens.

Did you notice that to impress also means to pierce? Could it be possible that one of the byproducts of a lack of parental teaching is that young people are mutilating their bodies with

piercings? They may be so desperate to be impressed by someone or something that they will readily tattoo pictures, phrases or symbolic images upon themselves.

Alternately, they may have something to say but they don't know how to express it, so they cut and mark themselves in an effort to get attention and to be heard. In either case, this could be a direct byproduct of the absence of a patriarchal influence.

Rather than allow society to mark them, here's how we can make an indelible impression upon our children with the Word of God:

1. Make it a part of the conversation in your household. This should be a daily pattern but not in a fake, religious sense. It should just be part of the conversation during normal routines.

For an example, talk about something that is making the headlines in the news. How does it relate to the principles of God's Word? If someone is involved in a scandal, what led to it? A sexual sin? A lack of integrity in politics or business? What scriptural example could be used to explain it?

2. As you're traveling. I really took advantage of this with my family. Drive time became teaching time for me. When we got in my SUV to go somewhere, I would begin to teach about principles in the Bible. Our family had the best dialogue while we traveled.

I believe God relates to us in the daily commute. As we go, God speaks to us. Adam walked with God in the cool of the day. Enoch walked with God, and he was no more, for God took him. Noah walked with God as a righteous man during a wicked generation. Abraham's steps were ordered as he walked to inherit a new land. Moses walked barefooted on a mountain as he received revelation from God. When Jesus came to earth, He too walked with man.

As you're traveling, spend time conversing with your family.

3. Before you go to sleep. Bedtime is a vital time to impress upon your children the things of God.

When my children were young, I made it a habit to tuck them into bed each night. I would tell them faith stories that I would make up, where the main character in the story was their age and gender so they could relate. I would make up situations where a belief in a principle from God's Word would help get them through a challenge.

Then I would speak a prayer over them for their sleep to be sweet, asking the Holy Spirit to instruct them during the night.

"When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet" (Prov. 3:24).

4. When you get up. Starting the day off with instruction and motivation is a key to training children to take action in their lives. When they get up it's the perfect time to make goals and forecast the day. Help your child with a "To Do" list. An assignment gives your child purpose and creates order for them.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish; but happy is he who keeps the teaching" (Prov. 29:18).

The Hebrew word for revelation is "chazown," which means a vision concerning future events, or an oracle.

An oracle is often referred to as a person with whom God speaks. It refers to an authoritative and wise person who answers looming questions. You have the ability to answer questions and the responsibility to forecast your child's future for them with your words.

5. Tie them as symbols on your hands. Not long ago a small bracelet with the acronym WWJD became a huge success. Of

course, WWJD stood for a question that really served as an answer, "What Would Jesus Do?" Those who wore the bracelet were reminded when they were facing a challenge or a question from the circumstances of their day that there was a higher standard to live up to.

When each of my daughters turned 13, I presented them with a ring to wear as a symbol of purity. I told them that these rings were really gifts to be given to their future husbands as tokens representing their purity for marriage. Each ring became a symbol upon their hands to remind them of their future.

I truly believe that children want to have your vision and values stamped upon them. Remember, to impress means to make a distinguishing mark upon them.

6. Bind them upon their foreheads. It is a Jewish tradition for men to wear the "Tefillin" or phylacteries, which are small, wooden, square boxes placed upon the forehead which house four Scriptures:

And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.

"It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets on your forehead, for with a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:16).

"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes" (Deut. 6:8).

"Therefore you must fix these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, so that they may be as frontlets between your eyes" (Deut. 11:18).

When a phylactery is placed upon a man, a spoken blessing is

announced, "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever."

Unfortunately, in many cases the purpose of these symbols have become confused and they are seen as some type of "magical" amulet to protect a person from evil. (When people attach a magical equation to a spiritual principle they pervert its power and compromise its meaning.)

We should take the more appropriate lesson to use these symbolic reminders that God is the protector of our children. He delivers His people out of bondage, and His hand will continue to guide our children's lives.

Our children need more than a rabbit's foot or a lucky charm; they need the reality of God's protection.

7. Write them upon your door frames and the gates of your home. As a man, you are the gate of authority to your home. The gate that you open up is the gate others walk through. This can be good or bad. To access your home, people and things must come through you. When someone knocks on the door, it is protocol for the man of the house to answer the door.

Years ago my eldest daughter, Alexandra answered the door. As I walked into the foyer, I overheard two men speaking to my daughter about her spiritual destiny. I was shocked. I walked over and took control of the conversation, excused my daughter, stepped out onto the porch to address those men. I explained to them how inappropriate it was for them to raise a spiritual conversation with my daughter.

Men, we're the gate of authority to our home. We shouldn't allow any influence into our home that does not have our endorsement.

If we're going to make an impression upon our children, it will be by intentional effort.

The words of a father, the impression that he leaves upon his children have staying power. They can become prophecies for his children's future.

Neil Kennedy, author of several books—including *FivestarMan: The Five Passions of Authentic Manhood*, *Centurion Principle*, *Mother's Guide to Raising a FivestarMan*, *God's Currency*, and *Speaking the Father's Blessing*—has authored articles for scholarly journals and multiple magazines, publishes *The Daily Champion for men*, and is founder of *FivestarMan*, an international movement of men.

For the original article, visit .

10 Healthy Habits for the New Year

Is your New Year's resolution to live healthier in 2015? Me too! Studies show health-related resolutions top the list.

However, it's important to know that research also shows that the more specific you can be, the more likely you will reach your goal.

Here are the Top 10 Healthy Habits for the new year:

1. Exercise. Exercising has both short-term and long-term benefits. Right away, it can improve your mood, reduce stress, and even make your brain work better. Over time, exercise can prevent health problems ranging from obesity and diabetes to heart disease and even cancer.

This is a result of what exercise does inside your body, according to Dr. Harry Lodge, author of the bestseller,

Younger Next Year.

“It turns out that your cells really don’t age,” he said. “They either grow or decay.”

“And if you do things in your life that trigger growth in the cells, then your body gets stronger, younger, fitter, healthier, better able to resist disease,” he continued. “And you live life as functionally a younger man or woman until very late in the game.”

Even with all these benefits, some 60 percent of Americans stay on the couch.

If you’d like to be in the 40 percent of regular exercisers, psychologists say to focus on the first three weeks. Be encouraged that it will get easier! Studies have shown that any activity repeated daily becomes a habit after three weeks.

2. Eat a healthy breakfast. Remember, a healthy breakfast contains protein. Eat within 90 minutes of waking-up. This starts your metabolism for the day and also prevents you from getting too hungry and overeating later in the day.

3. Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Make sure you don’t eat just fruit. Even though fruit contains natural sugar, too much of it can raise your blood sugar levels too high.

To avoid this, stick to eating berries, which are low in sugar and high in antioxidants. Instead of fruit, focus on trying to consume more vegetables, especially leafy green ones. A good plan is to eat a salad every day (with olive oil dressing!)

4. Avoid trans fats. Trans fats are found mostly in processed foods, so if the list of ingredients includes the word, “hydrogenated,” stay away.

Ironically, trans fats prolong a food’s shelf life, but they

have the opposite effect on our bodies, according to Dr. Michael Aziz, author of *The Perfect 10 Diet*.

“Trans fats are really like plastic,” he said. “And when we eat them they incorporate in our cells and the cells cannot communicate or talk to one another.”

“In turn, hormones are disturbed, weight gain follows. But more troubling, the risk for heart disease, cancer, stroke, infertility goes up,” he added.

5. Eat good fats. Omega-3s are found in foods like fish, especially salmon, sardines, and fish oil supplements. Other choices include walnuts, almonds, and flaxseed. These have been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease, improve your immunity, and reduce inflammation.

Coconut oil helps ward-off colds and flu because of its natural anti-microbial properties. Olive oil and avocados are also good-for-you fats.

6. Avoid sugar. This is one of the toughest. Its negative laundry list runs from obesity to diabetes to heart disease and cancer. The average American consumes 135 pounds of sugar a year, compared with 109 pounds 20 years ago and only five pounds in the late 1800s!

This includes hidden sugars like corn syrup, sucrose, glucose, and lactose. Celebrity diet coach Joy Bauer, author of *The 90/10 Weight Loss Plan*, says start by going cold turkey.

“The first seven days I eliminate all sugars, both real and artificial,” she said. “Because when you remove the taste of sweet from your mind and your taste buds, eventually it gets much easier and you stop craving it.”

“And so many people, when you start week two and you’re allowed to have sugar, they don’t even want it because they feel great without it,” she continued.

7. Cleanse your hands often. Eating right and exercising aren't the only habits that keep you healthy. Did you know the best way to avoid getting sick is to keep your hands clean?

When using hand sanitizer, make sure it's at least 60 percent alcohol, get in all those nooks and crannies, and rub your hands until they're dry. When using soap and water, lather-up for a full 20 seconds.

8. Practice good dental health. Believe it or not, periodontal infection contributes to heart disease, diabetes, and even premature, underweight births.

9. Get regular screening. The type of screenings you need depend on your age and gender, so consult with your doctor about which ones you need.

Some of the most important ones include an annual physical, blood pressure, and cholesterol test, colonoscopy, mammogram, pap test, and prostate and skin cancer screening.

10. Get enough sleep. According to Dr. James Maas, author of *Sleep For Success*, if you don't get your ZZZs, you're setting yourself up for a whole host of health problems.

"You're going to be irritable, anxious, depressed," he said. "You're going to gain weight, you have a greater risk for hypertension, that's heart attacks and strokes, type 2 diabetes, obesity, skin problems, and cancer."

"And your cognitive performance slows down," he continued. "You can't think, you can't remember, you're not creative, you can't think critically, it affects how long you're going to live. And if you're an athlete, it just ruins your motor coordination and your reaction time."

So at this time of year, when many of us vow to start afresh, take note of these habits to make 2015 your healthiest year yet.

For the original article, visit .

'Why Is My Daughter Cutting Herself?'

When I worked with teenagers, I would spend a month staffing a summer camp. In the midst of the fun, we would give opportunities for the kids to share what was going on in their lives.

A lot of things would come to the surface during those times. I was in charge of all of the leaders. When they had an issue, particularly with a kid, they came to me.

There seemed to be a reoccurring theme week after week, summer after summer. These sweet little teens and preteens were cutting themselves. It happens with boys, sometimes, and the causes are similar, but it is mainly an issue with girls.

It was difficult for anyone to understand. Most of the time when we would tell the parents, they would be shocked and would want to know why. If you ever have or will ask the question, "Why is my daughter cutting herself?" here are some answers.

Warning Signs

Look for the signs. The arms are a common place for cutting to occur. If they always wear long sleeves, they might be trying to hide the scars. Legs also tend to be common targets. Look for cuts, scratches, burns or bruises that are new, particularly if it is consistent, when it seems (all of the sudden) they have become a clumsy person or accident prone.

Other signs may include spending a lot of time alone or never feeling good about themselves. When she speaks about herself, is it usually negative?

Coping Mechanism

People who inflict self-injury have uncomfortable feelings that they do not know how to deal with or adequately express. They may have experienced something traumatic, particularly in childhood. It can also be linked to confusion about their identity or sexuality.

Other times, it is connected to difficulty in making friends and maintaining personal relationships. Relational and identity problems are typical experiences in early adolescence. When adolescents don't know how to manage their emotions or express themselves, cutting gives them a relief. It will even produce a chemical release in the brain. Obviously, this is an unhealthy coping mechanism. They are in need of treatment to learn healthy ways to manage and express their feelings.

Distraction and the Feeling of Control

When people cut or hurt themselves, they are attempting to distract themselves from the intense pain and feelings. She is suffering and looking for relief. It is a way for her to get her mind off of it. The cutting also gives her a feeling of control. Life and relationships feel chaotic and unstable. She is looking for an anchor—like Jesus—in which to ground herself. Many self-injurers also suffer with an eating disorder for the same reason. It is something that they can control that offers a distraction.

Suicide

Self-injury is an elevated cry for help; however, most self-injurers are not suicidal. Since it is a coping mechanism, it is actually an activity that, in a weird way, attempts to

sustain their life, rather than end it. Suicides by self-injurers tend to be accidental. They may have suicidal thoughts, and it should be discussed in therapy, even though self-injury is usually completely different and needs different treatment.

For more valuable information on self-injury and treatment options, check out the book, *Bodily Harm* by Karen Conterio and Wendy Lader, PhD.

Sound Off: Have you had a child or loved one cause self-injury?

Huddle up with your kids and ask, "How do you deal with things when you are hurt emotionally?"

Related Resource: "8 Warning Signs Your Child is Headed for Trouble"

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11 Benefits to Losing as Little as 10 Pounds

Have you given up the battle of the bulge? Do you feel it's not even worth trying any more? Good news!

Losing a measly 10 pounds can have profound effects on your health, sex life and even your pocket book.

Here's a look at how you can gain a lot by losing as little as 10 pounds:

1. Improved intimacy with your spouse. Losing just 10 pounds can improve the desire in and intimacy of your marriage, which is directly impacted by high blood pressure and diabetes. For men, it can help with erectile dysfunction, a problem that affects four out of five men who are overweight.

2. Lower cholesterol. LDL, the bad cholesterol, is affected by carrying too much weight. Losing just 10 lbs. can lower it by more than 10 percent.

3. Lower blood pressure. When you drop just 10 pounds, you can reduce your blood pressure, which in turn protects your heart and kidneys and lessens your chance of a stroke or heart attack.

4. Reduced chance of a heart attack. You automatically reduce your chances up to an astounding 50 percent of suffering a heart attack when you lose even 10 pounds.

5. Reduced chance of developing dementia. Losing 10 pounds cuts back on belly fat, one of the sources of chemicals implicated in dementia. It also reduces the chance of a stroke, another cause of dementia, by reducing cholesterol and blood pressure, each of which are also tied to Alzheimer's disease.

6. Lower chance of sleep apnea. Obesity is one of the prime causes of sleep apnea, which in turn is tied to a host of other health problems. Losing 10 pounds can help you get a good night's sleep and avoid this problem.

7. Less joint pain. A single pound of extra weight adds three times that much pressure on your joints. Ouch! Losing a mere 10 pounds can ease the pressure and reduce your odds of developing osteoarthritis by as much as 50 percent.

8. Lower chance of cancer. With each extra pound, your risk of cancer increases. Likewise, when you lose the weight, your chance of developing an array of cancers goes down.

9. Lower chance of diabetes. Your body becomes less sensitive to insulin the more weight you carry, leading directly to diabetes. Losing just 10 pounds can lower your chances up to 60 percent.

10. Reduced medication dosage. Losing 10 lbs. is often enough to improve your health to the point that your doctor can reduce your prescription, saving you money.

11. Cushion your wallet. If you slash just 100 calories each day—think 18 Cheez-Its—from your diet, you save an average of \$ a year.

BONUS: You'll Feel better!

Weight loss, even 10 pounds, lets your liver recover from the effects of the fat that can clog it. The result is better health and more energy.

Don Colbert, M.D. has been board certified in Family Practice for over 25 years and practices Anti aging and Integrative medicine. He is a New York Times Bestselling author of books such as The Bible Cure Series, What Would Jesus Eat, Deadly Emotions, What You Don't Know May be Killing You, and many more with over 10 million books sold. He is the Medical Director of the Divine Health Wellness Center in Orlando, Florida where he has treated over 50,000 patients. He is also an internationally known expert and prolific speaker on Integrative Medicine.

For the original article, visit .

How to Have a Healthy Argument With Your Spouse

Every day, a man I know makes himself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich to take to work. Every morning he lines up his peanut butter, jelly, bread and a baggie like an assembly line on the kitchen counter.

One day his wife was also making a sandwich to take to work. She took her sandwich and put it in the baggie he had lined up on the counter. He just went totally ballistic. He shrieked, "I can't believe you used my baggie! I had taken it out and laid it over here so I could put my sandwich in it, and you used my baggie!"

She was so mad she took off her wedding rings and left them at home when she went to work.

When I told this story at the Bible study I teach, every man in the room laughed because we could all relate. I certainly can! We all have those moments when our foolish pride makes a mountain out of a molehill.

But it stops being funny if it happens all the time. Or worse, if things get out of control, as they did with professional football player Ray Rice.

Obviously, the objective should be to avoid conflicts when possible, and resolve them biblically when you can't. No marriage is perfect, but knowing how to resolve conflicts in a mature, biblical way is one of the best ways you can build a safe, intimate relationship with your mate.

God has not left us to figure this out for ourselves. The Bible is full of practical wisdom for both preventing and resolving conflicts. Here are a few of the most important ways:

Commit to Deal With Your Conflicts Head On

Obviously, every marriage has conflicts, and if you try to ignore them, they will only continue to build up. A callous develops because of repeated friction. The skin toughens and develops a thick layer to protect your body. If a callous gets too big it will get ripped off, and the bigger it is, the more it hurts when it comes off! It's the same when we ignore friction points between us.

Do Not Escalate the Conflict

Hurtful words are like poison-tipped arrows that have left the archer's bow. Once in the air, they cannot be retrieved. Let go too often and they can destroy a relationship.

No matter how relaxed you are, everyone occasionally gets upset. If your spouse gets rattled, try to stay calm. Don't return fire. Be a thermostat, not a thermometer. If you don't respond in kind, the other person will probably cool off. "If the anger of a ruler rises against you, do not leave your post; for calmness pacifies great offenses" (Eccl. 10:4). Everyone gets upset occasionally. Let your spouse ventilate without you getting rattled too. If you answer humbly and calmly, the conflict may simply disappear.

Do Not Speak Rashly or Recklessly

Our words have consequences that must be considered before we utter them.

A lot of arguments and quarrels escalate because we keep saying those clever, razor-edged zingers that come to mind. Bite your tongue—the Bible calls it "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8).

The old "count to 10" adage is adage for good reason. In the flare of the moment you may say things you come to regret—like our lunch pail cohort. Cool down, and add reason to your

response.

Do Not Complain About the Conflict to Others

When you do have conflicts with each other, try to work through them as a couple. Don't involve others in your quarrels in the heat of the moment. "He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends" (Prov. 17:9).

Later, if the conflict remains unresolved, you may want a family member or counselor to act as a mediator, but not unless and until you both agree you need outside help. However, if there is emotional, psychological or physical abuse, seek immediate professional help.

Do Not Return Injury

"Do not say, 'I will do so to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.'" (Prov. 24:29). It is the ultimate sign of immaturity to keep score. Jesus says to turn the other cheek. If you cannot, and the offense requires redress, look for resolution, not retribution.

Listen Carefully and Ask Questions

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger" (James 1:19).

Listen carefully to what your mate is really trying to say. Many conflicts happen because we didn't really "hear" what they said. Ask lots of questions to understand the "real" problem.

Focus on the problem, not the person.

On a practical level, by asking questions and then listening carefully, you can learn 1) the other person's view of the problem, 2) how the problem makes him/her feel and 3) the intensity of those feelings. Keep the focus on how "I" feel.

What “I” am doing wrong—not your mate.

Let’s say, for example, that you and your spouse ride to work together, but you regularly make your spouse run late. He or she explodes and says, “You’re driving me crazy! Why can’t you just be ready on time?” Here are a few practical ideas to resolve such a problem.

Don’t make “you” statements, like “you are such a procrastinator!” And avoid “why” questions, such as, “Why can’t you just be ready on time?” Focus on the problem, not the person. For example: Don’t say, “You need to stop losing your temper all the time.” Say, “You know, when you lose your temper it really makes me feel tense and uncomfortable.”

From there, restate what you understand the other person to be saying until the underlying issue is clear. For example, the surface issues may be about anger and leaving on time, but after talking through it, you may find that the real problems were about respect and shared responsibility.

Decide How to Resolve the Conflict

Accept your share of the blame, apologize, and ask forgiveness as necessary. “I’m sorry, I can see how I have not been very sensitive. I want to make a commitment right now to be ready on time. How can we solve this problem?”

“Why don’t we set the kitchen timer to go off five minutes before leaving time? That will give you time to brush your teeth and be in the car on time.”

Trust the Lord Will Solve Your Conflicts

Not every conflict will be resolved the way you want. The question is: Could you be wrong? The best approach is to turn to God and ask Him to put the burden of reconciliation on your spouse’s heart, or show you where you have erred.

For the original article, visit .

What You Need to Know About This Severe Flu Season

This year's flu season could be severe, according to the Centers for Disease Control, so we should all do what we can to avoid getting it.

If, however, you fall victim to the flu, it's important to contact your doctor because there are things that can help.

The flu season lasts through April. Dr. Michael Jhung, a medical officer with the CDC's influenza division, said most people who should be vaccinated have not done so.

"We're not even halfway through the flu season," he said. "It's certainly not too late to get vaccinated."

Unfortunately, one of the most virulent strains of the flu, H3N2, is not in this year's flu vaccine. That's because it takes months to manufacture the vaccine, and the H3N2 became widespread after the flu vaccine was already in production and it was too late to include the H3N2 strain.

Nevertheless, there are still other flu strains circulating in America that are covered in the flu vaccine. Doctors estimate the vaccine is about 50 percent effective this flu season.

So the bottom line is: Even if you have gotten your flu shot, you should not enjoy a false sense of security. We should all be extremely vigilant in our efforts to protect ourselves and our loved ones against the flu.

However, if we fail at protecting ourselves against getting the flu, with the advent of highly effective flu anti-viral medications, if you or a loved one gets the flu, call your

doctor immediately. It's important to make that call as soon as possible because in order for the anti-viral medications to work, they must be administered within 48 hours of the development of symptoms.

These anti-virals can be life-saving for people at high-risk for developing fatal complications from the flu include the elderly, young children, and people with chronic medical conditions such as cancer, heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, arthritis and HIV/AIDS.

Clean Your Hands

The best way to prevent getting the flu is to keep your hands clean. Washing hands is the best way to do that, but it's important to wash your hands thoroughly. Use warm water and lather for 20 seconds, or about the time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice.

If you are not able to wash your hands, hand sanitizer is an adequate substitute. Just make sure it contains at least 60 percent alcohol. More is better.

Remember to clean your hands before touching anything that will enter your mouth. That includes all food. Not just meals, but snacks.

Avoid Touching Your Mouth, Nose, Eyes

Furthermore, refrain from putting your uncleansed fingers on your lips or in your mouth, nose and eyes. This is a tough one for those of us who wear contacts and eye makeup. We have to remember to clean our hands before we rub our eyes or the germs on our hands can enter the body.

Beware of Surfaces

Beware of surfaces that are touched by a lot of people, such as door knobs, refrigerator handles and remotes. Germs can live on hard surfaces for up to 72 hours.

By all means, do not share cups, glasses and utensils with other people.

5 Ways to Strengthen Your Defenses

You can strengthen your immunity—your body's ability to fight off infection—by taking some sensible precautions.

1. First, make sure to get plenty of rest. Eight hours or more per night will go a long way to protecting you and your family against sickness this flu season. While we sleep, our bodies repair themselves. Conversely, when we're sleep deprived, our resistance is low and we are more susceptible to illness.

2. Drink plenty of water. This flushes out any toxins that might wish to remain in our body and keeps our organs functioning properly. Stay away from other types of liquids if possible, such as sugary sodas and fruit juices, caffeine and alcohol, which all hinder good health.

3. Speaking of sweets, stay away from sugar too. Time and again, too much sugar has been proven to weaken the immune system.

4. Reduce stress. Stress also wreaks havoc on your immune system. So make sure to destress by exercising, praying and spending time reading God's Word, as well as practicing all the admonitions not to worry.

5. Finally, get all the vitamins required to stay healthy this winter. Load up on fruits high in anti-oxidants and vitamin C, such as berries.

Better yet, every day eat as many low-glycemic vegetables (not the starchy ones like potatoes and peas) as you can, such as green, leafy ones like kale and broccoli.

Supplements are a great idea because most of us don't get all the vitamins and minerals we need from our diet. Vitamin D, a good multi-vitamin (I take Damage Control Master Formula and love it because it's very comprehensive) fish oil, coconut oil

and a probiotic.

It's worth the time and effort required to prevent getting sick. According to the CDC, last year there were 109 flu-related deaths in kids, and 171 in the 2012-13 season.

The CDC does not compile similar data for flu-related deaths in adults because it's too difficult to trace, as the flu is usually the precursor to a condition that kills.

For instance, many of the deaths from pneumonia actually started with the flu. That said, it's estimated that deaths stemming from the flu number into the tens of thousands each year, mostly among the elderly.

For the original article, visit .

Here's an Overarching Prayer for the Coming Year

Each year I read through a One Year Bible. A decade ago I started drafting a prayer for the coming year, which I write in the front of the Bible I'm using. Those recorded prayers have become a beautiful record of my spiritual journey. Here's what I'm praying for 2015. Please read it as a prayer for both of us:

MY FAITH: That my faith would be simple, without being simplistic; that I would continue to trust in the truth of God's "inspired, flawless" word that "lasts forever" without doubt. That the statements in God's Word about what is true work themselves out in the details of my family. That the mysterious and difficult things I do not and will never

understand would not cause me to doubt what I clearly and plainly can and do understand.

MY MISSION: That I will be more loving, sensitive, gracious and merciful to those whose faith is weak or wavering. That I will be a voice for and to men who are confused, isolated, lonely, afraid, caught up in destructive behaviors, don't feel like their lives matter, don't feel like they have a purpose, lack direction, whose relationships are not healthy, who are caught up in materialism and consumerism, who have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and the glory of God for an idol or idols, who have become lukewarm or apostate or have never known authentic faith. Grant me the words and open their hearts to understand who they are in Jesus.

Thank you for praying. Consider drafting an overarching prayer of your own for 2015. And please join me in reading through the Bible this year. For the glory of Jesus, and no other reason!

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