

10 Strategies for Raising Healthy Kids Most Parents Ignore

My wife, Emily, and I have been discussing the challenges of parenting a lot recently. Some of that discussion has been prompted by her reading *The Price of Privilege* by Madeline Levine.

The book describes how parental pressure and relative affluence are leading adolescents to experience epidemic rates of depression, anxiety disorders and substance abuse. Based on highlights from the reading, here are 10 strategies for raising healthy kids most parents ignore:

1. Prioritize family responsibilities over extracurricular activities. “While demands for outstanding academic or extracurricular performance are very high, expectations about family responsibilities are amazingly low. This kind of imbalance in expectations results in kids who regularly expect others to ‘take up the slack,’ rather than learning themselves how to prioritize tasks or how to manage time.”

2. Eat together as a family. “Families who eat together five or more times a week have kids who are significantly less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana, have higher grade-point averages, less depressive symptoms, and fewer suicide attempts than families who eat together two or fewer times a week.”

3. Let kids begin to solve their own problems. “Certainly there are times when children, particularly young children, need parental intervention. But these times are fewer than we think, and the goal should always be to help the child learn about how to act on his own behalf.”

4. Let kids fail when the consequences are small. “By allowing them to get occasionally bruised in childhood we are helping to make certain that they don’t get broken in adolescence. And by allowing them their failures in adolescence, we are helping to lay the groundwork for success in adulthood.”

5. Don’t reward kids for their performance. “Never bribe children to learn; it sets the stage for them to depend on rewards of one kind or another to learn. This sets them up to be good performers and poor learners.”

6. Allow kids to experience consequences for their actions. “When we mitigate natural consequences for our kids we deprive them of one of life’s most important lessons: that we are held accountable for our actions.”

7. Don’t become a kid-centric family. “Mothers and fathers spend whole weekends for months on end shuttling their children to athletic events, ignoring the fact that friendships and marriage suffer under the barrage of child-centered activities.”

8. Set boundaries, and use appropriate discipline. “Various studies have found that firm parental control is associated with children who can take care of themselves, who are academically successful, who are emotionally well developed, and who are happier.”

9. Be real and be vulnerable. “One of the reasons that life in an affluent community can feel so lonely is because affluent people have the resources to buy their way out of many types of trouble and are reluctant to turn to neighbors for fear of being rejected or humiliated.”

10. Make healthy marriage a priority. “The best gift you can give your children is a good marriage.”

I’ve only skimmed the surface of the rich content of this book. It’ll really stretch how you approach parenting.

Specifically for student pastors and senior pastors, I hope you'll read this book. It'll open your eyes to the real issues that real students and parents are facing in many of your communities.

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