

Raising Children and Teens to be their Best Selves

Proven Ideas for Busy Parents

By

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Brain-Compatible Parenting™

The Essence of Genius

Thirteen year-old Lucy sees a gaunt, rail-thin woman in her favorite fashion magazine and thinks, "How cool! I really, really want to look like her." She cuts out the photo, and others like them and posts them all on her corkboard to look at it every day.

Down the street, Amanda, also 13, thumbs through the same magazine. Her eyes rest on the same gaunt, rail-thin model and she thinks "Yuck, how horrible! Pathetic. I would never want to be that unhealthy—ever!" She quickly finishes the magazine and gets back to her poetry writing—something she does for fun. She's discovered she's good at it—and she loves it.

Bobby's mom just called for him—for the fifth time, but he hasn't heard any of them. He's so immersed in the video game he's playing that he's blocked out everything else. His mom has to tap him on the shoulder and physically turn him around to face her to get him to stop and listen to her. "I made your favorite—spaghetti and meatballs—and garlic bread—take a whiff, you can smell it clear upstairs here. The bread just came out of the oven." Bobby isn't paying attention; he's already back to the game. She has to coax him to stop, promising him more time to play after dinner, against her instincts. It's a major hassle. But he knows she won't leave without him, so he finally tears himself away and follows her downstairs cussing loudly all the way. After dinner, Bobby, age 12, rushes back for another three hours of video game playing before his dad has to make him stop by pulling the plug and taking the system out of his bedroom. It's way past Bobby's bedtime and it's a school night.

Across the cul-de-sac, Bobby's neighbor, Alex, also 12, plays his favorite video game. His mom has just called him for dinner. "Down in a minute," he yells. "Drats, I was just getting to the next level," he complains to himself. In a less than three minutes Alex has made a decision to stop playing and go down for dinner. Why? The alluring aromas of meatloaf and biscuits filling the air made him suddenly realize that he was very hungry. After dinner, Alex went back for a half hour of playing the game and then he quit. He was done for the night. Feeling an urgent need to move, Alex went out in the driveway and shot some hoops until dark. He came in, had a snack and read for a while until bedtime—the new science fiction novel he had started was just getting good. His parents had to remind lights out or he would have read late into the night.

Beth and Anne saw the car approach and weren't prepared for the swaggering seniors that jumped out. As freshmen, Beth and Anne had seen these guys in the halls between classes—a rough-looking pair, with a reputation for trouble. Still...they were kinda cute. And they seemed



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friendly enough. “How about a ride, ladies?” “Where to?” the girls giggled the question. They were both fun loving girls, always ready for an adventure. “Oh just around here and there. Want to party?” the guy with the curly long hair asked. Beth and Anne looked at each other. Now here was a major opportunity. Wait until Carrie and Sarah heard about *this!* “Well, we don’t have all day,” Dave the one in the tight jeans and leather jacket urged them, “Make up your pretty minds. We have places to go, people to see.” Anne was the first to respond, “Thanks, I’ll pass. I need the exercise anyway and we were just on our way to the library—it’s just a block away.” Beth wild-eyed her and mouthed, “How *could* you?” Abruptly, she turned away from Anne and opened the car door. “I’m game,” she said, and jumped in. Anne sighed, staring at Beth’s head in the back seat as Dave gunned the car down the street.

In these three examples, who has the most smarts? Obviously, Amanda, Alex, and Anne hands-down, wouldn’t you say?

Yet, these kinds of smarts aren’t measured by an IQ test or listed on an academic transcript. Rather these smarts reflect a deep self-understanding that allows for sound decision-making. These smarts consist of emotional security, along with internal motivation for *naturally* making the best decision. These three kids were self-regulated appropriately for their developmental age, meaning they could control themselves—their parents didn’t have to do it for them. These are three smarts that your child’s very life depends upon:

- Self-Understanding
- Emotional Security
- Self-Regulation

And they are the essence of genius. Put another way: The essence of genius is the ability to make decisions from a source within oneself with clarity about one’s self-identity, skills, talents, and values. The essence of genius is really the foundation for a fulfilling life. The essence of genius means your child is becoming his/her best self.

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FYI: Focus Your Intent

So how do parents raise an Amanda, an Alex, or an Anne? Do moms and dads even have that much influence? Absolutely they do. I have helped thousands of parents get their kids back to the essence of their genius with Brain-Compatible Parenting™.

It's important to understand that it's not one thing that will build your child's strong sense of identity or ability to control him or herself. Rather it's many things, countless daily decisions that add up over time to form the essence of genius within your child. And it all begins with understanding Brain-Compatible Parenting™.

Brain Compatible Parenting™ means you make your parenting decisions with your child's brain in mind. And then...Your child grows to make the best decisions for him/herself—eventually, not always, of course. But what starts happening over time is that the child's cerebral cortex—the thinking function grows to be in control of the brain. Human adults must have brains that are cerebral dominant in order to be good decision makers. During the 18 years of development from birth to young adulthood, moms and dads are the managers of their children's brains—it has to be that way, since young brains are fragile, vulnerable, and not ready to be on their own. Brain-Compatible Parenting™ increases the likelihood that your child's brain will mature into a brain with the cerebral cortex in charge. Self-understanding, emotional security and self-regulation are by-products of cerebral dominance. Yeah!

Brain-Compatible Parenting™ is a rewarding approach for another reason, too. The brain connects directly to the heart emotions—or you could say the heart connects directly to the brain—whichever you prefer. Works both ways. When you use Brain-Compatible Parenting™ techniques you automatically help your kids grow in kindness, caring, empathy, and compassion. Neat, huh?

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And there are more benefits as well...

With Brain-Compatible Parenting™ your children will be mindful, self-aware, and deeply involved in a rich interior life. Attention span increases, along with the ability to concentrate and problem-solve. This further helps learning and all those traditional school smarts. And we could make a



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good argument for mindfulness being the center of the essence of genius, so here we are back where we started—completing a full circle development for healthy, emotionally sound, wise human beings—what parents wouldn't be thrilled to rear such individuals?

And there is even one more tremendous advantage of Brain-Compatible Parenting™:

You, your children—your entire family will be much less stressed. For instance, you will see more cooperative behavior and less melt-down and tantrums. This means more relaxed parents and kids. In addition, your children will experience less anxiety because they will be learning self-calming skills as you intentionally grow their brains. It's a match made in heaven: Brain-Compatible Parenting™ and Relaxation!

Do you know the significant dangers of stress? The American Academy of Pediatrics compiled an interesting [policy](#) statement about what these esteemed doctors refer to as, "Toxic Stress." Ugh—sounds like a bio-hazard. And it probably is. The adjective "toxic" before stress surely underlines the extreme negative consequences on young brains/minds and bodies.

So to recap:

Brain-Compatible Parenting™ delivers:

- A way your child can tap into the essence of genius: self-understanding, emotional security, and self-regulation.
- A way for you to know that you are meeting your child's cognitive and emotional/social needs in your daily parenting decisions.
- A way for your child to grow his/her kindness, caring, empathy, and compassion.
- A way for your child to develop attentive awareness and mindfulness.
- A way for your family to reduce stress and relax, have fun, free of anxiety and worries.

That's a lot! And it's all true.

Brain-Compatible Parenting™ is straightforward to implement. There's one catch, though—yes, only one.

You must be willing to **Focus Your Intent** on Brain-Compatible Parenting™ each and every day. When you FYI daily parenting decisions start to cluster around what's best for children's cognitive, emotional/social development. Then Brain-Compatible Parenting™ works like magic.

Ask this question each morning before you get out of bed: "How can I grow my child's brain today?" And your child's brain will do the rest.



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Keep your awareness on the basic question:
“How can I grow my child’s brain today?”

Follow These Simple Steps

1. **Read Through the 36 Ideas.**

These are not *just* ideas—these are *proven* ideas—meaning that a lot of time and research went into understanding why they work so well. I have given you a reference list at the end. You are welcome to read and study these books—but that’s not necessary. I did all that work for you.

Trust me: These ideas work.

2. **Note Which Ideas You Already Put Into Action.**

Keep doing these!

3. **Note One New Idea You Will Begin.**

Begin doing this and focus on it for one month. You don’t have to do it every day, just focus on it and think about it. Keep this one new idea at your level of awareness and when moved to, do it! Implement it when it is easy to do so; when it feels right. Thirty days like this, and this ONE NEW IDEA will begin to come naturally to you.

4. **Congratulate Yourself for Adding a New Brain-Compatible Parenting™ Idea**

This self-congratulatory pause is very important. Affirm yourself for your dedication and tenacity. At the PCI we often remind parents, “What you invest your time and attention in, will grow.” Guaranteed. By investing your life energy into one Brain-Compatible Parenting™ technique you can rest assuredly in your bed at night that you are giving your child every opportunity to discover his/her essence of genius.

5. **Repeat Steps 3 and 4.**

OK. Now choose another idea that calls to you and focus on it for another 30 days. Then, remember to congratulate yourself. Continue until all are addressed in your family day-to-day living. It might take a year. Or even two years. Who cares how long it takes? The important thing is that each month you pro-actively engage more ways to grow your child’s brain. Exciting.



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At the PCI we often remind parents, “What you invest your time and attention in, will grow. Guaranteed.”

So now, what are you observing?

- Your child gaining in confidence? Becoming more spontaneously cooperative?
- Your child discovering and using new talents? Loving his/her creativity?
- Your child choosing on his/her own not to play that video game or spend hours watching TV?
- Is that your child playing more and getting more physical exercise?
- Did you just not recognize your son because he was so polite to your guest? Did your daughter blow you away with the way she aced that test?
- Are the kids more relaxed? If your family less stressed?
- Do you have more time on your hands because you no longer need to nag, cajole, or control?
- Is everyone happier?

Dear Moms and Dads,

Observe carefully all the positive changes you are going to see happen with Brain-Compatible Parenting™. You will be amazed, pleased, and I hope, proud of yourself. You earned it!



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3 Dozen Proven Ideas for Growing Smart, Caring, Mindful Children and Teens

Let's Begin with the Physical...

1 Make sure your child drinks enough water. The brain needs water to function properly. A glass of water during homework, before a test, and while studying goes a long way to help memory stay awake and concepts retained. Plenty of water has the tedious by-product of trips to the bathroom, but it is well worth the effort. Every book I have read on optimal brain use stress the brain's needs for water and glucose.

2 Decrease (or totally eliminate) refined sugar from your child's or teen's diet and increase foods (vegetables and fruits) with complex carbohydrates, lean proteins and foods rich in essential fatty acids. The brain is a "glucose hog," that's for sure and needs carbohydrates. But the carbohydrates must be complex and balanced with proteins and the right fats for the brain to function optimally.

3 Children and teens of any age need plenty of movement, exercise, stretching, and active participation in the natural, sensory world—not only for the health of their bodies, but for their brains as well. Strenuous activity supports blood flow to the brain. In her ground breaking book *Smart Moves*, Carla Hannaford explains how autistic children made better progress in their speech development when they did exercises that stretched out their calf muscles. Our human stress response elicits the "tendon guard reflex," which shortens the calf muscles. When calf muscles work properly, so does neural activity. In turn, that means the brain functions better. To do their best, brains of all ages need bodies that move.

4 Sleep well and long. Babies, children, and teens need sleep for their brains to develop well. Often we think of sleep-deprivation as affecting the body's response mechanism and it does. But we must also understand that the cumulative effect of inadequate sleep can lead to learning and memory problems, as well as anxiety—affecting areas of the brain that balance hormones and support coherence in learning.

To do their best, brains need bodies that move.

To Improve Your Child's Cognitive Abilities...



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5

Use it or lose it. Mental exercise triggers brain activities, strengthening connections between synapses and actually building new connections. Providing mental challenges for your child or teen need not be stressful. Learning something new, like a foreign language or a musical instrument can be a journey into self-discovery. Refining skills such as learning more complex chess moves gives children an opportunity to develop new levels of competence. A mental challenge each day keeps your child's brain thriving.

6

Boredom, anxiety, and confusion are trouble for enhancing learning abilities. We get bored when we are not challenged enough, and we get confused when confronted with too many things that are beyond our present capacities. Anxiety appears with either. Keeping our kids mentally involved without overwhelming them is key. Asking questions from our own curiosity will spark their curiosity to pursue something of interest to them. Then, they are more likely to stay healthily engaged in the new learning, persevering through mental challenges without boredom, anxiety, or confusion.

7

Help your child see the meaning, sense, or purpose in a homework assignment, your directions, or advice. Since the brain enjoys and is built for meaning-making, you are enabling curiosity and intrinsic motivation for learning when you emphasize the meaning behind any actions or ideas. This builds a child's understanding of him or herself as a learner. A child who is used to seeking and understanding meaning grows confident in his/her learning abilities.

8

Many children and teens know how to read, but choose not to. The lure of video games or constant texting friends means less or no time for reading. Eventually, their love for reading withers. Begin a habit in your family to talk about why you love reading. Comb the Internet to find reasons authors, scientists, artists, and dancers love reading. Discuss these with your kids to draw out what they love about reading, while reinforcing their love of reading at the same time. Here's a quote you can begin with from essayist Curtis White: "Over the last thirty-five years there has never been a moment when I...was not reading one to five books at a time. Reading is an expression of...curiosity. Reading is a part of our desire for experience, a desire to know the world, to internalize the world, to prepare to judge the world, and even to be able to participate in the future construction of the world. With respect to art and intellect, it's not so much that one is afraid of dying but that one is afraid of dying empty."

Begin a habit in your family
to talk about why you love reading.



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9

Listening is often a forgotten skill. Yet listening to conversations and to books read aloud is a sure-fire way to light up your child's dendrites for all aspects of language development including, spelling, reading, and writing. Turn off the DVD in the car or van and turn on an audio book—much better for developing comprehension, high-level thinking skills, and imagination. You will see a change in behaviors, too. Listening to stories calms the restless body/mind.

10

When we focus our attention in specific ways, we activate the brain, strengthening synapses in that particular area of focus. For instance, when children think about their own thinking, (often called metacognition), areas of the prefrontal cortex are stimulated which refer to self-observation. The more children and teens reflect upon their own learning processes, the more their brains help them out by making it easier for them to do so. The pre-frontal cortex enables self-awareness, self-understanding and self-knowledge while learning. It's much easier to learn when you know why you are learning, how you are learning and what makes the learning easier or more difficult for you. Ask your child often: How do you know that?

11

Be cautious when using video games as a means of learning for youngsters. Young children have not developed cerebral dominance so the cerebral cortex is not "in charge" of their brains. Children under the age of 11-12 are much more vulnerable to the stimulus-response of video games because an undeveloped cortex cannot protect well from potential addiction. Video game play, then, becomes less about cognition and more about addiction. Clark and Scott in their book, *Game Addiction: The Experience and the Effect*, state: "Human beings get tripped up because video games provide draws that most people don't know how to balance." Even adults, with mature cortices have a hard time keeping video game play from taking over their lives. Imagine how difficult it is for children to learn how to stay in control of their video game use.

12

What is demonstrated is learned when the learner's brain meshes with the demonstration. Your child is learning whenever he or she is actively observing and thinking about what is demonstrated. A student watching a bored teacher reluctantly teaching, learns that this subject matter is boring, or at the least, not worthy. What is your child's school demonstrating to your child or teen on a daily basis? What are you demonstrating? That's what s/he is learning.

13

Help your child to think out of the box. Abraham Maslow pointed out that the one who has a hammer treats the whole world as if it were a nail. Children may take a hammer and do different things with it—such as dig with it, sculpt with it, or weigh down papers with it, points out Bob Samples in his inspiring book *The Metaphoric Mind*. Encouraging imaginative thought processes helps children build inventive qualities and capacities.



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A child or teen in touch with his/her uniqueness is much less likely to become a mindless conformer.

14

Keep tests in perspective. Research has demonstrated consistently that emphasis on standardized testing oversimplifies what is taught and severely constricts what is learned. Even if your school doesn't do this, help your child see that test results are a tiny slice of what s/he actually knows. Encourage your child or teen to develop interests, talents, and skills that support his/her autonomy and competence. A confident learner knows how to separate test results from the love and the results of learning. (And will more likely to do better on the test, next time!)

Nurture Your Child's Emotional Well-Being

15

Consider your toddler's or young child's undesirable emotional behavior as his/her need to understand body movements in time and space. Your child's acting out emotionally may be caused by inadequate kinesthetic feedback. A child who isn't moving enough does not know how to assess appropriate behaviors for him or herself. For instance a youngster who is not cued in through brain/mind feedback to stop movements will constantly be crashing into people and things and be accused of hurting because he squeezes too hard and will frequently damage objects. He doesn't mean to do this. It means that his motor control needs more practice in appropriate uses and he needs regular positive feedback for when he manages to control himself. When he gets this feedback regularly, his emotions will calm down and his behaviors will become more appropriate.

16

Young children who engage in imaginative play regularly tend to be less depressed than youngsters who don't. Research shows that youngsters tend toward depression when they don't use their generative imaginations in creative play. Encourage lots of imaginative play with props around the house, such as puppets, dolls, building blocks—toys that will allow your child's imagination to roam free.

17

Calm fears by recalling to your child's attention how s/he coped in the past. Since children are less likely to interpret unsettling present situations by remembering reassuring past experience—and this can be true of teens, as well, especially when they are overly distraught—soothe them with a story from the past on how they conquered that fear in the past. By amplifying the strengths they used and the determination they displayed, you remind them of what will work now to assuage their anxiety. Eventually, they will learn to do this on their own.



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18

Make time each day to authentically connect with your child, so your child/teen feels safe, loved, and known. The brain's emotional center needs the resonant connection with a caring adult to feel belonging and to grow into self-understanding and awareness. In addition, parental expression of love models healthy intimacy. Children learn to love and to be vulnerable in relationships through practicing in the safety of their parents' unconditional love.

19

Remember, screen machines such as TV, computers and cell phones are not people and cannot meet children's emotional needs. Dr. Jane Healy points out, "Screen time and electronic toys and gadgets not only detract from the development of interactive human language and social skills, but...also...there is no way in which such mechanisms can give each child a personal, emotionally, and cognitively custom-tailored response that is directed specifically at his or her level of ability and need. Yet, it is clear...that (young) human brains...need this sort of contingent, face-to-face adult responsiveness." When tempted to use TV, an iPad®, or a cell phone to keep your child quiet and safe while you get work done around the house, ask yourself, "Is there a way I can engage my child in this activity with me?" Or "Is there a way my child can be with me in the same room helping me in some way?" When you make your relationship time with your child the priority, you will have clarity about how to reduce his/her time with screen machines.

**Remember, screen machines are not people.
They cannot meet children's emotional needs.**

20

Nurture the prefrontal cortex—that's the part of the brain behind the forehead that grows slowly and steadily throughout childhood and adolescence, not reaching maturity until the early 20's. The frontal lobe, while the seat of our higher level thinking, will, and self-determination, also acts as the "turn-off switch" for impetuous actions. When your child spends time in play activities with others in the 3-D world, the prefrontal cortex is stimulated appropriately to grow well. 2-D screens, however, have the opposite effect. A study by the World Federation of Neurology expressed great concern over the way in which visual electronic media are affecting children by "...halting the process of frontal lobe development and affecting their ability to control potentially antisocial elements of their behavior...the implications are very serious." Children and teens must spend more time in the 3-D natural world than in the 2-D screen world.

21

Give your child the healthy emotional habit of positive thought. If you help your child reframe negative or potentially negative situations in a more positive frame, and if you do that consistently each day for over a month, chances are your child will begin to do this on his/her own. Learning a new habit usually involves a lot of orchestration of different parts



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of the brain, as they work hard to get all in sync—sort of like learning to ride a bike or drive a car. If you think back, it took time to get all the “piece parts” in place. Harmonious interaction of hand, eye, and foot, after all, takes practice. With enough intentional repetition, the actions become second nature. This is also true of new cognitive behaviors, as well. Give your child time to repeat and practice learning the newly acquired positive focus (or any new skill), consistently address the new learning for a specific period of time (at least 21 days) and don't try to get your child or teen to learn a bunch of new habits at the same time. If s/he learns one well each month—that's 12 new healthy habits each year. Start with the habit of positive thought—that will give a strong foundation for other healthy habits.

Increase Your Child's Social IQ...

22

Help children think about how others think about the world. There are specific areas of the brain used when adults think about others' thoughts. Recent research shows that these areas may be developing as early as age four. As children grow they come to understand that others' thoughts are representations of the world that may or may not match the way the world actually is. Through conversations with parents and other caring adults, children and teens grow to learn how to discern the differences between reality and what others may be thinking, and are less likely to make quick judgments and wrong assumptions about what others are thinking—essential skills to become socially competent.

23

Discuss what's fair and be prepared for different views depending upon the age of your child. Children and teens run into problems with their peers when they feel they are not being treated “fairly.” If you have more than one child, you know the sibling squabbles that occur over who's right and who has more. When the “No Fair” alarm sounds in your house it can be helpful to know that what we consider “fair” changes as we age. Young children like all things to be equal, but older children and adolescents are more likely to consider merit. The move to the more merit-based “meritocratic” view occurs largely between fifth and seventh grade, with seniors placing the most importance on achievement. This transition likely results both from changes in the brain as it develops, and from exposure to new social experiences as we age. When parents talk with their children/teens to learn what they consider fair and define what fairness means to them, the kids form a more accepting attitude of different ways of being “fair.” This goes a long way to help them in accepting variances in their peer group and helps them to control their impulses to persist in making sure all is fair—as they perceive it.

24

Give your child explicit instructions in socially acceptable behaviors. Remember above I mentioned that children learn through demonstration? (#12) You can help children and teens in the safe harbor of your home learn social skills necessary at school such as how to make a request, how to be courteous by saying please and thank you, or how to initiate and close a conversation in a respectful manner. It may seem awkward at first. But role-playing



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different scenarios can be fun and rewarding as you see your child gain social competence and confidence.

25

Teach cooperation through healthy competition. Competitive sports and family games provide excellent opportunities for your child to learn the value of good sportsmanship and a greater understanding of how to cooperate as team member for the good of the whole. Household chores and responsibilities, such as cleaning, taking out the garbage, and walking the dog can be discussed as a way for your child or teen to contribute to the well-being of the group. When children learn to cooperate in such a way, they feel connected to the larger whole and know they belong to something bigger than they are. This is extremely important for growing a social consciousness and for understanding that their individual contribution matters.

26

Respond quickly to any distress with peers at school, especially when your child is transitioning to a new school or situation. Your child's brain, not being fully functional until age 23, cannot respond appropriately. Your speedy intervention may mean the difference between school success or failure. Research demonstrates that learning social skills contributes to successful school transition and to later academic success.

Respond quickly to any distress with peers at school.

27

Keep your family traditions, customs, and rituals alive. These allow family members to resonate with each other's internal states. Researchers have discovered a mirror neuron system located at various cortical regions of the brain that enable us to represent intentional states of others—we actually feel with the others we are with. This phenomenon is called resonance. By attuning with the emotional states of another, we feel felt by that person. In family activities such as a traditional holiday meal, each person "resonates" with the others in a deep way because of the important meaning they all place on and share together in the common ritual. Children who grow up with such experiences are much more likely to have an autonomous sense of self, while at the same time know how to respond to others in a variety of social settings. They have experienced attunement with others in their families. This has met their emotional need for belonging, so they can relax in the company of others. And, they have less of a need to prove themselves, act out, or pick a fight to get attention.

28

Help your child become more aware of his/her intentions. You've probably had the experience of listening to a person at a meeting and detecting insincerity in what he or she was saying. By contrast when you listen to someone speak "from their heart" there is a marked difference in how that person is perceived and received. When we focus deeply on our intention when we speak to others, they resonate with us on a deeper level. Researcher Daniel



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Siegel writes, “As we become aware of our intentions, the mind creates a representation of that intentional state that is not just a feeling, but it is sensed as an activity of the mind itself.” Parents can ask children and teens questions such as, “What is your purpose in saying_____?” “What would you like to accomplish in this conversation?” “What do you intend to do with it?” “Have you thought about how to say this sincerely?” Youngsters and teens won’t naturally understand how to access *their* intentions without *our* intentional intervention.

Cultivate Your Child’s Spiritual Life...

29

Studies have shown that a simple gratitude practice can decrease stress and increase energy, enthusiasm, well-being, and sense of meaning. Children at any age can be taught to “count their blessings.” Help your child focus on appreciating the good in his/her life. You can do this informally as a matter of course during a busy day or with more intentional time discussing a family gratitude practice during a family meeting. Your child will be more relaxed and tuned in to what’s important when you do.

30

When you grow your child’s thinking function, you also support his/her higher-level emotional development such as compassion, empathy, and generosity. There is a distinct connection between the frontal lobe and the limbic system that governs these emotions, while anger, hate, fear etc. are functions of the lower brain area. Reasoning skills such as analysis, predicting outcomes, and understanding cause and effect support the growth of the higher-level emotions, which are actually choices. So when you sit down to help your child/teen with his/her homework, you are also enabling wisdom and generosity within his/her brain. Nice thought, don’t you think?

31

Consider meditation training for your child, especially if experiencing attention difficulties. A growing body of research indicates that meditation supports attention for learning, focus, and overall well-being of body and mind. If your family’s spiritual practice does not include meditation, you may want to begin with a few classes or have your older children and teens do some research on the subject. Then decide how to incorporate a family meditation practice into your schedules.

32

Thinking and talking about God helps our brains grow. Andrew Newberg, MD and Mark Waldman in their interesting book, *How God Changes Your Brain* enthusiastically ask, “So what does neuroplasticity have to do with God? Everything, for if you contemplate something as complex or mysterious as God you’re going to have incredible bursts of neural activity firing in different parts of your brain. New dendrites will rapidly grow and old associations will disconnect as new imaginative perspectives emerge. In essence, when you think about the really big questions in life—be they religious, scientific, or psychological—your brain is



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going to grow.” Make the “big questions” part of regular family conversation and watch your child’s mind expand in the process.

33

Help your child or teen to consciously reduce stress through slow breathing and holy word repetition. This doesn’t require as much time or practice as meditation, but it can be very effective for centering and reducing stress. Dozens of studies demonstrate that we can consciously reduce stress throughout our bodies by breathing slowly and repeating words or phrases that provide a sense of comfort such as God, om, or peace. Children and teens who experience stressful situations develop better resilience and coping skills when doing this practice on a regular basis.

Thinking and talking about God helps our brains grow.

34

Help your child/teen develop a routine of prayer or quiet reflection. A conscious connection to a spiritual idea shifts the brain to use more of the frontal lobe, the area that supports the development of compassion and empathy. In addition, your child exercises his/her anterior cingulate, the area that connects our emotions with cognitive skills. It also integrates activities of different parts of the brain in a way that allows for self-consciousness to emerge, especially as it applies to how we see ourselves in relation to the world.

35

Encourage your child to express empathy and caring more often. When we verbally express our concern and compassion, it reinforces those neural pathways in the brain, developing those capacities on deeper levels. “Talking kind” makes us kinder.

And, of course, Every Step of the Way....

36

Teach your child about the wonder, fragility, and power of the human brain.

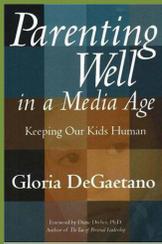
Good Luck. Have fun and thanks for reading!



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INFORMATION

Read the Book



Gloria explains the essential Vital Five human needs—for children, and parents, too. With a focused chapter on each of the five and tons of practical activities, Brain-Compatible Parenting™ has never been easier. Read more [here](#).

About the Author

Gloria DeGaetano, educator and writer, founded the non-profit organization, the Parent Coaching Institute and developed the highly acclaimed training program for Parent Coach Certification® worldwide. (www.ThePCI.org) Gloria and her associates help you solve your parenting problems with innovative processes and researched-based best practices. Over a successful 30-year career, Gloria has experience as a classroom teacher, school district administrator, university instructor, parenting consultant, and parent coach. She has helped thousands of moms and dads rediscover their groove when blown off course by the countless challenges in our high-tech world.

Gloria's best-selling books include *Screen Smarts*, *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill* (with Lt. Col. Dave Grossman) and *Parenting Well in a Media Age* which received the 2007 i-Parenting Award.

Gloria is a renowned speaker as well. Her audiences consistently rate her as one of the best and most entertaining and practical speakers they have ever heard. For information on how to book Gloria for a keynote or training, please go to GloriaDeGaetano.com.

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