

Raising Happy- and Moral- Children

Richard Weissbourd

Key Moral Capacities

1. Moral Literacy

What We Focus on Too Little:

2. Moral Identity: Moral Motivation/Moral dispositions
3. Moral Awareness/Circle of Concern
4. Managing Destructive Emotions
5. Moral Reasoning
6. Social and Emotional Skills that are Key to Moral Functioning
7. The Strength and Maturity of the Self

Promoting Morality and Well-Being

1. Rather than telling our children the most important thing is their happiness, tell them the most important thing is their kindness (The novelist Henry James said that “Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind.”)

Morality and Well-Being *(Continued)*

2. Be aware of the subtle ways that we may be placing our children's happiness over their caring about others. For example, don't let children simply write off kids they find annoying, remind them to give other kids credit for their achievements, help them tune in to other kids' emotional states.

Maturity as the Focus

The primary goal of parenting and teaching should not be our children's happiness or self-esteem but their maturity and their morality.

Maturity includes the ability to balance and coordinate our needs with others, to take a third person perspective, to be reflective and self-critical, to receive feedback constructively, to change our behavior based on our own and others' assessments and to manage destructive feelings.

For More information on Parenting Strategies that Promote Caring

Making Caring Common:

www.gse.harvard.edu/mcc