

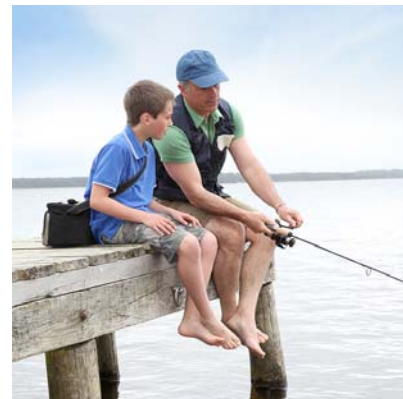
The Parent's Notebook

ARE YOU GOING TO DISNEY WORLD?

It has been astonishing to me over the years how many times parents take on the challenges and responsibilities of parenting without being completely clear about what they are trying to accomplish. If one asks these well-meaning individuals what their goals are, they will say things like, “To raise responsible adults,” or “I want my child to be happy and successful.” Raising children without having the specific end goals in mind is like setting off on a trip to Disney World without a road map or any clear idea of how to get there. You are going to get lost!

The goals of parenting are rather clear and few, although not always easy to accomplish. Parenting is essentially a teaching enterprise, and so the goals include teaching your children what is right and wrong, equipping them with the skills they will need as adults and instructing them on how to use resources to find out anything you didn't cover, and to never stop learning. Let's take each of these in turn.

- **Teaching the difference between right and wrong:** Parents are the most important influence in the moral development of their children, especially in the early years. Respecting authority, honoring others' property rights, having a strong work ethic, telling the truth, taking personal responsibility for choices, etc. are clear examples. Parents must not only teach and explain these standards, but must also model and demonstrate these in their actions and lifestyle. In other words, parents should practice what they preach.
- **Teaching children life skills so they can be independent and self-reliant:** Instructing children in a wide range of skills, such as how to make a bed, prepare a meal, complete homework independently, manage money, apply for a job, maintain a car, etc., are skills that also have to be actively taught and demonstrated. Having children help out around the house and assist parents in household chores and errands are excellent ways to accomplish this. Parents should avoid doing tasks for children they can do for themselves. Parents will not always be there to do things for them.
- **Teaching them how to find answers, solve problems and continue learning:** Parents should not only provide their children with excellent educational opportunities, but they should also expose them to experiences and real life situations that require research and problem-solving. A few suggestions include taking them to the library and museums, exposing them to camping and fishing, assisting them in developing athletic or artistic abilities and participating in extracurricular activities, attending concerts, and taking field trips. Encouraging reading and Internet research as leisure activities from an early age should also assist in developing practical problem-solving and ongoing learning.



Parenting is a full-time responsibility best not left in the hands of others. While not always easy and at times downright challenging, the results can be extremely rewarding.

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