

The 10 Building Blocks for a Happy Family

by Jim Burns, Ph.D.

Most parents are doing a good job of parenting – but don't realize it. All parents should understand that there are no perfect families. I know for sure that mine isn't! Likewise, there is no perfect parenting method. Still, my wife Cathy and I have settled on what we believe to be the ten essential ingredients for building and maintaining a happy family. Here they are presented in an “overview” form. For a more in-depth look at these issues, you may find my book (by the same name) helpful!

1. **Be there for your kids.** Your children regard your presence as a sign of caring and connectedness (even when they don't seem to do so!) Presence provides kids with a greater sense of security than almost any other quality parents can offer.
2. **Express affection, warmth and encouragement.** Families with a sense of A.W.E. – as opposed to shame-based parenting – is a home where children and spouses will feel more secure.
3. **Build healthy morals and values.** The decisions kids make today will often affect them for the rest of their lives. Parents have significant powers of influence – through modeling and teaching – over the morals and values their kids carry into adulthood!
4. **Discipline with consistency.** Clearly expressed expectations and consistent follow-through produce responsible kids. Make your goal of discipline one of teaching kids responsibility not evoking obedience.
5. **Ruthlessly eliminate stress.** The unbalanced life will not be kind to the areas we neglect. Parents must make the difficult decisions of reducing the effect of our culture's breathless pace on their family.
6. **Communication is key.** Positive communication is the language of love for our children. Parents must take the initiative to set the tone for family communication – which includes the important skill of listening.
7. **Play is necessary for a close-knit family.** There is nothing like play to bring about family togetherness and communication. Play builds family memories, reduces family stress and produces support and affirmation.
8. **Love your spouse.** A loving marriage brings hope and security to your children. At times, this means putting your spouse's needs ahead of your children's needs.

9. Let your life reflect the understanding that the best things in life are not things. Healthy stewardship and financial decisions produce positive family priorities.

10. Energize your family's spiritual growth. Your greatest calling in life is to leave a spiritual legacy for your children. Pay close attention to your own spiritual health and model a healthy spirituality for your family.

(Excerpted from the book [*The 10 Building Blocks of a Happy Family*](#) by Jim Burns, Ph.D.)