

10 Tips for Raising G-Rated Kids in an X-Rated World

By Doug Fields and Jim Burns

Raising kids in today's culture is not easy. There's no question that the way we parent is influenced by the world we live in. And what a world it is! We need to help our children deal with drugs, sexuality, movies, television, video games, the Internet, terrorism and war. It's our goal as parents to raise our kids in this X-rated culture to become G-rated people. It can feel overwhelming trying to give our teenagers the tools they need to make godly decisions in an ungodly world. Recently, I had the privilege of talking with youth ministry expert Doug Fields for a two-part broadcast on *HomeWord with Jim Burns*. Doug shared insights into 10 action steps that parents can take to raise healthy kids in today's culture.

1. Instill belief in them.

The beliefs and values your children will carry into adulthood are very dependent on the examples they see parents setting at home. It's critical to understand and believe that as a parent, your actions, values and beliefs will have the greatest influence in the life of your maturing child. Parental influence is a high calling. It's part of your destiny and your enduring legacy, for better or for worse.

2. Be present in your kids' lives.

Presence in a kid's life is spelled T-I-M-E. One of the major contributing factors for healthy kids points back to parents who were present in those kids' lives. Some parents subscribe to the theory that quality time beats quantity time. These parents are simply wrong. Parents must prioritize and reorganize their schedules to be present for their kids. When they get older, your kids won't care that you worked more so they could ride in nicer cars or live in a bigger home. They will care about how much time you spent with them!

3. Make memories with them.

Our lives are a museum of memories that contribute to who we are today. That's why it's key to strive to create good memories for our kids. Good kids have good memories. This isn't to say that our kids' lives won't have their share of bad memories. But, on balance, good memories trump bad ones. So, build great family traditions at holidays, birthday celebrations and summer vacations, just to name a few. Make memories for your family by creating new adventures for them. Solidify these memories by being sure to capture them through pictures, video, and in writing through journals or letters.

4. Give them encouragement.

Encouragement is food for our souls and we all long for it. Our kids need encouragement, too. Words are powerful. Words can either build confidence or they can destroy. A

parent's words have lasting effect. Learn to be an encourager. Catch your kids in the act of doing something right, and then take the opportunity to mention it! In addition, be sure to go beyond encouraging for just a job well done. Kids mess up and fail all the time. Find ways to encourage your kids, despite their failures. Encouraging beyond performance means conveying that you love and value your kids even when they mess up.

5. Be positive and caring role models.

You are your children's role model for living life. Be assured that they are watching you. They know what you say and how you say it. They know how you treat people. They know how you respond to conflict. Kids need you to set a positive and caring standard for living life. They need your integrity and they need you to set the pace when it comes to faith. Your kids know that you aren't perfect, so there's no pressure to try to act like it. What your kids need are parents who demonstrate what it means to be a lover and follower of God, despite their shortcomings.

6. Give them discipline and boundaries.

Providing your kids with consistent boundaries and discipline is all about guidance, not punishment. Boundaries and discipline are the result of love. Giving kids too much freedom and not holding them accountable for their actions does not demonstrate love. When disciplining, be delicate. Don't discipline in anger.

7. Give them affection.

Emotionally healthy kids have been given lots of proper affection. Kids who don't get adequate affection from their parents often turn to inappropriate sources of affection. And, there's plenty of inappropriate affection to be found in today's X-rated culture. Unfortunately, kids who have their needs for affection met in inappropriate ways, often become emotionally distant, not emotionally healthy. If you aren't an affectionate parent, get over it! Learn to become one. It's that important to the health of your child!

8. Develop responsibility in them.

Parents want their kids to grow up into responsible, functioning adults. Unfortunately, we often unintentionally teach irresponsibility, instead. We allow kids to become apathetic by too quickly solving their problems for them. We allow kids to pass the buck by blaming others. And, we are slow to force our kids to carry their own weight. The solution comes in not rescuing our kids from their problems. Sure, there are times that we need to lend a hand and help out, but these times are, in reality, few and far between. We must let kids wrestle with consequences. Whenever we jump in to bail our kids out, they never learn to take responsibility for themselves and they don't have to experience consequences. Learning from mistakes is a great path to responsibility and wisdom.

9. Be fun.

In the book of Ecclesiastes it says this: One of the necessary rhythms of life is laughter and dance. If you want to fully understand life, if you want to fully live abundantly, meaningfully, joyfully you need to have some laughing and dance in your life. It's one of the necessary rhythms of life. This generation of kids is totally stressed out. So, when

kids see their parents injecting fun and laughter into life, it helps relieve some of the anxieties they feel. So, lighten up the mood in your home. Have some fun with the life and family God has given to you.

10. Give them a peaceful home.

Your kids don't need a perfect home, but to thrive, they need a peaceful one. Kids are at battle all day long. They're battling an X-rated culture and language and values. They're battling bullies and peer pressure and body image and conforming. In your teen's world, there are battles going on all the time. They need to come home to a place where they can retreat and drop their battle gear at the door and be in a shelter where they can just be themselves. Your home ought to be the one place your kids feel truly safe; where they can be loved and known and cared for.

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