

RAISING A

CHAMPION

FOR LIFE



**10 KEYS TO MAKING YOUR CHILD
SUCCESSFUL, HAPPY, AND CONFIDENT**

SHIHAN CRAIG HALEY

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CHAPTER 1

CATCH THEM DOING SOMETHING RIGHT

Being a coach, instructor, or anyone that works with kids can be one of the most gratifying and rewarding jobs out there. Seeing one of your students grow and improve to make it to the next level or graduate is one of the biggest joys out there.

However, it can also be one of the toughest jobs—one that wears on your patience. Kids aren't like adults. They see the world differently than we do. They get so focused on what they want and that single-minded focus is, many times, completely opposite of what we want as teachers or parents.

That can be FRUSTRATING! All of us want the best for our kids, and we want to make sure we give them the tools to be successful in school, sports, socially, etc.

So how do you get through to them so they start to listen and understand what you are trying to teach them? How do you connect and communicate effectively with young children so they want to listen to you?

The answer is the opposite of what you might think. We first have to **catch them doing something right!** Think about it for a moment. Parents are usually talking to (or yelling at) their kids about what NOT to do. Have you ever said this before?

“Don't touch that!”

“Stay out of there!”

“Don't make a mess!”

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It's a natural way to communicate because young people will often want to do things that are destructive and unsafe. Sometimes we have to yell to get the point across when it comes to their safety. You have to yell when your child wanders into the street!

However, let's think about this proactively, not reactively.

The greatest management principle in the world says whatever you praise, recognize, and reward, you get more of. So when you recognize bad behavior, bad choices, and bad attitudes by yelling, getting frustrated, and angry, you are actually encouraging that behavior.

You are bringing attention to that behavior. Did you ever notice why many kids decide to act out in public? Because they want attention in front of people! They know you can't react the way you want to in that moment.

Smart little devils!

I am going to give you the long-term strategy for developing high self-esteem in your child. This strategy is not always easy. This strategy can be tough when you are frustrated and involves a lot of work. This strategy also works!

CATCH THEM DOING SOMETHING RIGHT!

How many times does your child do something little that is right, and you, as a parent, overlook it? You might even say, "Well, they are supposed to do that," and you would be right. However, remember that they are the kid, and you are the adult!

As a martial arts teacher, I have worked with tens of thousands of kids over the years. I've seen every personality and every behavior challenge you can imagine. I'm also proud to say that our school has been able to turn many of these kids into Black Belt Champions and achievers in life.

When you focus on what they are doing right, you are aligning yourself with your child. You are showing the child you love, respect, and appreciate them. You are showing them that they have seeds of greatness in them.

When teaching martial arts, our first goal as instructors is to find out what they are doing right. That could be great energy, intensity, speed, focus, or great hair! Whatever we see as a positive, we try to bring it to light in front of the class.

Everyone likes to be praised in front of others.

When I first opened my martial arts school (dojo), I noticed that the 4:00 class was always very high energy and often unfocused. It makes sense. The kids had a long day at school and they wanted to be a little crazy and have some fun.

I used to get VERY frustrated because this was a martial arts class and the students should be focused! The challenge was they did not understand this, or they just didn't care.

So I decided to give this principle a try. I started focusing on the kids that were focused and working hard. I started praising them in front of the class. I ignored the kids that were unfocused and/or lazy in the moment.

I also made sure the praise was specific. I didn't say, "Good job Johnny!" I would say things like:

"Johnny, great speed on that right cross!"

"I love your intensity, Kendyl!"

"Sarah, I think you are STRONGER than a Black Belt!"

A funny thing happened. When I started focusing on what I wanted and praising what I wanted, more and more kids started giving it to me. They wanted to be acknowledged in front of the class. They wanted the attention.

I felt like I had the magic potion for teaching for producing quality students and enjoying the process! I had the best of both worlds.

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Now of course I did not completely ignore the kids that were not trying. I would walk by and say things like:

“Sammy, I know you can do better than that. You are a champion. I know it.”

“Alex, are you okay today? You are usually much stronger than what I am seeing today.”

I learned that coming down on them was not the recipe for success. I reminded myself that the kids wanted to do well, but sometimes they have bad days, get tired, and feel a little run down. It happens to us all!

I use this same strategy with my daughter at home. Both my wife and I are constantly looking for opportunities to praise her. We look for the times she is a first-time listener, picks up her toys, remembers to say “please” and “thank you,” brushes her teeth on her own, etc.

By focusing on that and rewarding the positive behavior, we get more and more of it. Now it’s not 100%; none of us are perfect. But we certainly get more positive behavior than negative using this approach.

Here’s a formula for correcting students and children without damaging their self-esteem: P-C-P (Praise–Correct–Praise).

When you want to give any kind of corrective feedback, start with praise. Then give them the correction in as positive of a way as you can. Lastly, finish with some other form of praise or encouragement.

If we don’t follow this formula and just correct kids, they may feel that you are picking on them or don’t like them. As adults we know this isn’t the case. We just want to see them improve. However, they are not adults, they are KIDS and they view the world much differently than we do!

You might say something to your child like this, *“Alexa Rae, I love how caring and loving you are with mommy and daddy. You are an awesome little girl. I would love it if you could pick up your toys the first time we ask you to and not the fifth time. Can you work on that for me please? That would make mommy and daddy VERY happy. Thank you for being the best little girl ever. I love you!”*

One important point when it comes to correcting kids—Correct the behavior, never the child! Kids (or adults) cannot change who they are but they can change their actions.

Instead of saying, “*Johnny, you were terrible in the store today!*” Try something like this, “*Johnny, I know you are a good boy; however, you did not act like the great boy I know you are. You did not listen when I told you to stop. I do not want that to happen again. Otherwise, there will be some consequences for your behavior. Can you do your best to make sure this doesn’t happen again?*”

I know this strategy is foreign to many of you. It was to me too at first. However, the results are worth it. You will also enjoy working with kids more, build their self-esteem, and feel a lot less stressed in the process.

CHAPTER 2

GOALS WE SET ARE GOALS WE GET

Goals are important for everyone—both kids and adults. It gives us a target to aim for, something to work hard for, and something to look forward to. I had the great privilege of starting martial arts at 10 years old and learned how powerful this concept is.

After my first class, I set my goal to become a Black Belt. I wanted to be just like my instructors. Not only did I have a goal, but I had several models of excellence to follow. I was lucky!

I didn't know why I wanted my Black Belt. I just knew I wanted it. It was cool. As I look back, it wasn't why I wanted it at 10. What was important was that I had something to focus on and work for. That goal kept me from getting into a lot of trouble and making some poor choices.

Kids need a goal. They need something to work towards. Earl Nightingale, the late author and speaker, said that we are all happier when we are moving towards a goal. I agree with him 100%. There is an enthusiasm that you have when you are working towards something you want. You eagerly anticipate what it will be like to achieve the goal. Plus, it's fun!

I encourage parents at any age to talk with their kids about what they want to be when they grow up. Get them to create a vision. Get them talking about it. Whatever it is, encourage them! When they are telling you what they want to be, ask them questions to better clarify their goal.

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Ask them about why they want to be a _____. Ask them how they will feel. Ask them who they are going to work with. You may hear some pie-in-the-sky dreams and ideas. So what?

A martial arts mentor of mine, Kyoshi Dave Kovar, says, “Create a vision and visit it often.”

Ask your kids all the time, “What are you going to be when you grow up?” Ask more and more questions about that goal to get them talking. Not only will this build excitement, but it will help you get to know your child on a much deeper level. You will start to see what is important to THEM. You will get to understand how THEY think and what motivates THEM.

Goal-setting can also work with chores around the house. Try setting goals with your kids to have them do some of the chores that you want done. Set a goal to have them keep their room clean for a week; if they do, you will take them out for ice cream on the weekend.

You can set a goal to clean up the yard, and if they help and do their part, you will take them to dinner at their favorite restaurant.

Should there be a reward for doing chores? I say yes. Achieving a goal can be fun. You are working for something you want. To motivate kids to help with chores, which may not be that much fun in their eyes, you must reward them. Incentivize them to do their best and get involved.

As they get older you may not need to do this as much, however you will get much more cooperation when you dangle the carrot and give them a reward.

Not only is it important to teach goal-setting to kids, it’s just as important for them to see you striving to achieve goals as an adult. The best way to lead and influence is by example.

I remind the Elite Force Martial Arts professional team of this concept all the time. It’s one thing to say to someone, “You should go running.” It’s another thing to say, “Let’s go running together.” One is an order. The other is helpful, supportive, and encouraging.

My daughter has grown up watching my wife and me striving to achieve new goals. She sees us working towards our next degree of black belt. She sees my wife striving to be a stronger martial arts athlete and Hyper coach. She sees me working towards my black belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

We talk about our goals to her and how hard we are working. We talk to her about never giving up, even when things get tough. Our example is a powerful influencer. When you do this, you are creating a culture of achievement in your house. It becomes embedded in them and that is powerful!

CHAPTER 3

ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH

Telling the truth is probably one of the biggest challenges that parents have when it comes to their kids. Now I know there are some of you reading this that are thinking, “What? I never lie to my kids. I would never do that.”

I don’t mean the same lies you told your parents when you were in high school and you wanted to go to a party that you didn’t want them to know about. That’s a completely different circumstance.

What I am talking about is disciplining your child and telling the truth.

Kids will always test the boundaries. If you tell them not to step over the line, you can bet there will be a toe on the other side just to see what will happen. It’s natural for them to see what they can and can’t get away with.

I’m sure you’ve been in that moment (as I have) when your child starts misbehaving, not listening, or throwing a temper tantrum in front of a lot of people. It’s a frustrating moment as a parent, and depending on what type of day you might have had, you react a little more harshly than you intended.

You may have yelled out things like this...

“If you do that again you are grounded for a week!”

“If you don’t pick up these toys, I am going to give them away to another child who will appreciate them!”

“If you don’t start listening then we are not going to the movies tonight with your friends!”

Here's the challenge: If the child still does not respond favorably to your ultimatum and you don't follow through, they will start to call your bluff going forward. The child will start to realize (sooner rather than later) that you are not serious and you are not going to do what you said.

This is the recipe for disaster as a parent! Your child will never respect what you say when it comes to discipline. So my suggestion to you is **always tell the truth.**

Rule #1 is make sure when you lay out an ultimatum with your child that you are 100% ready, willing, and able to follow through on. You have to know with 100% certainty that you will take the action if the behavior doesn't change.

Did you know that the root word of discipline is disciple? Disciple means to teach. So when you discipline your child, you are TEACHING them the right way to behave and act. Discipline is a good thing. Everyone needs it. Don't feel bad about disciplining your child's behavior. You are showing them how to act and be successful in the world.

Here's the key: You discipline your child out of love, not anger. You should never throw out idle threats because you feel frustrated. The reality is you may not be able (or willing) to follow through on them. Instead, keep your cool, focus on the behavior you do want, and take the appropriate actions.

So in the end, you are doing what you said you would do. This will be tough for both of you. That may mean you have to stay in that night when they are being grounded. But when you do this consistently, your child will know there is no wiggle room. They will know you mean what you say and when you ask them to change their behavior, they are far more likely to listen.

KEEP YOUR PROMISES!

As parents, it's easy for us to keep the fun promises. You might have said things like this...

"If you pick up your room in the next 10 minutes, we will go for ice cream!"

"If you show me an awesome report card next month, we will go on a special weekend trip."

Those are fun promises to keep. Everyone will have a blast. You will encourage your child and remind them to do what they have to so they (and you) can get the reward.

I bet you would be looking forward to that experience as well. Again, it's a fun promise to keep.

Here's the challenge: Most parents will keep the fun (positive) promises but not the negative ones. It's easy to keep your promise about going to Disney Land but difficult to keep your promise about not going to the movies with the family if the child's behavior doesn't change.

You have to be willing to follow through. Let me say that again, you have to be willing to follow through! When you follow through, you are teaching your child that you always tell the truth and you will keep your promises, both positive and negative.

This creates a sense of certainty with your child. You become this person that your child can always count on. They will get to know who you are and what you stand for. Believe it or not, kids want certainty. They want to be led. They will become happier and more confident kids because of it.

CHAPTER 4

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO SERVE... AND THAT DOES NOT MEAN GET YOU A BEER!

Tony Robbins says one of the six human needs is contribution. It's a desire that we all have to help others, contribute towards a cause or a goal that is far bigger than us. He is right!

When a student is approaching Black Belt, they are required to teach and assist with the beginner classes. Why? Well there are a few reasons.

First, when you teach something you learn it better. We do it because we want them to know the details cold!

Second, when you teach, you view yourself as a leader. Your self-image changes. You see yourself in a more confident light. You then start to take more positive actions in life and get awesome results.

A funny thing happens when people start teaching. They start really connecting with the students. They get to know them and develop a bond. They start motivating and mentoring them. That connection and sense of bonding compels them to teach far after they earn their Black Belt.

People want to serve. They want to contribute to something bigger than themselves. Everyone has a deep desire to want to help others.

As a parent, you want to bring this out in your child early. The more we encourage our children to help others, the better adults they will be.

We do team runs in our school three days per week. Our students have to make a certain run time (based on age and gender) to qualify for Black Belt. During these runs we have students that are pushing themselves to the limit to make their time so they reach their goal.

The cool thing is seeing how many students (kids and adults) that already have their Black Belts continue to go to the team runs and run with the existing candidate team. They want to see others be successful. This camaraderie among the students creates an incredible culture in the school. It's based on a spirit of teamwork, respect, and helpfulness.

ACTIVATE THE LAW OF ATTRACTION!

When you go out of your way to help others, the universe has a way of always paying you back. Good fortune, sooner or later, will come your way. I can't explain it, but it's the truth.

Author Jeffrey Gitomer says one of his golden rules is to always help others. He says he always gets paid back by the universe, but rarely by the person he actually helps. He doesn't do it because he knows good things will happen. He does it because it is the right thing to do and the extra benefit is he is creating good karma!

He tells a story in one of his books about a guy who lost his credit card at the airport (the ATM machine took it and wouldn't give it back). He saw the guy was frustrated so he went to the guy, gave him \$100 so he had some cash to get home.

The guy was, of course, very thankful and asked Jeffrey for his business card. A week later, Jeffrey got a thank you note in the mail with the \$100 he loaned him. Two months later Jeffrey got a call from the same guy asking him to print t-shirts for the upcoming Olympics (Jeffrey was in the t-shirt business back in those days).

As it turns out, the same gentleman in the airport had the exclusive right to make shirts for the upcoming Olympics and because Jeffrey helped him out, he wanted to give Jeffrey the business. That one job was worth over \$700,000.

It all came because Jeffrey was paying attention and acted on his golden rule of always help others.

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS...

Teach your child to help in little ways; holding the door open for others and picking something up when another person drops it are great ways to teach this principle. In time, they will own it and take it to a much higher level.

I have seen this principle work in my martial arts school and countless others for years. As a Shihan, which means “teacher of teachers,” I teach, mentor, and coach students as well as our professional instructors. You develop bonds with these people. They become an extended family. You want to go the extra mile for them.

A common practice we have at our school is when a student gets a new car, we send them a gas card with a handwritten note of congratulations. When a student buys a new house, we send them a gift card from Lowes or Home Depot with a handwritten note of congratulations.

We do everything we can to go the extra mile for our students. I can tell you first hand these efforts pay off. We have incredible retention with our students. We have hundreds of students that have been with us for six years plus. We even have three generations of Black Belts training in our school. That’s right—three generations. We have (at the time of this writing) a 12-year-old black belt, his parents are black belts, and his grandparents are black belts.

The families that kick together—Stick together!

CHAPTER 5

ASK GREAT QUESTIONS AND LISTEN

Listening is one of the most important skills in relationship building and overall communication skills. It may be the most important skill, yet it is not taught in school. So most people are not good listeners. Most people want to be heard and people love to talk about themselves, including your kids!

Listening shows that you care. Listening shows the other person (your child) that he/she is important and what they have to say is important. Here's the biggest benefit to being a good listener—when you are listening, you are learning! When you are talking, you are not.

As children get older, they experience life and they want to talk about it. It's a great joy to listen to your child talk about something they have done for the first time or something they have done they are proud of.

HOW CAN YOU BE A BETTER LISTENER? HERE ARE A FEW TIPS:

1. Sit down and face your child straight on. This open posture shows the child you are focused on them 100%.
2. Be an active listener. Nod, comment, and question for clarity and complete understanding. This lets your child know what they have to say is important to you.
3. Look your child in the eyes. Eye contact shows that you are paying attention.

What if your child isn't talking to you? What are they keeping to themselves? Does it seem like something is bothering them?

Dale Carnegie wrote a classic book called, “How to Win Friends and Influence People”. In the book he talks about the importance of being great at asking questions.

When you ask questions, you are showing interest in your child, you are showing them they are important, and that you care.

Think of yourself as the host of a talk show. Look at Jay Leno, Larry King, or Jimmy Fallon. They are great interviewers. They ask great questions that get their guests talking. In a sense, you need to do this with your child.

I do a lot of work with kids that are being bullied. Bullying is a huge problem today. At the time of this writing, here are the stats...

1 out of 4 kids are getting bullied

160,000 kids miss school every day because of bullying

It’s the largest reason for suicide between the ages of 11 and 16

Kids that are being bullied are often embarrassed about it. They feel they did something wrong and feel humiliated. It’s a terrible experience. I was bullied as a kid. In fact, that’s the reason I got involved in martial arts back in August 1987.

Fast forward to the present...no one picks on me anymore!

There are two kinds of questions...close-ended questions and open-ended questions. Close-ended questions require a yes, no, or very brief answer. They do not usually get the other person talking or opening up.

Open-ended questions require the other person to talk and open up. They require more than a one- or two-word answer. Open-ended questions begin with phrases like...

“What did you do at school today?”

“Why did you do that?”

“How did you do that?”

Another phrase, which is not really a question but gets the other person to open up is, “Tell me about...”

“Tell me about...” is asking the other person to describe something. It could be an experience or a through process.

Combining great listening skills with great questioning skills is the key to having great dialogue with your child. It may take some time but when your child sees that you are truly interested in what they have to say, it’s just a matter of time before they start opening up (because you are truly listening) and because you are asking great questions that gets them talking.

A QUICK NOTE ON BULLYING...

As stated before, many times children feel embarrassed about bullying. They feel they did something wrong or feel humiliated. As you know, kids are kids and they don’t have the maturity that adults have. We have to explain to them there is a BIG difference between “Tattling” and “Reporting.”

When a child tattles on someone, they are trying to get them in trouble for something minor or that isn’t that big of a deal. Kids are notorious for this. Reporting a problem is much different.

In my youth empowerment workshops, I often ask the kids if they went outside and saw a car was on fire, would they come and tell me. All the kids raise their hand and say yes. When I ask them why, they say because the car could explode, someone could get hurt or burned.

I then remind them that bullying creates a similar danger. Bullying and negative words can impact how someone feels about themselves for a long time. Physical bullying can hurt someone and can be very dangerous.

Your children need to know we all have to work together to keep our environment safe. When they learn to report trouble of any kind, it is not tattling. It’s reporting something that can hurt someone (physically, mentally, or emotionally) and it’s the right thing to do.

CHAPTER 6

TEAM UP AND NEVER GIVE UP

It takes a village to raise a child. Many times when parents enroll their kids in martial arts, they are amazed at how well the kids listen to their instructors. The instructors talk to the kids about saying “please” and “thank you,” eating their vegetables, and being a first-time listener, and they do it!

Martial arts instructors are saying the same things parents say, but they have the belt, cool uniform, and can do some amazing skills that the kids want to do.

So the best way our instructors can help (team up) with parents is to reinforce what they are already teaching them.

Teaming up also means reinforcing the right behavior. When a child does something right, such as gets better grades, cleans his room, or stands up to a bully, and the instructor praises that child he is reinforcing the right behavior. That reinforcement from the instructor combined with mom and dad’s teaching can go a long way.

It is a common practice to give kids special stripes on their belt, take a picture of them and post it to our Facebook page when they get a great report card or win an award in school. Why? Because it recognizes the right behavior and brings attention to it!

Another big part of teaming up and never giving up is helping kids develop a non-quitting spirit. Kids are notorious for starting and stopping activities. They start something new, like martial arts, and in the beginning it is novel, new, and fun. They are fired up with the road that lies ahead.

Then that phase wears off and they see that being good requires work. Now of course, they are still having fun but they see the repetition that is involved to be good and how long it takes to become a Black Belt and they get a bit discouraged.

This is where parents need to teach and influence their children to stick to their commitments. It takes perseverance and hard work to achieve big goals and to become successful. Why not teach kids that from the beginning?

Big Secret: Kids are the most impressionable when they are younger. They are forming their body of truth. You have the best chance of anchoring in key attributes like a non-quitting spirit when they are younger. Don't wait until they are older and you have to help them undo old, bad habits.

I know when I was in college I thought about dropping out several times. I didn't like it very much but I did see the value in it. I did see the goal at the end and how it would help me in life.

Parents often say their child fights with them about coming to class, but when they come to the dojo they love it. They are fired up on the floor, enjoying class, and raising their hand to answer questions and demonstrate.

Parents say they get tired of fighting with their children and want to let them quit.

Think about this: Most parents go to the gym, run, or do some kind of workout on a regular basis. Are you always fired up to get up and go run or to the gym? If you are being honest, probably not. How do you feel after being there and moving for 15 minutes? How do you feel after the workout when you are leaving?

If you are being honest, you probably feel great and are glad you went!

So if you go through the same process your child does, why do you have such a higher expectation of him? Why is it okay for you to feel lazy in the moment and you push yourself to go and not them?

Instead, you should understand what your child is going through and help them get through it. Teach them that not everyone feels like doing things in the moment but **ACTION CREATES MOTIVATION** and they will have fun when they get there.

It's human nature to feel lazy sometimes. It's okay. You just can't let your child fall into the habit of allowing that laziness to dictate what they do and don't do. This lesson will serve them for the rest of their life!

CHAPTER 7

HABITS WE TRAIN ARE HABITS WE GAIN

Experts tell us that 90% of everything we do is based on our habits. You probably get up in the morning and have a very consistent routine. You probably do the same things in the same order most of the time.

Routines are powerful, especially when they produce great results.

I have a very powerful routine in the morning. I get up between 5:00 and 5:30. I read for 20 minutes something motivating or educational. After that, I write for 30-45 minutes. I write blog posts, class messages, or material for an upcoming book.

I have another habit that has served me for years. I make driving time learning time. I listen to audiobooks and educational audio programs in the car when driving. This allows me to turn that normal down time into learning time. This habit keeps me thinking and acting in a positive manner.

Your child doesn't have bad or good habits when they are born. It's up to you, the parent, to analyze their routines and help them develop the right habits.

Do you have them brush their teeth in the morning and at night?

Do you have them get up and go to bed at set times?

Do you have a set homework routine?

More than likely you answered yes to all these questions.

Think about this: What habits do you want to help your child develop? What habits will make a big difference in their productivity in school? What habits will give them more energy throughout the day?

Here are a couple habits that will make a huge difference in the energy level and attention span of your child:

- 1. Drink water!** The absolute minimum is half your bodyweight in ounces. Is your child drinking enough? Soda and caffeine drinks dehydrate you. If you live in a hot climate, such as Florida, than you need to have your child drinking an ounce of water for every pound they weigh. Their energy and emotions will be much better.
- 2. Teach them to eat like a champion!** Fill their plate with fruits and vegetables. These are great sources of carbohydrates and their bodies will break them down and turn them to energy easily. Avoid fatty foods and starchy carbs. These bloat kids and make them feel lethargic.

I once read an article about what the top Olympic athletes eat and drink to perform at the highest levels:

A gallon of water per day

Fruits and vegetables

High quality lean proteins

There's your formula for successful eating!

- 3. Exercise regularly!** Kids today are less active than ever. The obesity rates are higher than ever. In fact, this is the first generation of kids that are expected to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents. Experts say that 1/3 of kids today are obese and another 1/3 are overweight.

Also, most schools do not have P.E. anymore. Make sure exercise is a regular part of their daily routine.

4. Read! Teach your child to love reading. Here's the secret: ALL LEADERS ARE GREAT READERS! Read to your child when they are young.

Read with them when they get older. Encourage them to read when they know how. Reading is exercise for the mind. It stimulates creativity and imagination.

5. Teach them to save! Kids earn an allowance and get money for birthdays and other holidays. Teach them to save a percentage. Most adults have terrible savings habits and nothing in the bank for emergencies.

Teach them to save up for big purchases. Most adults don't save up for things anymore. They buy everything with a credit card. No wonder they are in so much debt!

If kids give your resistance on this, take them to the bad part of town and show them around. Ask them if they want to live there.

Explain to them that this is where the people live that don't save money. Kids are visual and they will get it!

Habits are powerful and will set your child up for success in life!

CHAPTER 8

LOOK FOR TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Raising a child is one of the greatest joys in the world; it also can be one of the most challenging. You, the parent, are responsible for the development of this person. It's up to you to make sure they develop good habits in life.

It's up to you to ensure they develop the right attitude, behavior, and character to be a good person when they grow up.

As a martial arts instructor, we are constantly giving class messages to kids about goal-setting, positive attitude, and leadership. Often I can see that I am connecting with some kids. I can see the message is getting through. Other times I see kids talking or staring off into space.

Have you ever felt like this before? Have you ever tried talking to your child and they are just not focused or listening to anything you have to say.

TRY THIS: LOOK FOR A TEACHABLE MOMENT!

You are probably saying the right things to your child, but the timing may be off. It may be your child's attitude or emotions are not in the right state to absorb a message.

When students prepare for Black Belt, they are required to break a board at the Power Weekend. This is the final Black Belt test. Before board breaking, the student must be in peak state mentally, physically, and emotionally. They have to have complete confidence in themselves.

They have to believe with 100% certainty they are going to go THROUGH the board, not just hit at the board.

If the professional staff did not do some exercises to get the students in peak state, called KOKORO in the martial arts, the students would not break the board and have a successful experience.

Parents need to get their child in the same state to absorb a message. You don't want them fired up and crazy. You don't want them screaming or over overly emotional. You want them ready to listen, understand, and change their behavior.

So how do you know when the teachable moment arrives?

Answer this: How does Spider-man know when there is danger? If you are a superhero fan, you know he relies on his spider sense. He has that FEELING. Believe it or not, you have that feeling already. Knowing you are looking for that teachable moment will help you see it when the time is right.

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF TIMING AND FINDING THE TEACHABLE MOMENT:

1. When your child is in the middle of a temper tantrum. Now is not the time. You are better off waiting until the storm passes; let them have the tantrum. This is good for them. It tires them out and makes them use their muscles. Once they are calm and tired, then you have that teachable moment to get the message across.
2. When your child wins the game or passes their Black Belt test. This is the time to pull them aside and talk to them about how proud you are. They are in a peak positive emotion. Talk to them about how the dedication, focus, and determination they showed will make them successful in everything they do.
3. When you catch your child doing something wrong or worse yet, illegal. This is not the right time because you are more than likely in a negative or angry state. It is best (and I know this is difficult) to wait until you are in a more calm and relaxed state so you can think about what you want to say so you don't say something you will regret.

4. When you catch your child doing something kind or thoughtful. Take a moment and tell them how proud you are of the person they are becoming. Praise their character and thoughtfulness. It will sink in BIG TIME!

Big secret: Always correct the behavior and never your child. Never say “you disappointed me yesterday.” Instead focus on the behavior and say, “what you did yesterday was very disappointing. You are a great kid but you made a very bad choice yesterday.”

Your child can't change themselves, but they can change their actions and decisions.

Often during teachable moments, you will have to talk about the rewards of success and the penalties of failure. Rewarding is the fun part. Your child won the game, performed some random act of kindness, or achieved a goal. Reward them to anchor in the victory and the correct actions. Your child will associate the right actions with rewards.

BIG SECRET: REMEMBER, WHATEVER YOU PRAISE, RECOGNIZE, AND REWARD YOU GET MORE OF.

In teachable moments, you may need to discipline your child. There should be penalties or consequences for making the wrong choice. Be clear to your child that you love them and think the world of them. Make sure they know the punishment is a result of the actions THEY took. They are calling the shots by choosing their actions and you, the parent, are simply administering the rewards or consequences based on their actions.

When administering punishment, be completely unemotional. Don't seem like you are happy to put them in their place or to see them suffer. Let them know they created the situation with their actions and the good news is that they can change the circumstance next time with better choices.

Hopefully they will!

CHAPTER 9

BE THE MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

The best leaders (and yes, parents are leaders) lead by example. The old saying, “Do as I say and not as I do” went out with the 80’s. In an age of social media and complete transparency, you have to do the right thing and be a great role model for your child.

There is a Master Instructor in the martial arts who I look up to and is a complete role model in every sense of the word. His name is Kyoshi Dave Kovar. He is in his mid-fifties, trains and works out every day, runs a successful business, has ethical business practices, and is a great family man.

He sets the pace and leads by example in every sense of the word for his employees and his kids.

There is a big difference when a martial arts instructor says, “You should go run,” and one that says, “Let’s go run.”

Your example and actions are always the best way to influence.

Part of earning a Black Belt is being in great shape. You can have great skill but if you get tired too quickly, that skill will do you know good. So great instructors stress the importance of proper nutrition and being in great shape. They are also in GREAT SHAPE. They are not hypocrites!

There have been a few frustrating moments in my career when I have had young advanced students who were great kids but needed to get in better shape. The major problem was the parents had terrible eating and health habits. Exercise was not important to them so the kids grew up modeling their parents.

So here I am talking to the kids about eating better foods, running, coming to class more frequently, and giving more effort. You can see the challenge. The child has a nearly impossible feat. They have to eat clean when their parents are eating junk. The parents are not being great role models and not creating an atmosphere for their child to achieve their goals.

With some rare exceptions, most of the kids did not make it to the next level. Not because of their ability or potential, but because of their parents and home environment.

I have seen the opposite too. We are a family-based martial arts school. We have in our main school over 90 families training together and I see some parents who are amazing role models that exercise, train, and eat well. They are incredible models of excellence for their kids.

I'm sure you as a parent want to see your kids set goals and be successful.

Do your kids see you setting goals and striving to reach the next level? Do they see you getting up early, busting your butt all day long, and staying up late to reach your target?

I've made sure to talk with my daughter about my goals so she can see me doing the same things I am encouraging her to do. Currently I am a Blue Belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and I have a goal to someday be a Black Belt.

Now that is a long-term goal, but my daughter knows that's my goal. She sees me pull out my Jiu-Jitsu bag and go to class. She sees me workout with the Elite Force staff and striving towards my next degree of Black Belt.

My wife, Melissa, is the same. She talks with our daughter about her goals of running marathons throughout the country, earning her 5th Degree Black Belt, etc. Alexa Rae, our daughter, sees her going for runs, doing martial arts, and earning medals from the races she does.

It's a powerful force for a child to see their parents leading by example. But it's also one that can shape their attitude and actions for a lifetime!

CHAPTER 10

THINK LONG-TERM, ACT SHORT-TERM

There is a success philosophy “See it–Believe it–Achieve it.” Visualize your goals, believe with all your heart it is possible, and never give up until you get what you want.

Your long-term vision of what you want your child to be will shape your day-to-day actions. When you visualize your child making great grades in school, being confident dealing with bullies, and having lots of friends, you are creating a vision in your mind of their future.

This means you are creating a vision of what sports they will play, extra-curricular activities they will be involved in, or what they will be when they grow up. What this does mean is you are creating a vision for their level of confidence, self-belief, and attitude about what’s possible.

“Create a vision and visit it often” is another success quote I’ve heard that shaped my business, my personal martial arts training, as well as my family life.

When you have a vision of your child growing up and being successful, the next step is to make sure your day to day actions and attitude support the long-term vision.

HERE ARE A COUPLE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

What's your vision of your child when they go to school?

How do they interact with other kids and the teachers?

How does your child feel about themselves?

How do you want them to feel?

What's your child's self-esteem level like?

When you have a vision of the type of child you want yours to be, you can start to act in a way that supports that vision.

What parent doesn't want their child to be happier, healthy, and confident? What parent doesn't want their child to set goals, never give up, and believe in themselves?

Here are a couple of daily actions you can do with your child to support this type of vision:

1. Affirm your child. Zig Ziglar, the late, iconic speaker and author, used to say this to his kids and I borrowed it from him with my daughter. I would say, "Alexa Rae, you are endowed with the seeds of greatness, engineered for success, and born to win. And Daddy loves you!"

Speaking words of encouragement and faith to your child plants seeds, seeds of confidence and belief. You are shaping their self-concept, which is the way they view themselves. That is powerful!

2. Show them examples of greatness. Point out examples of great people that you would like your child to emulate. That could be pointing out how kind someone is, how confident someone is, or how someone had a goal and never gave up.

Reading them stories that plant seeds of kindness, ambition, and perseverance. I'm a big fan of the book "The Little Engine That Could." It's the ultimate book of positive affirmation and positive self-talk. It's not a kid's book, it's a philosophy for life!

When you point out positive qualities in people over and over again, and praise your child when they show those attributes, you are reinforcing the right attitude and behaviors.

The Chinese Bamboo tree is very much like raising a child. When first planted you see very little growth above the surface, however the roots are growing very aggressively underground. They are laying a strong foundation for the tree. After the first 3-5 years the bamboo tree can explosively grow as high as 90 feet in some cases.

What does that tell you?

Your child is that tree. You can get frustrated if you don't see results right away from some of these strategies. Don't! You are planting the seeds of greatness, and at one point or another, the positive impact, confidence, self-belief, and positive attitude will show up in your child.

Thank you for reading this book.

Thank you for friendship, loyalty, and support.

Thank you for being a part of the Elite Force family!



SHIHAN CRAIG HALEY

Owner and Chief Instructor at Elite Force Martial Arts
in Lighthouse Point Florida and 6th Degree Black Belt

954.785.1348 | eliteforcemartialarts.com