

The 5 L's of Parenting

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The 5 L's of Parenting give you the basic rules of raising a spiritual child. These simple steps allow you to have the best relationship possible with your child. Blessings!

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Through the joys and frustrations of being a single parent, I have discovered some rather basic things that really help. I call it the 5 L's of Parenting; Love, Listen, Laugh, Light & Like creates Like. Now some of you may count and say that's 6, but since *like* is repeated, I only count it once.

Being a parent I know you don't have much free time to read, so we'll get right down to business.

1. *Love your child*, not just in your heart, but with your whole being. For many of us this is a no-brainer. We are so in love with our children, yet we often forget to show it. We become so lulled by our every day responsibilities that we carry our frustrations home. Unfortunately we sometimes sit in our frustrations at home and our children take the brunt of it. They are much more aware and much more sensitive than we think.

Surrender yourself to that love of your children. Make every decision based upon that love. Sure, it's scary to give so much of your Self to a person, but it's worth it. To be fully present with your children is paramount. When we carry our everyday frustrations into our homes, we are not fully present with our families. We need to put down our burdens at the door. Clear yourself consciously. Take 5 to 7 deep breaths and feel yourself relax before entering your home. Put a smile on your face and greet the ones you love. Remember that nothing that happened outside that moment of connection with your children matters. Focus on your love for them and the joy you feel knowing that you love them.



Ever hear the expression; 'Love isn't something until you give it away'? It is not enough to feel love for someone, you must express it - In word AND action. A child needs to be totally secure in your love for them. [Yes, I know a child is never TOTALLY secure, but they can be close] Their greatest fear is to lose the love of a parent. And that holds true into adulthood. That is why we forever strive for our parents' approval - consciously or subconsciously.

Let your child know how important they are to your life as often as you can. Feel that appreciation for your child often and express it. When we do this with our children we are teaching them to be appreciative also. I often tell my daughter how much I appreciate that I can trust her to do the right thing - her homework, being honest, standing up for herself and her friends, etc. Be specific with your praise, not empty, kids can see right through that.

2. *Listen to your child*; you'll be surprised by how much they can teach you. A child's view of the world is different, so they may see angles to things you would never have considered. If we are not truly listening to the children around us, we miss much more than we realize.

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I mean REALLY listen. It's surprising how many of us don't know how to do that. [Maybe, because our parents never really listened to us?] So then, what does listening look like? First is to keep eye contact, if possible. Be attentive. Ask appropriate questions, but do not form an opinion or formulate your questions while they are speaking. If you're thinking of what you're going to say, or form an opinion before they have the opportunity to explain themselves fully, you are not listening.

We need to remember that it is okay to have silence during a conversation. Often we see it as an uncomfortable silence, yet if we habitually have thoughtful silence in our conversations, they are not uncomfortable, but a sign of respect. If you really listen during conversation, there will be silence. These pauses are needed for you to digest what was said and form a response. On the flip side, allow your child their moments of silent consideration.

Remember, if you expect your children to listen to you, you need to listen to them. Listening is a skill. It is something we learn, not something you're born knowing how to do. Sounds simple enough, but it is a skill that takes practice.

3. *Laugh with your child.* Allow them to experience life as fun - It will help you to maintain a positive attitude with them. Your child will help to remind you not to sweat the small stuff if you let them.

It is important to show your child how to approach life with humor. This is not to say teasing or mean spirited expressions of humor are acceptable. Laughing at another's expense is not something we want to teach our children. It still bothers me that a large segment of America's Funniest Videos is devoted to people taking falls where they would obviously be hurt. I can never stomach that segment. It makes me proud to say that my 7 year old has enough sense to change the channel during those times.

Laugh with your child. Remember to play. Use your imagination and encourage them to use theirs. Laugh at your own mistakes instead of becoming frustrated. Teach your children how to handle stress through laughter; in order to do that they need a sense of what is really important. That means that we need to react appropriately to situations and not blow things out of proportion. This is not as easy as it sounds.



Imagine you are late for a wedding, maybe one that you're in and your two year old decides to pick that moment to raid your make up case. You are already stressed, but is it really that major a problem? If your child had done the same thing on a stay at home

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day would you react the same way? Take the action and place it in a different situation to decide how you need to respond. Remember, act - do not react. The world will not end if you take a moment to breathe.

Unless the action of the child puts them or someone else in danger, it's probably small stuff. Yes, your child needs discipline. To discipline means to teach, not scream, not punish. If there is no lesson learned in the exchange, there is nothing gained. When in doubt, give them a stern look, Make them clean it up, maybe point out what is wrong and laugh. [You may want to go in the other room for the laughing part if you want to remain stern.]

4. The word light is multi-faceted for my purposes here. First, *live in the light*, the light being Truth and Love. There is no more powerful teacher to our children than our own lives. Living the light means having and maintaining an authentic life. If you want your child to be happy, find happiness. Lead by example, because whether that is your intention or not, that is what you are doing. Be mindful of that fact.



Second, *keep it light*. Life is hard enough without us throwing our drama on our children. I have found a long stern lecture to be much less effective than a stern look and a single statement. Try not to get caught up in lecturing your child; a real conversation goes a lot further. Remember a conversation consists of two or more individuals taking turns speaking and listening, SPEAKING AND LISTENING. That means, regardless of how you feel, you need to keep your mouth shut and ears attentive. Don't be worried about your reply. Concentrate on what your child has to say. In other words, REALLY listen. Listen without judgment. [That's really the hard part, and very important].

I know that it's hard, but it's worth it. Good communication builds a good relationship that can last a lifetime. If you don't actively listen to your child when they're small, why would they bother talking to you when they become teenagers?

5. *Like creates like*. What does that mean? When our children are young they reflect what we do. If your child tends to be condescending, or short in their speech, you need to examine the manner in which you are speaking to them and others around them. The aspects of their behavior that set us off the most tend to be the things we dislike in ourselves. Behaviors like dishonesty in the form of lying or cheating are learned. You are leading by example whether you like it or not. Always consider your actions when in the presence of a child.

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Children are wonderful reflections of our own behavior. They can teach us so much about ourselves if we pay attention. When a young child displays an undesirable behavior, like yelling at us, we need to monitor ourselves and change to model more acceptable behavior. Of course this is a part of discipline. We still need to correct the child when we see them behaving inappropriately. And we also need to discipline ourselves to behave honorably at all times.

Children are a gift. They are not little clones or blank pieces of clay for us to mold. They have their own personalities, thoughts and feelings. They deserve respect, as you do.

Remember, you are the most important thing in their lives as they grow to discover who they are. It's our jobs as parents to give them the tools they need to safely navigate the world. And if we teach them properly and present a good example, our children will change the world. Simply by their presence in it, the world will be a better place.

Love them in word and deed. Laugh with them. Listen to them. Live the Light to guide them and keep it light for them. Like creates like, so live as if everyday what you do will be on the cover of tomorrow's newspaper. [I stole that quote from my mom] Don't forget to thank your parents. Good Luck and God Bless.

Geralyn St. Joseph is a single parent. She holds a degree in Communications with a concentration in Law and Psychology from Temple University in Philadelphia. She offers her services as a spiritual advisor and Intuitive Parent Coach. She also offers couples guidance and a wide array of metaphysical classes and services both in person and via email. She is available for individual or family sessions as well as corporate events. Contact her at 808 261-7866 or geralyn@voiceofspirit.com.

