

Center for Youth and Family

Five Tips for Becoming a More Confident Parent

By Jim Burns, Ph.D.

When my wife, Cathy, and I found out we were going to be parents for the first time, I was brimming with confidence. After all, I had college degrees in psychology and ministry, and had been working with parents and teens for nearly a decade. Cathy had studied early childhood education in college and had a wonderful way with kids. “So, how hard could it be?” we thought. Well, from the moment we brought our precious daughter, Christy, home with us, we knew that parenting was a lot tougher when you were actually responsible for your own kids!

Fortunately, God is gracious and merciful to parents and children alike. And now that Christy and her two sisters have moved through adolescence into young adulthood, I want to share with you five tips Cathy and I have discovered to be essential for keeping a level head in the parenting department. These foundational principles will really boost your confidence also.

1. Bless your children. Kids love praise. In fact, I’m convinced that they crave it. During their growing up years, they have a tendency to gravitate toward the adult (or the “senior member” of their circle of influence) in hopes of finding approval from that person. Why not make it you?! There is absolutely no substitute for receiving a blessing from Mom and Dad during a child’s formative years. It will literally propel them to new heights spiritually, emotionally, and relationally by providing a foundation of a healthy self-image. Try it and see!

2. Overcome negative family patterns. Now, I realize that this one isn’t always easy to do, especially if you grew up in a home with a physically abusive father or a verbally demeaning mom. But the fact is that you can be part of the transitional generation who stops blaming bad behavior from the past as an excuse for bad parenting today. Get the help you need to heal the hurts of your own childhood and then start setting healthy, loving, and supportive examples for your own kids. Start using the power of sacrificial love to your advantage!

3. Create a grace-filled home. Every cluster of teen or pre-teen friends has a certain place they like to hang out, and 99 times out of 100, that place is the home where grace abounds. You don’t have to be “parent of the year” to create the kind of atmosphere that makes kids feel welcome. But if you can create that special spot, you will be on your way to being that special Mom or Dad that all of your kids’ friends want to adopt.

4. Communicate with A.W.E. (Affection, Warmth, and Encouragement). This one is a no-brainer. Affection, warmth, and encouragement can work to your advantage to melt the heart of even the most stubborn teen or pre-teen. You don’t have to be a pushover in this department; in fact, remember that leniency does not equal love. But if you are fair, firm, and consistent with the “house rules” in your home, and you enforce them with affection, warmth, and encouragement, you’ll build a stronger bond with your kids. And that will be a tremendous confidence-booster for you as a parent.

5. Raise kids who love God and themselves. This is where the “r” word comes in: respect. When kids are taught the value of obeying their parents, honoring and respecting God is easy. That obedience makes it easier to establish a loving relationship with Him once they receive the free gift of salvation. But don’t stop there. Give your kids the gift of learning self-respect as well. This could be one of the most precious commodities an adolescent will ever get. Self-respecting kids do a better job of making good and wise decisions in life, and they’ll learn self-respect from you, Mom and Dad!

Trust God to give you the confidence you need to train up His children in the way they should go and when they are older, you will all rejoice a lot more!

*Excerpted from the book, **Confident Parenting** by Jim Burns, Ph.D.*

Azusa Pacific University’s Center for Youth and Family with Jim Burns, Ph.D., serves as a research and training institute dedicated to providing biblically-based resources for parents and youth to help build healthy families.