

What Kind of Parent Do You Want to Be – And What Happens On the Days When You're Not

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One step you can take toward becoming the parent you want to be is to define – in writing – what that means. This can begin with a process of brainstorming your goals and values, then writing a vision statement, and then putting that into action. Then in the future, on the inevitable days when you know you're off track from where you want to be, having this written vision can help you course-correct.

Brainstorming the Basics

Here are some questions to ask yourself to discover what's important to you.

- What are your family's strengths? What do you do best?
- What are the most important values you want to pass on?
 - What is the place of education in your family? What value do you place on work? On money?
 - How do you view religion/spirituality, and what part does that play in your daily life?
 - How important is it to you to help other people or participate in your community?
- What would you like the relationships in your family to feel like?
- Is there something you specifically want to avoid doing as a parent? How can you build systems that help you avoid doing that?
- When your child makes a mistake, or intentionally does something wrong, how do you want to respond to them? How will you help them learn to do better?

Writing it Down

Some families have found it very helpful to write a family mission statement or a family vision. (Search online for lots of examples to get you inspired.) You can think about it formally like that, or just write down a series of miscellaneous thoughts. Either way, writing something down helps you to commit to it.

Then you can start living it. Use it as a map for your parenting life to guide how you interact with your child, especially around what choices you let them make and what your discipline approach is.

Narrowing the Vision – Action Gap:

The reality of parenting is that we're often making things up as we go along – we have something we just need our kids to do *right now* (e.g. put on their shoes so we can leave for school, or stop banging on our laptop before they break it). So, we take actions that give us quick results in the moment. Sometimes... those actions aren't really in alignment with our long term goals or visions of ourself as a parent – I'm sure we've all had moments of thinking "I can't believe I just said that!!" or "Oh, that's not who I want to be as a parent!"

When you "mess up" and don't feel like you're succeeding at being the parent you hoped you would be, it can be easy to get discouraged. Be gentle with yourself – don't beat yourself up for your mistakes. Acknowledge them to yourself. Apologize to your child if needed. ("I'm sorry I yelled like that. It was not OK that you drew on the counter, and you will need to help me clean it up. But I should have kept calm and talked to you about it instead of yelling.")

And then... move forward. Ask yourself what you could do differently the next day to move more toward your vision.

Sources:

- [Becoming the Parent You Want to Be](#) by Davis & Keyser.
- Creating a Mission Statement: <https://theparentingpassageway.com/creating-a-family-mission-statement/>
- Create a Family Purpose Statement: <http://theartofsimple.net/back-to-the-basics-create-a-family-mission-statement/>