

Create a Character Culture

PHILOSOPHICAL GUIDELINES

PUT PRINCIPLES AND ATTITUDE OVER RULES AND BEHAVIOR

As a family, solidify the principles which are at the center of the family. Talk about them often. Put your eggs in the basket of ***principles over rules***. Rules are necessary as guidelines but do not deal with the bigger picture. For example, if your student gets into a jam, yet faces it and handles her accountability responsibly, you are able to support her actions. Likewise, your child may have an unproductive attitude, yet follow the house rules. Principles are also goals for **everyone** in the family to work towards: for example, if mom is stressed and has a controlling attitude that also needs to be respectfully addressed. The focus is not on any one individual, but instead centers on the unique potential of all members.

PUT “HOPES AND FEARS” ASIDE AND ALLOW OBSTACLES TO BECOME OPPORTUNITIES

For parents and students, it may be helpful to discuss your hopes and fears for the vacation. While not meaningless, they tend to move you off-track. Most of the fears are out of your control, and the hopes can lead you to promote ***harmony over truth***. Try to move to a framework where you begin to see your child’s struggles as important junctures along his or her journey. Give as much responsibility as you can to your kids to face their struggles and work out their solutions. Ask yourself, when faced with a dilemma, “Is this my issue?” If not, then stay quiet! Count to ten. Then use the classic line, “Sounds like you are struggling. What are you going to do about it?” You may want to throw in, “Let me know if you need any help” before you walk out of the room.

PUT EXPECTATIONS FIRST

Begin with the expectations. Again, these involve everyone. Cooperate as a family to figure these out. Work on pushing each other to their best, rather than keeping them from their worst. What are your expectations? Do you really know? Take some time to talk about this, and if there are two parents in the home, commit to unification on these. When expectations are truly understood by everyone, the negative behavior has less of an atmosphere to breed. For example, by holding down a job, (whether inside or outside the home) your son or daughter has to get up in the morning and thus must get to bed by a decent hour in order to function.

YOUR EXAMPLE WILL BE THE STRONGEST MESSAGE

Finally, your actions will speak louder than any words or lectures. If you are “into this”, your kids will notice. They may not be able to get excited about this yet, but that will come at some point. As you focus on yourself, you will find yourself examining old attitudes and changing! There is nothing wrong with announcing those changes even if they will rock the boat. As you struggle to put ***truth over harmony***, you may risk progress in order to raise the bar on the family. I offer one helpful tip on ***letting go and taking hold***: if you know exactly what needs to be said, that may be a sign that you need to listen. If, however, your gut is churning and you don’t quite know how to put your feelings into words, then bet on the truth. Your struggles will affect your child more than your assured thoughts.

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THE THREE POINT PLAN

EVERYONE HAS A JOB –This expectation is important. It deals with all kinds of negatives (vampire hours, too much free time, questionable peers), but most of all, it gives you a sense of accomplishment. Jobs can be looked for over shorter vacations and volunteer work is certainly acceptable. Offering to help an elderly neighbor for a few days or volunteering at a soup kitchen can be a great experience. Even a work project in your home can work (as long as mom or dad does not micro manage!)

WEEKLY FAMILY MEETINGS - Gathering the family once a week may likely bring a chorus of moans from kids and adults, but once the commitment is made, everyone will benefit. Have different people run the meeting so that the “likely person” is not saddled with this. The meeting can be done in one half hour asking the following questions.

Are there any “Decks to Clear”? (Deal with the past few days or week.)

What do I feel good about?

What am I struggling with?

How am I doing following our family principles?

What goals need to be set for the next week/month? (Individually & as a family.)

Receive feedback.

MANDATORY FUN - This is extremely important. Again, some might moan and groan, but later, many of these mandatory fun times will go down in the annals of great family memories. You can choose to do it at any interval (weekly, biweekly). Everyone gets a chance to plan and direct the activity. **Everyone must go along and have fun!**

REMEMBER THE PARENT MANTRAS:

- We are the parents.
- We are world class.
- Go to the calm.
- Is this my issue?
- We love our child but we do not seek their love.
- Go for respect.
- I’m sorry but that is unacceptable to me.
- This isn’t working for me.
- We don’t have to be right.
- Do not engage!