

# Raising Happy Kids

A Report for Parents



By Winsome Coutts



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*“It takes a whole village to bring up a child.”*

*Old African Saying*

*This e-book is for parents, grandparents, teachers, friends, aunts and uncles  
– anyone who influences the happiness of a child.*

Please share this Report with your friends and family

We want the world to be a happier place

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## *About The Author Winsome Coutts*

**Winsome Coutts, a grandmother and mother of two**, holds a teacher's certificate in education (B. Com, D. Ed), taught school in Australia and Canada, and has written hundreds of articles on self-development.

Winsome studied Child Psychology as part of her training and raised two wonderful children (now wonderful adults). And now she is privileged to have significant input with the raising of her grandchildren, seeing them on a daily basis, and contributing to what they are learning about this wonderful world.

From her depth of experience and vast reading and research on raising Happy Kids, Winsome has a great deal to offer busy parents and child carers.

**Winsome says:** *“As a parent, ex-teacher and now grandmother I just LOVE to see the children I know achieving magical things. All those years of experience communicating and relating to children mean I do have a few tricks up my sleeve on how to connect with kids and*

**Her passion with children is to give them confidence and a strong sense of self esteem, and above all to ‘have fun’. This book can help.**



*Winsome with granddaughter Klara*



*Winsome with granddaughter Stina*

# Introduction

## “All I want is for my kids to be happy”



Parents frequently say, “I just want my kids to be happy”. But we sometimes forget how to focus on happiness in our busy family lives. Let’s think about what happiness consists of and how we can provide more of this gift for our precious children. In this e-book, you’ll learn new ideas as well as get useful reminders, plus suggestions for fun activities.

### *What is happiness?*

When you understand how true happiness develops, you can help your children find it, too. Happiness is within ourselves; it is within our control. That means we can teach our kids skills and attitudes that allow them to foster their own happiness.

Children are surrounded by all sorts of alluring images and ideas on TV, in the playground, and among peers. Wealth, fame, personal beauty, power, countless gadgets and toys – these don’t bring lasting happiness. In fact, chasing after these can even cause unhappiness. True happiness must be found within. Let’s look at some of the ways we can give this to kids.



1. **Building Self-Esteem and Confidence**
2. **Building Relationships**
3. **Creating Stability and Balance**
4. **Teaching an Optimistic and Positive Attitude**
5. **Fostering Passion and Enthusiasm**
6. **Shaping and Teaching Family Values**
7. **Teaching Gratitude and Giving**
8. **Being a Family with Lots of Fun and Fantasy**



# Chapter I

## Building Self-Esteem and Confidence

**Children grow in self-esteem when we do things that make them feel worthwhile.**

When we show we think they have value, they are full of confidence, ready to take on the world. When you appreciate your child, he learns to appreciate himself. The way we communicate, both verbally and nonverbally, is crucial in building a child's self-trust. Every act of communication should convey our respect, admiration and love.

### *How to Build Self-Esteem*

- Tell your kids how special they are to you. You can't say it often enough. Tell them how much you like them and why they are important: "I have such fun with you," "I was so thrilled when you were born," "I had a really good time with you today," "You are so outgoing. I like that about you," "You're doing even better in school now than you did last year."
- Praise is the magic word when dealing with Kids. Praise their actions and character traits you admire – the ones you want to reinforce. Kids love to be praised, especially when they know they have done a good job. Notice your child's strengths and tell him about them (of course you must be sincere): "You have really good ideas," "You're so funny," "I appreciate the way you let the little kids go first." **[100 Ways to Praise a Child](#)**
- Listen. When your child speaks - listen to her with your full attention. Stop what you are doing and look her straight in the eye. Ask questions that show you are really "with her." Nothing speaks value like attention!

- Treat your kids as politely and respectfully as you would a stranger. When they interrupt, shouting at them or ignoring them is as rude as the behavior you are reprimanding. Insults and sarcasm just make them feel resentful and think about resistance and revenge. Good manners should absolutely start at home. Listen to your tone of voice – your words may be fine, but irritation and impatience can easily show through.
- Ask their opinion and advice on matters that are relevant to them, including family affairs. Get everyone together to plan outings and holidays. Perhaps you could say, “We’re going camping this year and need everyone’s ideas on where we might go.” “We can afford a weekend away. Shall we go to the theme park or Water World?” It is very empowering for children to know that their opinion and wishes count.
- Do things together. This way you teach skills, and your kids become more competent. Encourage them to try new things by setting an example. When they see that you obviously want to spend time with them, you are sending the clearest message that you think they are worthwhile. This doesn’t mean sitting in front of the TV with them while you read!
- Give your child choices – options they can choose. This is easy with little ones. Instead of a remark like, “It’s time for bed,” you can say, “Okay, it’s 7.30 and bedtime. Would you like to clean your teeth first, or have your stories?” As kids get older, the choices become more significant. Let them choose their own clothes, hairstyle (does it really matter?), what color their bedroom is painted. This gives them some power over their own life. The more often you let them choose and have a say in things, the less resistant they’ll be when something arises that you want to decide yourself. Kids who’ve been raised on a healthy amount of personal choice are also less likely to rebel later on.
- When a behavior problem arises, gain some thinking time by asking them what they would do if they were the parent in this situation. Such a question encourages them to start thinking from a different perspective – that of accountability for their actions.
- Be prepared to revise your opinion on things. When they produce a convincing case, nothing is more empowering to them than having you recapitulate on something you thought by acknowledging the validity of their perspective or idea.
- Spend time with them, doing things they want to do. Have regular walks every week. This is great time to chat. You will find they share their feelings at unexpected moments like this. Quality time cannot be achieved without quantity time!
- Support them in front of others – don’t ignore them when visitors are around. They need to know that to you they’re more important than your guests.

**Kids with high self-esteem are happy kids.**

When you show faith in their abilities in many little ways, and when you support them and treat them respectfully, they feel a sense of security in their own capabilities and worthiness. Self-esteem is an important part of happiness. They can master their own lives, free from uncertainty and worry.



## *Some Fun Activities to Promote Self-esteem.*

- ★ Build a club house, tree house or dog house together – let them make the decisions. Get them to help with the design, the color of the roof, and so forth.
- ★ Plan and plant a garden – go shopping to choose the plants together.
- ★ Research your camping destination on the Internet. Discuss where to go and the reasons why. Together make a list of everything you need to pack.
- ★ Clean out the shed together and decide what to do with the stuff.
- ★ Plan, shop for and cook a special family dinner using the best china. Write the menu. In fact, make this a permanent monthly event where you all sit down together and just talk for the evening. Older children can take turns being the planner and cook.
- ★ If you have a camcorder, make a family movie together. Discuss what should be in it before you film it. Copy the movie onto disks as presents for grandparents, aunts and uncles.
- ★ Plan a regular time of the week when you are always available for them. This is your family time – for them only.



**“Children need models  
rather than critics.”**

**Joseph Joubert (1754-1824)  
French Philosopher**



# Chapter 2

## Building Relationships

Research shows that people with strong, healthy relationships tend to be the happiest people. The same goes for children, too, of course. Sharing warmth with family, friends and schoolmates gives kids positive feelings. When giving and receiving friendship and love, we are all at our happiest!

### *How to Teach Relationship Skills*

- *Praise and acknowledge your children as often as you can.* They respond warmly and feel good about themselves and relating with you.
- *Create opportunities for your kids to be with lots of other people.* The family circle with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, all having fun together, is a great learning environment. As children grow older, add social occasions that include their friends. Make your home a welcome place for their friends to come to.
- *Help your younger child learn to share and have fun with other children her age.* Invite other little kids over, not too many at a time, and get down on the floor and play with them. They learn relating behaviors from you.
- *Discuss things with the children.* Ask for their suggestions and comments.
- In public, teach by example to always say thank you and to tell people you appreciate what they do for you. Kids in time adopt this behavior. Well-mannered kids get more positive feedback from others.

- *A sense of belonging in any group is a strong relationship need* – belonging in a family, on a team, with a group of friends at school. Healthy family interaction with acknowledgement of all family members, no matter how young, teaches kids relationship strategies. They learn to get on well with others.
- *Enrich your life through friends*, and let your kids see how much friends mean to you. Make your friends feel welcome in your home, and expose your kids to people you like, demonstrating the happiness you receive from others.
- *Teach your children to be gracious when they lose as well as when they win*. Learning to handle both success and defeat is an important life skill that begins in childhood.
- *Treat your child with love, respect and encouragement*. She will model this with the people she comes in contact with.
- *Demonstrate the importance of helping others* to encourage your child's thoughtfulness. Children raised in a help-giving family become thoughtful and caring adults themselves.

**Kids with great relationships are happy kids.** They aren't as vulnerable to enticements of popular culture geared to make them feel important or popular. When children feel connected and have good relationships, they are less likely to look for negative attention and acceptance through anti-social behavior. Healthy social and peer group relationships have been shown to reduce stress, increase feelings of security, and generate other positive emotions, all of which are conducive to happiness.

### *Some Fun Activities to Help Build Relationships*

- ★ Organize a family reunion and get your kids to work on it with you
- ★ Make a family tree together – this promotes a sense of belonging
- ★ Practice for a recital or skit and invite relatives and friends
- ★ Bake cookies together to take to some friends
- ★ Tell old family yarns – grandparents might help
- ★ Say “I love you” to each other
- ★ Write a family story of an outing or holiday together
- ★ Organize a street party
- ★ Make a family photo collage with photos of favorite events you've shared
- ★ Teach your kids to always write a thank-you note or card to friends and relatives when they have given them a present. Post it to the mailbox together.



# Chapter 3

## Creating Stability and Balance

**Kids thrive on routine and a balance of activities in their family life.** Too many children spend most of their time on one activity. If it's not the TV (babysitter!), they are spending five days a week at ballet or soccer lessons because they "have to be" a star. Overemphasis on competitive activities teaches kids wrong values and robs them of their ability to enjoy life's simple pleasures.

Carve out routines that balance all the needs of your children: physical (sports) but also spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social.

### *How to Create an Atmosphere of Security and Balance*

- Have established family routines, especially for regular things like bedtimes and meals. Kids will be much more comfortable and show less anxiety if they know exactly what to expect. Try to keep a consistent, but flexible, daily routine.
- Eat together. Having a separate mealtime for the kids went out with the Victorian Era (thank heavens!). Meals are a great time for conversation and sharing your day together, providing an opportunity for your children to see what you know and believe.
- No meals with the TV on! Maybe Saturday evenings as a treat. No TV after dinner; this is homework time. If homework is finished, there's time for other activities before bed.
- Sleep. One emerging problem with a lot of children is that they are simply not getting enough sleep. Here is another place where routine contributes to good habits. In some families, when visitors are over, small children are still running around at 11.00 pm. Not only are tired kids obtrusive during the adult time, but they get over-excited and don't

handle the next day well. Sleep deficit can build up in children, causing them to be chronically whiney, exhausted, and unhappy.

- Variety. Plan lots of different activities with your family – some quiet and some physical. Then plan in lots of rest. This provides stability.
- Create reasonable and fair rules for activities and behaviors in your family – with consequences the children understand. Stick to those rules. Kids feel secure when they know you can be relied on to enforce the family policies you make.
- Don't over-schedule. Plan some time for just hanging out together.

Balance can mean different sports and physical activities, reading and crafts, going to cultural or spiritual activities and sharing in family fun as well as school work. Stability is found in routine and family patterns that kids can rely on. When these are in place, the world is a reliable place for them, and they feel happier.

### *Some Fun Activities to Provide Routine and Balance*

- ★ Make Sundays pancake breakfast day, or bakery breakfast day – kids look forward to a special family event that happens every week.
- ★ Together plan a list of things you want to do as a family and write them on the calendar. These dates are then non-negotiable – don't make something else more important!
- ★ Have a regular "date" with each child. Go to a place of the child's choosing (within a budget). You can start this routine with kids as old as 30, and it will still be appreciated. One-on-one time, even once a month, is magical.
- ★ Family rituals – think some up that can be unique to your family. Little things like high fives at certain times, the way you hug each other the first thing after the school-and-work day, or going out for pizza as a family every Friday.
- ★ Create a family vision board where the family plans its future together. A vision board is a collection of pictures and words about things the family would like to enjoy and experience. A terrific project is **Jack Canfield's "Dream Big Collection" for kids**
- ★ Celebrate milestones, both large and small.



# Chapter 4

## Teaching an Optimistic and Positive Attitude

**It's delightful to see children who have an upbeat attitude about things.** They look at the world with joy and positivity, expecting good things to happen rather than fretting about bad things that might come. They see sunshine and rainbows rather than clouds and cold days. Such kids enjoy life. The way to develop excitement and anticipation for the future is by focusing on the positive in all your communication together.

### *How to Promote Optimism and a Positive Outlook*

- Every night ask them to tell you about the good things that happened that day. For example, the ritual could be just before turning out the light, "Tell me the three best things that happened today."
- Instead of asking, "How was your field trip?" ask them to tell you the best things they liked about the trip (or about a movie they saw, a book they read, or a person they met) – always looking for the positive.
- Tell them often about the good things you notice that they did, and the things that you think are great about them.
- When pressing, serious problems arise, share them with the adults in your life but not with the children. This is too heavy a burden for their level of maturity and can cause them to suffer great, unnecessary anxiety.

- Teach them that to get a smile you have to give one – to look at other people and smile at them. Smiling actually has a physiological effect on our endorphins, so it makes us feel better too.
- You are the role model. Mostly children learn optimism and pessimism from their parents, so watch yourself for negative thinking and language. Two exceptional books by Dr. Martin Seligman can help here: [‘The Optimistic Child’](#) and [‘Learned Optimism’](#)
- Talk to your child about the lovely attributes you notice in other people. They will learn to look for the best in others too.
- Make sure you keep your promises. When plans fall apart too often for children (because something “more important” has come up for you), they get a negative message about themselves and eventually reduce their expectations that things will work out for them. Of course everyone has to alter plans occasionally, and your child can cope with a reasonable explanation. That’s different than repetitive promise breaking. The other side of this coin is: don’t make promises you can’t keep!
- Be observant if your child seems sad or afraid about something, and discuss the matter with them until they understand their feeling. Sometimes kids hear things out of context, and blow up situations in their minds out of proportion. Don’t trivialize their feelings, but do explain where their perceptions are not realistic.
- When an event is coming up, talk about how excited you are. When grandpa is coming, say how much you look forward to seeing him.

**Optimistic and positive children see exciting challenges where other kids see problems.** They look for solutions with positive expectations. They are rarely bored. They also are more likely to be grateful and appreciative. Children who welcome opportunities and convey genuine gratitude have been found to be very happy kids indeed.

“Optimism is the faith that  
leads to achievement.  
Nothing can be done without  
hope and confidence.”

Helen Keller



## *Some Fun Activities to Promote Optimism and Feeling Positive*

- ★ Create some affirmations together and pin them around the house. Start with things like: “What we think, we get,” “Think BIG,” and “Thoughts create the world.” Write and post your own unique affirmations, specific to your child or family. [Click here to find others you might use.](#)
- ★ Every so often, secretly stick a yellow post-it note on a door or mirror that gives a sincere compliment to your child.
- ★ Create a happiness box. First decorate a cardboard box with pictures. On colored note cards, your child can write down happy memories he recalls. He can keep them in the box, and add to them at happy moments. He can also include photos, a ticket stub from a ball game, travel brochures of a great holiday place the family went, or pictures of the theme park rides he went on. On days when he needs a lift, remind him to look inside the box and to tell you about some of the items.
- ★ Place a chart or notice on the fridge which you have personalized for your child. Every now and then, when she is not around, write something good about the great things she has said or done, that you have noticed about her.
- ★ Play the personality game. This is useful for traveling in the car, waiting at restaurants, or anywhere you have a few moments of spare time. Ask your child “What are three things you are good at?” or “What are three things you like about yourself?” or “What three things would you like to improve upon?”
- ★ Plan exciting events together to look forward to, and focus on excitement and anticipation until the time arrives.
- ★ Say only positive things for one whole day.
- ★ Around the dinner table, have each family member say one thing they like about each person in the family.



# Chapter 5

## Fostering Passion and Enthusiasm

**One major contributor to your child's happiness is a passion for something in his life.** It's important to honor the natural talents and interests our children possess. It doesn't matter whether it's football, reading, dance, music or cooking. Passionate kids are happy kids because there is something in their lives that they absolutely love to do!

### *How to Encourage Passion and Enthusiasm*

- Spend time together working on their hobby. Go to the ball game, sit by the river and paint, read fairy stories – whatever is exciting for your child.
- Make sure that you don't impose your hobbies and interests on your child, though nine times out of ten they will want to emulate you anyway. It soon becomes apparent what they are interested in.
- Shopping, video games and TV programs soon become boring, and children want to buy more stuff. This is because such things don't provide lasting fulfillment. Get the focus off these "junk activities" by introducing creative ones that bring greater happiness. Your child's need for the mall, Nintendo or TV will naturally diminish.
- You are a role model. When your kids see you totally engaged with your hobby or sport, they will follow suit.
- Advertising is everywhere, and cleverly engages our children. Material things will not light up real passion in kids. Make purchases of toys a treat – not a regular event. Parents

often choose this expedient way of entertaining their children rather than spending time with them finding something they really love to do.

Kids who have an interest which comes from inside them are not bored; they have a spark that adds vitality to their lives. When they are absorbed in doing the thing they love most, they are happy. Your children are even happier when you take a special interest in their interest!

### *Some Fun Activities to Promote Passion and Enthusiasm.*

- ★ If a particular sport is his hobby, plan an exciting trip to the big ball game. If the special love is dancing or acting, take her to a professional ballet performance or theatre production.
- ★ Collect advertising and pictures of the players/ performers, then help your child make a poster or scrapbook. Keep the event stubs and the program. Research details on the stars of the event, to write on the poster or in the scrapbook.
- ★ Purchase books about the hobby and help your child work through them. You might have to read them to her if the vocabulary is above her level.
- ★ Write a book together about your child's passionate interest.
- ★ Sit down together and ask them to tell you all about their passion. Ask questions to show you are really listening.
- ★ Involve them in your own hobby, and if they show an interest, teach them what you know. Have heaps of fun doing it.
- ★ Ask your child what ideas he has for doing more of what he loves the best. Ask how you can help.



**“If you do the best you can, you will find, nine times out of ten, that you have done as well as or better than anyone else.”**

**William Feather**



# Chapter 6

## Shaping and Teaching Family Values

**As parents, you get to decide the values for your family.** Indeed, it's your responsibility. A strong sense of your family's values provides a firm basis for self-knowledge, and adds to your child's happiness. A kid who knows where he stands and has a clear understanding of right and wrong is a happy kid. She feels secure. Establishing boundaries and sticking to them provides your child with a yardstick by which to measure herself. She can rely on you to keep her on track while she is learning to set her own boundaries. Below are some values that probably are important to your family:

### *Typical Family Values*

- *Our family is more important than anyone else in our lives.* If your children and spouse take first place in importance, the way you communicate and spend time with them will show this better than words you use to proclaim it.
- *Each person is important for who they are, not for what they have.* Popular culture promotes consumerism and materialism. It wants to create people whose primary purpose in life is to spend and devour; buy, buy and buy some more. Families need to counter this by teaching the value of people over things. One way is by example, being generous rather than overly acquisitive.
- *Our feelings deserve to be honored and acknowledged.* It's okay to express feelings, even the unpleasant ones. When your child comes to you with a problem, try not to minimize his challenges and fears. By helping him look for solutions, you send the message that it is safe to talk with you about his problems.

- *We control our own life.* Teaching your child that she has the power to create her own reality through the way she thinks, and how to do that, is one of the greatest life tools you can give a child. Show her how to take responsibility for their own life, by setting goals and achieving them. The best book on the market for guiding kids in goal setting, visualization and the Law of Attraction is [\*\*Go for Your Goals for Kids\*\*](#). It contains a parents' guide and two downloadable children's books (each targeting a different age group) set in language and art work a child can understand.
- *There are bounds to acceptable behavior.* Set boundaries - reasonable behavior expectations. Discuss your family rules and explain the reasons for them to your child. Then stick to those rules. If your child learns that he can get around you, that you'll waver and give in, you deprive him of the firm values and expectations he needs, to grow into an ethical human being.
- *Actions have predictable consequences.* Create acceptable and fair consequences for problem behaviors. Be consistent – if you handle it one way this week, be sure that you handle it the same way the next. Include rewards for positive consequences, especially when a child is working to overcome a negative behavior. Let your child express her opinions about what her consequences should be. Ask her what consequences (both negative and positive) she would find motivating. Discuss this when the child has been behaving and the communication is good between you (not when she has misbehaved and there is tension between you).
- *Responsibility is empowering.* Children of all ages can be responsible for parts of their life – for tidiness, chores around the house, pocket money, and so forth. They learn responsibility for their actions when you allow them to make their own decisions. If the choice concerns something new, you might let them make it after discussing the various options together.
- *Learning is exciting.* Teach curiosity and lifelong learning as virtues. Go to the library with your child, not occasionally but frequently. Pick out books together, and explore learning about subjects that interest you both, sharing information. Visit museums, planetariums and aquariums. Let your child see you reading frequently, and read everyday to your child. Do this until he is 14. Not only do such happy moments encourage a love of books. They also help expand your child's comprehension and vocabulary. Read him books at a higher vocabulary level than he is capable of reading by himself.
- *Fairness.* Children respond to reasonable expectations – try to expect only skills and behaviors that are appropriate for their age. Teach kids to be fair with each other. Playing with them and their friends is one way to do this. When conflicts arise with the very young, explain what's fair and why. Help older children understand the point of view of the other child involved in the conflict. Then gently encourage them to find the fair solution.
- *Kindness and empathy.* You can say things like, "We are always kind to animals. They are so innocent. We protect them and never want to hurt them." Then explain the reasons why you feel that way.
- *Co-operation.* Play games where many are involved and learn about co-operating to make the game more enjoyable.

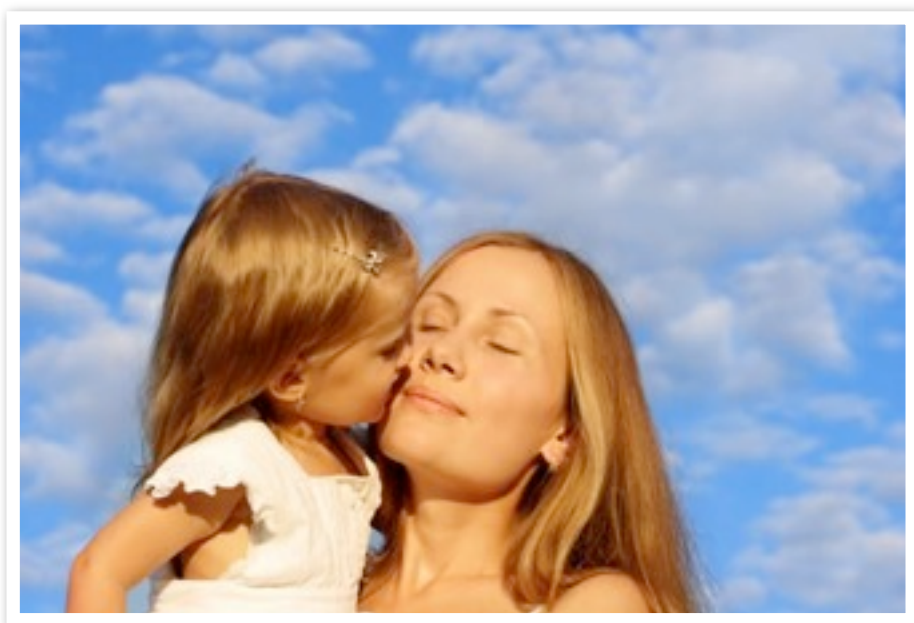
- Honesty. Explain why it's wrong to take things that belong to other people, including items in a store. Consider – is it okay for children (and parents) to help themselves to a few unpaid-for cherries and grapes while they do the grocery shopping? Why or why not?
- Helpfulness. When you assign age-appropriate chores, you teach them to be helpful and that their contribution counts
- Good manners. Old-fashioned manners make social interactions more comfortable and pleasant. Once again, you are the role model. Your actions speak louder than words. Teach your child about saying thank you, good table habits, playing music (and talking) at a considerate volume, listening (not interrupting), protecting the environment (not littering), letting cell phones ring through to the messaging feature when they are visiting with someone, sitting in a movie, etc.
- Non-violence. If you tell your child, “It’s not okay to hit your brother,” then later on hit him yourself, you are sending a mixed message. Actions speak!

We teach values even when we are not conscious that we’re doing it. Many parents never discuss values, so their principles become known to their children by default (when the child is told not to do something). It is better to teach values in advance; the results are more pleasant and positive, and the learning goes far deeper. Rather than a mandate, it becomes an ethical understanding.



## *Some Fun Activities to Teach Your Family Values*

- ★ Play board games – even make up ones of your own together. Teach fair play, taking turns and playing with honesty.
- ★ Volunteer with your child in the community. Help out at the animal shelter, or visit old people in a nursing home. Don't just do it once but regularly. Practicing kindness teaches kindness.
- ★ Make handmade valentines and greeting cards with your child, for family and friends, to express your gratitude for these individuals being in your life.
- ★ Wash the car together or clean the family silver – praise them for being so helpful.
- ★ Visit the library and learn something together.
- ★ Play ball in the backyard or park with your child and one or more other children. Teach about sharing.
- ★ Make a little photo book to give to grandparents, commenting on how rewarding it is to think up things that make others happy.
- ★ Sit down and talk about values, explaining what they are. Then ask your child to tell you what values he notices in your family. Write them down as he lists them, and help him fill out the list for any important values he may miss.
- ★ Make a family poster about your family values. Write them down and cut out pictures representing each.



# Chapter 7

## Teaching Gratitude and Giving

**Research shows that really happy people have a sense of gratitude, even when things aren't going too well.** Gratitude is an attitude of open receptivity – it allows more good things to enter our lives. By contrast, when we are complaining and miserable, our negative feelings repel good things that otherwise might come to us. It's healthy to focus on the positive and maintain an attitude of expectation that problems will right themselves and the good will come our way. It's important for children to learn this, so they can attract happy experiences into their life, both now and in adulthood.

Happy people are also characterized by the habit of giving. Being generous benefits the giver even more than the receiver. This may be a platitude, but the platitude has come to exist because it's so indisputably true. No matter how little of something you may have, when you find a way to share it with someone else, you grow in the feeling of self-worth, power, and abundance. You feel less poor, less desperate, more capable in your own life. Again, these positive feelings attract more abundance to come to you.

How valuable a lesson this is for children! Here are some ways you can teach both giving and an attitude of gratitude.

### *How to Encourage Gratitude and Giving*

- Talk about the little things that make you both happy. The more you focus on them, so will your child.
- Teach sharing to small children by saying each can have two minutes with the favorite toy. Set a timer while they take turns playing with it, and explain the concept and value of

taking turns. Learning to share is sometimes hard for very little kids; they are rather ego-centered until the age of six. Don't insist they share their very favorite toys; they can put them away before playmates come over.

- Speak your appreciation frequently. When you express your gratitude for things and people, your child will model you.
- Do something for others together. Ask your child who they know who maybe could use some help or cheering up. Then ask her what she thinks you might do together to bring them more happiness. (Ideas: making the person cookies, inviting them over, visiting them, taking them for a ride, offering to clean or do yard work for them or to run errands)
- Talk about the little things as well as big things you can be grateful for. Appreciate the lovely day, the flowers, insects, or birds. Talk with them about how fortunate we are to have a warm home and great holidays.
- Teach about the happiness that comes of giving. A starting point might be to go through the clothes together that don't fit anymore and give them to the charity shop for other children. Young kids are naturally possessive of their toys, so don't press them to give those up. There are other things they can give, that won't leave a hole behind.

**Children will grow in happiness by learning to give of themselves to others.** When we focus on helping others, we expand who we are. It is extremely satisfying and gives meaning and joy when we help improve someone's life, even in a very small way.

## *Some Fun Activities to Encourage Gratitude and Giving*

- ★ Help your children to write a **gratitude journal**.
- ★ Take part in a tree-planting day.
- ★ Create greeting cards to send to family members on special occasions.
- ★ Bake a cake to take to some friends.
- ★ Get a gratitude rock: find a special pebble, keep in your pocket, and every time you touch it, remember to be grateful for something about your day. Do this with your child.
- ★ Help an elderly relative or neighbor spring-clean.
- ★ Do some volunteer work.
- ★ Think of ways your family can help the environment or help create a sustainable community. Then get involved in a project together.
- ★ Have a garage sale of everyone's old things. Donate the money to charity.
- ★ Participate in a community fund-raising drive.
- ★ Invite friends over – and all cook the dinner together.
- ★ Think of a family you know that has to struggle to make ends meet. Brainstorm with your kids about how your family might help ease their situation. One-on-one giving (to people you personally know) carries emotions of kindness, support and empathy that are very healing for the receiver and empowering for the giver. But explain about giving gracefully: not embarrassing people by giving in an ostentatious or patronizing way, or blatantly helping people who would be offended by it.



# Chapter 8

## Being a Family with Lots of Fun and Fantasy

**Kids who play and laugh a lot within the family circle are naturally happy.** Fantasy develops creativity, and it's a pleasure to share make-believe together. Let kids be kids, and learn to be kidlike with them. When it comes to play, you may find your child becomes **your** teacher!

### *How to Laugh and Play Lots*

- Just play! Allocate time for family fun and don't be afraid to be silly.
- Kids just love it when adults joke around and laugh with them. Laugh wholeheartedly and loudly, sharing anything that is funny.
- Lighten up. If you are forever busy and rushing around overwhelmed with what you have to fit into each week, stop! Step back and see what can be eliminated or streamlined. It's not healthy to be too busy, and kids don't want us to be too serious.
- Play daydreaming and fantasy games together. Kids know the difference between make-believe and reality, and just love pretending. The more ridiculous, the better.
- Allow them to be kids – try not to burden them with adult worries and responsibilities.

**Heaps of fun and laughter go a long way to making children happy.** Laughter, in fact, has a physiological effect that activates our endorphins. The more kids laugh, the better they feel. It's hard to overemphasize the importance of fun and laughter!

## *Some Fun Activities for Family Fun and Fantasy*

- ★ Lie on your backs and watch the stars, or all go to the local planetarium. Get a stargazer map that shows the sky by date and time. See if you can find the constellations in the night sky.
- ★ Sit down together and make a list of fun things you all want to do together. Put it on the fridge, and get the kids to choose one when you have a spare afternoon or a few spare hours.
- ★ Roast marshmallows on a fire in the yard.
- ★ Rake autumn leaves and roll in them.
- ★ Pretend you're tourist in your own home town and visit all the significant sites.
- ★ Watch a parade.
- ★ Read joke books together.
- ★ Play card games, board games, or memory games like "I'm going to Grandma's house, and in my suitcase I'm going to pack ..."
- ★ Rent a really funny movie and laugh together.
- ★ Have a treasure hunt.
- ★ Play charades.
- ★ Blow bubbles.
- ★ Play hide and seek. A family version of this is to have one person hide (in a fairly big space), then all go looking. When you find the hider, wait until no one notices, then jump in to hide with him. When everyone is hidden, the last one in has to be the next person to hide. Kids love squeezing in with the adults and trying not to giggle.
- ★ Get up early and watch the sunrise from a nearby hill or vantage point.
- ★ Buy lollipops or ice cream bars and stroll along eating them.
- ★ Go bowling.
- ★ Plan a hike with a map, and go on it.

Have lots of fun with these ideas, and especially  
have lots of fun with your kids.

It's true: you'll turn around one day, and they will be young adults. Parenting, though, never stops. There's never an age to stop praising, encouraging or listening to your child.

**Feel free to share this e-book with your friends and family. We want to make kids lives happier everywhere.**



*Winsome Coutts*

Winsome Coutts  
Author of 'Go for Your Goals - for Kids'  
[www.4lifehappykids.com](http://www.4lifehappykids.com)

# Great Resources for Happy Kids

## E-book

### 'Go for Your Goals – for Kids'

by Winsome Coutts, a Parent's Guide and two Kids Workbooks (different for appropriate age groups). Goal setting is rarely taught in school, but is one of the most important skills we can give our children. This e-book set is a brilliant process to follow for children with their parents, teachers or grandparents. Walk through the goal setting process with your child with fun exercises and examples. Children learn what a goal is, why it is important, what specific steps to take, and the importance of visualization. Once they learn this skill and have success with it, they have it for life.



## Books

### 'The Optimistic Child'

by Dr Martin Seligman, an exceptional book by this noted psychologist strongly recommended for parents wanting to help their children to be positive and optimistic in life.

### 'Learned Optimism'

by Dr Martin Seligman This book is more directed at adults, and does spend considerable time discussing why becoming optimistic is good for us when we really want to learn how, but nevertheless, is well worth reading and learning from.

## Programs

### 'Dream Big Collection'

by Jack Canfield: a really unique visualization tool that creates a private, sacred space for your child to define their dreams, goals and desires. Each Vision Book comes with a broad collection of inspirational words, quotations, and affirmations to select from and place them in their Vision Book. Combine them with pictures and images that inspire them and best represent their dreams and desires. A fun visual process.



*"When you're connected to a source and to each other through conversation, through making love, through meditation, playing games with your kids, all that stuff, then your self-esteem's going to go up." - Jack Canfield*

### 'How to Raise Happy, Healthy, Self-Confident Children'

by Brian Tracy; a 6-CD Program which teaches the four behaviors of effective parenting, how to communicate with your children on a deeper level and how to raise responsible happy children who are high achievers. In fact how to raise super kids!



*"If you raise your children to feel that they can accomplish any goal or task they decide upon, you will have succeeded as a parent and you will have given your children the greatest of all blessings." - Brian Tracy*

## Free Resources

### 100 Ways to Praise a Child –

A free poster for your fridge

### Kids Affirmations –

Free affirmations for children to use

### 100 Ways to Have Fun in Your Family–

Ideas on how to have fun with your kids and the whole family

### Help Your Kids Set Goals –

Goal cards booklet - includes 6 goal cards and a goals worksheet

### 20 Tips for a Great Relationship with Your Kids –

Another free poster for your fridge



[www.4lifehappykids.com](http://www.4lifehappykids.com)