

## PARENTING

### Finding parenting's true north!

In South Australia they have a unique variety of gum tree called mallee. Mallee gums lack a central trunk, and have lots of stem clusters that look alike. This means it's really easy to get lost if you walk off the track in Mallee. Parenting today is a lot like Mallee bush – everything looks the same and it's easy to get lost!

As a parent, how do you stay on the right path when there are so many distractions? How do you optimise your child's growth and future?

In our constantly changing world quick fix techniques or programs seldom work in transforming a child into the best he or she can be. We believe today's parents need a new principle centred approach. This approach is the critical difference between you being in control as the parent, or your child being in control of you. So how does it work?

First a metaphor. Using the Mallee bush as an example, what would be most helpful if you found yourself lost in it: a map or a compass? A map describes or represents the territory. It's a quick overview, so it's like a quick fix. If the features are stable it is useful, but if they are changing it becomes less effective. Fire, flood or drought can quickly change the landscape. A compass on the other hand shows how things really are.

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### Investing in heart

There was a time when a new year was simply the repeat of the previous one, but already the signs are that 2009 will be a time of massive change. With change comes new challenges for families, especially economic security. Change though can also present new possibilities. Author Elizabeth David suggests one such possibility: "There are people who take heart out of you, and there are people who put it back."

In these challenging times be a parent who puts heart back into your family. Then no matter what happens externally your home will be a safe place for your child.

Wishing you parenting success.

Ian McKean

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## Finding parenting's true north! (Continued from page 1)

A compass will point you in the right direction even if the landscape changes; it is more accurate and useful than a map when the territory is constantly changing. Therefore a map is like a set of prescriptions, but a compass gives direction thus helping the parent to choose their own pathway.

If parents rely upon 'maps' they will get bogged down in trying to find the right discipline technique, as well as having to constantly upgrade their 'maps.' Parenting by 'map' is energy draining work! We believe parents today need a compass to provide them with 'true north' direction. Even in a chaotic world, 'true north' parenting principles help children thrive. With a 'true north' compass it doesn't matter how much change there is in your child's environment, because you still know the direction to head in and what you need to get there. That's why a compass in the mallee is a lot more useful than a map. And why it's also true for parenting.

There are four essential principles that point the way for parents. No matter what your situation these principles are relevant and necessary to help your child thrive.

### PRINCIPLE ONE

*Energy* is your most important **RESOURCE**

**INSIGHT:** You can't give what you don't have. As a parent, if you are low on energy it becomes difficult to energise your child. It takes energy to love a child, to discipline them, to play with them, to listen to them, to teach them, to hang out with them, to be in the 'now' with them. Without energy you have to get lucky to be an effective parent.

### PRINCIPLE TWO

*Connection* is your most important **FOCUS**

**INSIGHT:** You can't control a child. You might think you can by bullying them when they are little, but . . . when they become an adolescent it will be pay back time. You don't want that, so focus your efforts where you can make the greatest impact. While you can't control your child, you can influence them.

And the degree of influence is determined by the strength of the connection they have with you. If they don't feel emotionally connected to you, you will have little influence in their life; but if they feel a strong connection with you, you have strong influence. Aim for maximising your influence by building the emotional bond between you both.

### PRINCIPLE THREE

Enriching your child's *environment* is your most important **TASK**

**INSIGHT:** You can't grow your child. Nature has already taken care of that by giving them genes! Genes are really motivated to help your child flourish. But to help genes do their work they need an enriched environment. And that's where you come in. Trying to grow your child is futile because only nature can do that. By caring for your child's environment your efforts will get great rewards.

### PRINCIPLE FOUR

Learning your child's '*dance*' (how they move and how they feel) is your most important **CHANGE STRATEGY**

**INSIGHT:** Being an effective parent is like waltzing to Andre Rieu. I didn't know who he was until this week when I was at a shopping centre and saw hundreds of people lined up with CD's and DVD's. "What's this huge queue for" I asked. "We are here to see Mr. Waltz!" When two people waltz they flow together in the same movement, with the same music. That's a good metaphor for how parent and child move together when there is cooperation and harmony. You want your child to flow with you. Misbehaviour is when you want your child to waltz, but they insist on doing hip hop. It doesn't make for happy parenting!

Four simple principles . . . Four powerful ways for helping you find "true north" as a parent. Our discipline workshops explain these principles in more detail. Check our web site for dates and locations.



## Ten rules for a successful relationship

Here are ten rules that couples researchers have consistently identified as nourishing a romantic and loving relationship:

- 1** "I love you." Tell your partner you love them. Words are powerful symbols.
- 2** Touch builds connection. Being physically affectionate means not just sex, but kissing, cuddling, and holding hands.
- 3** Give emotional support. Support is being available when your partner needs you – when they are tired, stressed, or anxious.
- 4** Express fondness and admiration for your partner. Recognising and affirming your partner's positive strengths creates attraction. We like people who like us.
- 5** Love gets expressed in material ways. Giving gifts, writing a love note are visible evidence of a grateful heart. Someone has wisely said, "You can tell the depth of love by the degree of giving."
- 6** Share more openly and authentically with your partner than you do with other people. Who you share your emotional world with is who you get most attached to. Sharing about your self builds love bonds.
- 7** The golden rule works for relationships too: Do unto others as you want them to do to you. Don't be a partner who gives less and wants to receive more. Nurturing relationships give more than they expect in return.

**8** Every partner brings a unique set of problems to the relationship. Realising they aren't perfect, and loving them in spite of their idiosyncrasies, builds love. Naturally this doesn't include abuse, but does include our unique personalities and reaction buttons.

**9** Cultivate your love everyday. Through your time and energy make your partner a high priority. Like in a garden, a week of neglect can give the weeds a head start.

**10** Spend time with each other without other distractions. Couple love requires focused attention and special moments of oneness. Love only grows in the NOW. If you are distracted by the past or future it can't grow.

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### Quote

"Let us dedicate ourselves to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world." Quoted by Robert Kennedy following Martin Luther King assassination.

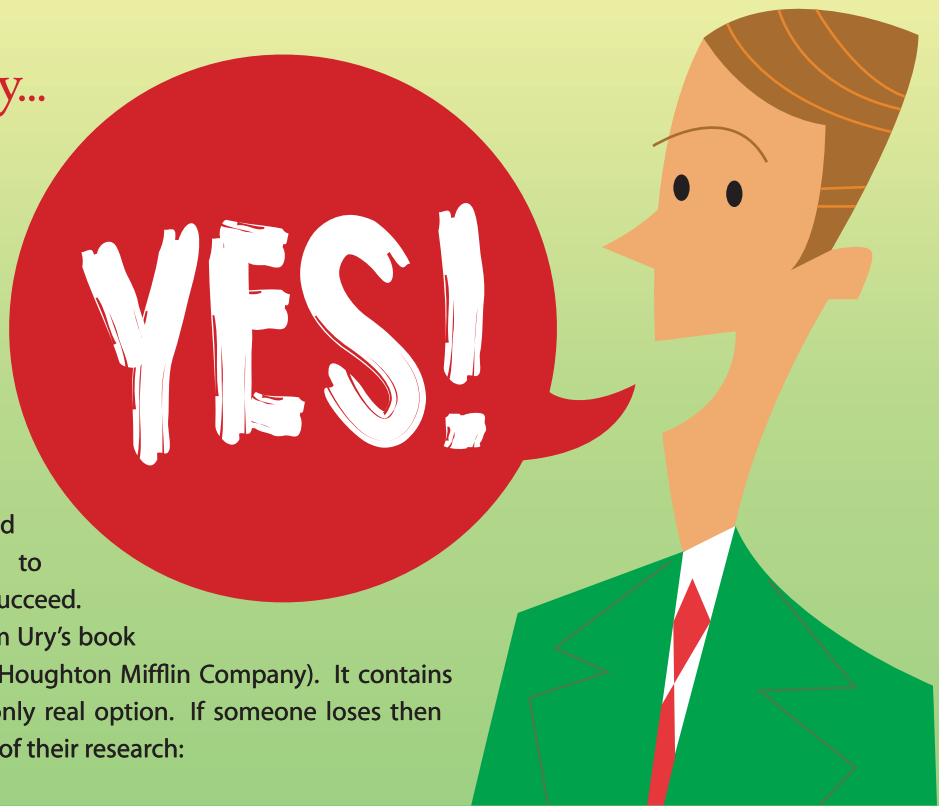


## Getting people to say...

Successful work relationships are when we work together cooperatively so everyone feels they are listened to and valued. It wasn't so long ago that a competitive, aggressive, win at all costs attitude was a quick way to get a corner office, even if it meant stepping on top of others on the way!

Today most work environments understand they are interdependent – we have to cooperate with other people in order to succeed.

I recently reread Roger Fisher and William Ury's book on negotiation called "Getting to Yes." (Houghton Mifflin Company). It contains good insights into why win-win is the only real option. If someone loses then really everyone loses. Here is a summary of their research:



SOFT	HARD	PRINCIPLED
Lose - win	Win - lose	Win - win
Participants are friends	Participants are adversaries	Participants are problem-solvers
The goal is agreement	The goal is victory	The goal is a wise outcome reached amicably
Make concessions to cultivate friendship	Demand concessions as a condition of relationship	Separate the people from the problem
Be soft on the people and the problem	Be hard on the problem and the people	Be soft on the people, hard on the problem
Trust others	Distrust others	Proceed independent of trust
Change your position easily	Dig into your position	Focus on interests, not position
Makes offers	Make threats	Explore interests
Disclose your bottom line	Mislead as to your bottom line	Avoid having a bottom line
Accept one-sided losses to reach agreement	Demand one-sided gains as the price of agreement	Invent options for mutual gain
Search for the single answer: the one they will accept	Search for the single answer: the one you will accept	Develop multiple options to choose from: decide later
Insist on agreement	Insist on your position	Insist on objective criteria
Try to avoid a contest of wills	Try to win a contest of wills	Try to reach a result based on standards independent of will
Yield to pressure	Apply pressure.	Reason and be open to reason; yield to principle, not pressure

### Health: Get your exercise!

Harvard School of Public Health warns that 'visceral fat' – fat behind your belly muscles – is especially harmful to good health as it pumps out hormones that have been linked to heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. Their

advice is women should aim for a waistline of 35 inches (89 cm) or less and men 40 inches (102 cm) or less. If too many calories are beginning to show it's time to increase your physical exercise routine.

## Berries make a happy heart

One of the good things about fruit shops is the selection of berries. And what child doesn't love a bowl full of strawberries, blueberries or raspberries! A recent study conducted in Finland (reported in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition) divided participants into two groups: one group ate 2/3rds cup of berries and berry juice every day for 8 weeks. The other group ate no berries. The group who ate the berries had three major health benefits that all related to improved cardiovascular health:

- 1 Berry eaters HDL cholesterol (good) went up
- 2 Their blood pressure went down
- 3 They also had higher levels of polyphenols (natural plant compound) in their blood. Polyphenols act as antioxidants, causing the blood vessels to open up.

### DISCIPLINE

## There's a whiner in the home

A whining child can really get on your nerves - especially after a day at work. For most children who whine it peaks around three and a half years. There is a pattern to when and how most kids whine, so observing your child is the first intervention step:

- My child whines all the time
- He or she only whines when tired, or I am busy
- If I don't give my child attention they whine more
- He or she has only just begun to whine
- My child knows when he or she is whining
- I often give in to his/her whining

### Here's what to do:

**Bored children whine.** Encourage your child to be independent. Provide activities for them to be involved in. If they are only young remember they won't be able to play independently for too long.

**Your child needs attention because all kids want to be noticed.** Provide a special time to play with your child each day. Give them attention before they whine, so they don't think that whining will get them attention.

**Observe your child's behaviour before they whine.** Do they whine just before they go to bed? Just before dinner? After they have been out all day? If there is a pattern it provides you with a clue of why they whine (tired, hungry) and also how to treat it.

Berries contain vitamins A, C and E, folic acid and the minerals potassium, zinc, iron, magnesium, calcium and selenium. Researchers at the Indiana University School of Medicine have found that selenium could play a role in protecting the aging brain from mental decline. This means berries aren't just good for kids! Parents need them too.

**One cup of berries provides the following values:**

BERRY	CALORIES	FIBRE	SUGAR
Strawberries	53	3 grams	8 grams
Raspberries	64	8 grams	5 grams
Blackberries	62	8 grams	7 grams
Blueberries	82	4 grams	14 grams



**Respond to your child as promptly as possible when they ask you something.** Don't let their frustration

build until it becomes whining. If a child thinks they can only get your attention by whining, you can guess what they quickly learn to do! It's important to teach your child how to politely say "excuse me."

**Teach your child to hear their whining voice** - even use a tape recorder so they understand what their whining voice sounds like. They need to understand the difference between a whining voice and a nice tone of voice.

### Some further advice

Don't respond to a whining voice. What gets attention gets repeated. Once your child realises they won't get a response if they whine it will stop. You can remind them though that you'll only listen if they speak in a nice tone of voice. Reward them when they use a nice tone of voice. Catch them speaking nicely and affirm them (hug, verbal praise, high five).

And most importantly, be sure you are a good role model! Set a good example by not whining when you discipline them. Ask your partner if you sometimes whine when you correct your child and if they say 'Yes,' don't argue with them; work on changing your own tone of voice first.

## INSPIRATION

# A life worth living

- Follow the three R's: respect for self, respect for others, responsibility for your actions.
- When you realise you have made a mistake, say sorry immediately.
- Be open to change, but hold onto your values.
- Not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.
- When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
- Great love and great achievements involve great risk.
- A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.
- In disagreements with loved ones, deal only with the current situation.
- Don't bring up the past.
- Don't let a little dispute injure a great relationship.
- Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
- The best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.
- Share your knowledge.
- Spend some time alone each day.
- Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.
- Be gentle with the earth.
- Live a good honourable life. When you get older and think back, you'll be able to enjoy it a second time.
- Judge your success by what you had to give up to get it.

*(Unknown ~ quoted by Michael Josephson)*

## FAST FACTS

In a recent North American and European survey people were asked: In a typical week, how often would you eat a meal by yourself? Here are the percentage who said, "every day or most days:"

USA	46%
Germany	40%
Czech Republic	42%
Hungary	39%
Poland	36%
United Kingdom	36%
Russia	33%
Ukraine	33%
Romania	32%
Italy	25%

## QUOTE

Life is a series of problems. We either moan about them, or solve them.

Dr. Scott Peck.

## Parents Partner

The newsletter for  
Kindercare families

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## WORDS OF WISDOM

Sometimes the smallest things take up the most room in your heart. ~ Winnie the Pooh.