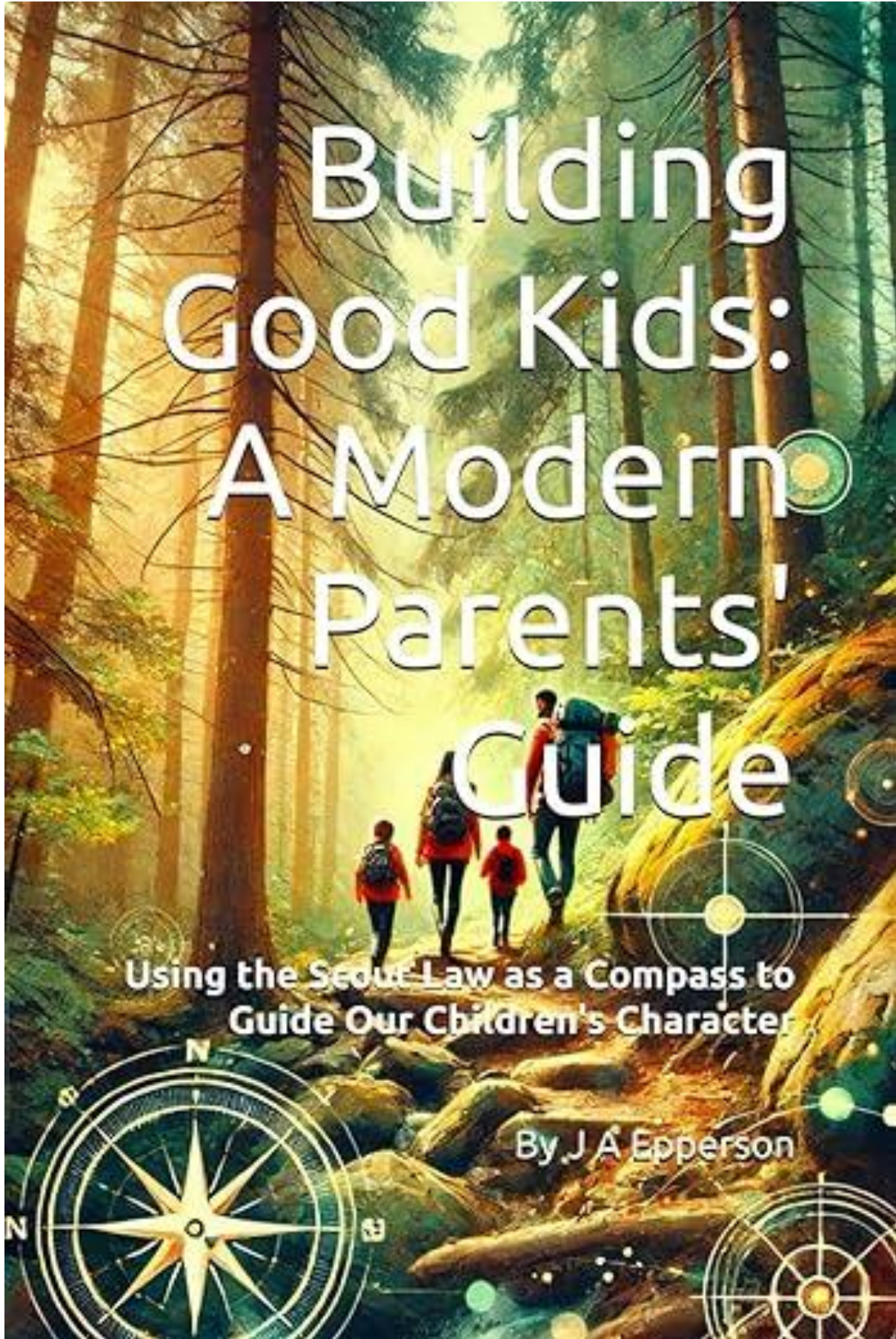




Building Good Kids: A Modern Parents' Guide

Using the Scout Law as a Compass to
Guide Our Children's Character

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*Building Good Kids: A Modern Parents' Guide --
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(All names have been changed)*

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Introduction:

Why This Book?

Hey there, fellow parent! If you're reading this, chances are you're just like me – trying to figure out how to raise good kids in a world that seems to be changing faster than we can keep up. I'm not here to preach or claim I've got all the answers. I have over 68 years of life experience, many of those years working with families, particularly their youth, and I've seen firsthand how powerful the Scout Law can be in shaping young lives.

Now, I know what you're thinking. "Scout Law? Isn't that just for, well... Scouts?" Trust me, I had the same thought at first. But here's the thing: these principles aren't just about tying knots and earning badges. They're about building character, integrity, and respect – qualities we all want our kids to have, right? Even more, we want them in the adults we interact with daily. I once learned from an experienced Scout leader, "If you want good adults, you have to build good kids."

Let me take you back to a moment that drove this home for me. I learned the following story from a former scout leader.

It was a typical Tuesday evening, and he was sitting in his office, buried under a mountain of paperwork. A young man walked in—let's call him Dave. He was in his late twenties, looking aged beyond his years. A little rough around the edges. Perhaps the result of some bad choices. He sat and said, "You probably don't remember me, but I was in your Scout troop 15 years ago."

The leader didn't recognize him at first, but the memories came flooding back as they talked. Dave had been a handful as a kid—constantly testing boundaries and getting into trouble. The leader remembered countless nights worrying about whether they were getting through to him.

As they caught up, Dave's eyes welled up. "I just wanted to say thank you," he said. Those lessons you taught us—about honesty, respect, and helping others—stuck with me. They saved me. I was headed down a destructive path, but I heard your voice in my head, reminding me to be trustworthy and kind."

That moment hit the leader like a ton of bricks. It showed him the lasting impact these values can have, even when they don't seem to be sinking in at the time.

But here's the kicker – you don't need to be a Scout leader to instill these values in your kids. You're already doing it every day, whether you realize it or not. This book is about adapting and applying those timeless principles to our modern parenting challenges.

So, what can you expect from this book? Well, it's not a step-by-step manual (because, let's face it, kids don't come with instruction manuals). Instead, think of it as a friendly chat with someone who's been in the trenches of parenthood and has picked up a few tricks.

We will break down each point of the Scout Law and explore how it applies to raising kids in today's world. We'll talk about everything from teaching honesty in the age of social media to fostering bravery in a time when our kids face new kinds of pressures we never dreamed of.

You'll find real-life stories – told from the perspective of a counselor, some from my own experience, some from other parents. These aren't picture-perfect tales of parenting triumphs. They're messy, sometimes funny, often challenging stories of real families trying to do their best. Because let's be honest – parenting *is messy*, and we're all just figuring it out as we go along.

Each chapter will also include practical tips and activities you can try with your family. These aren't complicated or time-consuming – I know you're busy enough as it is. They're simple ideas to help reinforce these values in your everyday life.

I want to clarify something – this book isn't about raising perfect kids. It's not about creating little robots who always follow the rules and never make mistakes. It's about nurturing children to have a solid moral compass, know right from wrong, and have the courage to stand up for their beliefs.

It's also about something other than adding more to your already full plate. I know you're juggling work, school schedules, extracurricular activities, and trying to have some semblance of a personal life. That's why everything in this book is designed to integrate into your existing family life to enhance the things you're already doing.

As we go through this journey together, remember there's no such thing as a perfect parent. We all make mistakes, lose our cool, and sometimes wonder if we're doing it right. The key is to keep trying and stay committed to raising kids who will make the world a little bit better.

So, get comfortable because we're about to embark on an adventure – the adventure of “building good kids.” It's not always easy, but I promise you, it's the most rewarding thing you'll ever do.

Are you ready? Let's get started!

The Scout Law 101 - What's the Big Deal?

Alright, let's start with the basics. The Scout Law isn't some mystical code – it's a set of 12 simple principles that have been guiding young people for over a century. Now, before your eyes glaze over at the thought of memorizing a list, let me assure you – this isn't about rote learning. It's about understanding the essence of these principles and how they can shape our kids into awesome human beings.

So, here they are in plain English:

1. Trustworthy: Tell the truth, keep promises
2. Loyal: Stick by your family, friends, and values
3. Helpful: Lend a hand without being asked (and certainly when asked)
4. Friendly: Be kind to everyone, especially if they're different
5. Courteous: Mind your manners, help little old ladies across the street ☺
6. Kind: Treat others how you'd want to be treated, “Do Good Be Nice.”
7. Obedient: Follow the rules (most of the time)
8. Cheerful: Keep a positive attitude, even when things get tough
9. Thrifty: Don't waste stuff – money, resources, or the planet
10. Brave: Face your fears and stand up for what's right
11. Clean: Take care of yourself and your surroundings
12. Reverent: Respect others' beliefs, including your own

You might think, "Sure, these sound great, but how do they fit into our crazy, modern lives?" Don't worry; we'll break it down and make it real for you and your kids.

Let's take a closer look at why these principles matter in today's world:

1. Trustworthy: In an era of "fake news" and online scams, trustworthiness is more important than ever. It's about integrity – doing the right thing even when no one is watching.
2. Loyal: With social media making it easy to "ghost" people or jump from one friendship to another, loyalty teaches kids the value of deep, lasting relationships.
3. Helpful: In our often-self-centered culture, being helpful reminds kids that we're all part of a community and are responsible to each other and our families.
4. Friendly: With increasing diversity in our communities, being friendly to everyone, regardless of differences, is crucial for creating a more inclusive society.
5. Courteous: Good manners might seem old-fashioned, but they oil the wheels of social interaction and show respect for others.
6. Kind: Kindness is a superpower in a world that can sometimes seem cruel. It costs nothing but can change everything.
7. Obedient: This isn't about blind obedience but about understanding and respecting rules and authority while also knowing when and how to question them respectfully.

8. Cheerful: Positivity is contagious. Teaching kids to find the bright side can help them (and those around them) navigate life's challenges.
9. Thrifty: In our consumerist society, being thrifty teaches kids to value resources, save for the future, and care for the environment.
10. Brave: Courage comes in many forms – from standing up to a bully to admitting when you're wrong. It's about doing what's right, even when it's hard.
11. Clean: This goes beyond personal hygiene. It's about taking care of your surroundings and, by extension, the planet.
12. Reverent: In our diverse world, respecting different beliefs and having a sense of something greater than ourselves is crucial for fostering understanding and peace.

I know what you're thinking. "This all sounds great on paper, but how does it work in real life?" Let me share a story that might help put things in perspective.

Consider the case of the Johnson family, who sought guidance from a family counselor a few years ago. They had two kids, Emma (10) and Liam (8). The parents came to the counselor feeling overwhelmed. They felt like they were constantly nagging their kids about behavior, manners, and responsibility, but nothing seemed to stick.

They sat down together, and the counselor introduced them to the Scout Law. At first, they were skeptical. "Our kids aren't in Scouts," they said. "How is this relevant to us?"

So, they broke it down. They looked at each principle and discussed how it applied to their daily lives. For example, being trustworthy wasn't just about not lying—it was about Emma following through when she said she'd clean her room or Liam admitting when he'd made a mistake instead of blaming his sister.

They turned it into a family project. They made a colorful poster of the 12 points and hung it in the kitchen. Each week, they'd focus on one principle. They'd talk about what it meant, look for examples in books or movies, and challenge each other to embody that principle.

The transformation didn't happen overnight, but the changes were remarkable over time. Emma started taking more initiative to help around the house without being asked (Helpful). Liam learned to take a deep breath and find something positive to say when he was frustrated instead of lashing out (Cheerful).

The parents noticed they were nagging less and praising more. They caught their kids being good more often than not-so-good. Family dynamics improved, and they found themselves enjoying their time together more.

But here's the cool part – these changes extended beyond their home. Emma's teacher called to say she'd noticed a positive change in her behavior at school. Liam made a new friend – a kid often left out at recess – because he decided to be Friendly and Kind.

The Johnson family's story isn't unique. I've seen similar transformations in countless families who've embraced these principles. The key is to view the Scout Law as something other than a set of rules to follow but as a framework for discussion and growth.

So, how can you start incorporating these principles into your family life? Here are a few simple ideas:

1. Make it visible: Create a family poster or board with the 12 points. Let your kids get creative with the design.
2. Word of the week: Choose one principle to focus on each week. Talk about what it means and look for ways to practice it.
3. Catch them being good: When you see your kids exemplifying one of these principles, point it out and praise them specifically.
4. Family storytelling: Share stories from your life where you've seen these principles in action.
5. Media mindfulness: When watching movies or reading books together, discuss how characters do or don't embody these values.
6. At the dinner table: Ask your children, "Who did you help today?"

Remember, the goal isn't perfection. It's about progress, about slowly but surely building these values into your family's DNA. In the coming chapters, we'll explore each principle, diving deeper into practical ways to bring them to life in your home.

It's time to take on the Scout Law challenge with your family. It's worth embarking on. Let's Go!

Trustworthy - Building a Foundation of Honesty

Let's talk about honesty. Teaching our kids to be truthful can feel like an uphill battle in a world of "fake news" and social media filters. But here's the thing – trustworthiness is the foundation of all relationships and needs to start at home.

A young father, Fred recalls a critical moment in his son's life. "I'll never forget the day I caught my son, Jake, in his first big lie. He was 7, and I'd come home to find my favorite picture shattered on the living room floor. When I asked what happened, Jake looked me straight in the eye and said, "The dog did it." Now, we didn't have a dog.

Classic move, right? Fred's first instinct was to scold Jake for lying. But then he remembered something a wise mentor told him: "Kids don't lie to be bad. They lie because they fear the consequences of telling the truth."

So, instead of punishing him, Fred sat Jake down and asked, "How would you feel if I lied to you?" Jake's little face scrunched up as he thought about it. "Bad," he said. "I'd be sad and wouldn't trust you."

That moment was golden. It opened a conversation about trust and how lying hurts relationships. They talked about how it's always better to tell the truth, even when it's hard. From then on, they made a pact to always be honest with each other, no matter what.

You may think, "That's a nice story, but my kid isn't a perfect angel who will suddenly start telling the truth all the time." And you're right. Teaching honesty is an ongoing process. Here are some strategies that have worked for many families I've known:

1. Create a "safe space" for truth-telling: Clarify that honesty is always rewarded, even if the truth is uncomfortable. This doesn't mean misbehavior has no consequences, but it does mean that lying will always worsen the situation.
2. Model honesty: Kids learn more from what we do than what we say. Be honest in your everyday life, even in small things. If you make a mistake, own up to it.
3. Use storytelling: Share age-appropriate stories (real or fictional) about the consequences of dishonesty and the benefits of truthfulness.
4. Praise honesty: When your child tells the truth, especially in difficult situations, acknowledge their courage and reinforce that they made the right choice.
5. Avoid setting "traps": If you know the truth, don't ask questions that tempt your child to lie. Instead, allow them to be honest.
6. Distinguish between lies and imagination: Young children often struggle to distinguish between reality and fantasy. If your 4-year-old tells you they saw a unicorn, it's not the same as lying.

Let me share another story illustrating how these strategies can work in real life.

A counselor was working with a family – let's call them the Smiths – who were struggling with their 12-year-old daughter, Lily. Lily had started lying about her homework, saying she'd done it when she hadn't. The parents were frustrated and didn't know how to handle it.

They started by creating a "truth jar" in their home. Whenever someone told a difficult truth, they got to put a small treat in the jar. At the end of the month, they'd celebrate their family's honesty by sharing the treats.

At first, Lily was skeptical. But then something interesting happened. Her mom put a treat in the jar and explained that she'd forgotten to pay a bill on time and had to pay a late fee. She said she was embarrassed but wanted to be honest about her mistake.

Seeing her mom's vulnerability affected Lily. A few days later, she came home and put a treat in the jar. She admitted that she'd been struggling with math and had been lying about her homework because she was embarrassed to ask for help.

Instead of punishing her, her parents thanked her for her honesty and worked with her to get the help she needed. Over time, the lies decreased, and Lily became more comfortable asking for help when needed.

The truth jar became a family tradition, a tangible reminder of the value they placed on honesty. It wasn't always easy, but it opened communication channels and strengthened their family bonds.

I want to discuss a tricky question: What do you do when your child catches you in a lie? Because let's face it, we're not perfect either. Maybe you told a white lie to get out of a social engagement, or you said you weren't scared during a thunderstorm when you were.

The key here is to own up to it. Use it as a teaching moment. Explain why you lied, acknowledge that it was wrong, and talk about what you could have done differently. This shows your child that everyone makes mistakes, but what matters is how we handle those mistakes.

Here's a family activity you can try to reinforce the value of trustworthiness:

The Trust Walk: Pair up family members. One wears a blindfold while the other guides them through a simple obstacle course in your home or backyard. The guide must give clear, honest instructions to keep their partner safe. After the walk, discuss how it felt to completely trust someone else and the responsibility of being trustworthy.

Remember, building trustworthiness is a journey, not a destination. There will be setbacks along the way, and that's okay. The key is reinforcing the importance of honesty and integrity, even when difficult.

As you continue to nurture trustworthiness in your children, remember that your actions speak louder than words. Be the example you want your kids to follow. When you make a mistake or break a promise, own up to it. Apologize sincerely and make amends. This shows your children

that being trustworthy isn't about being perfect but about being accountable and striving to improve.

By fostering an environment where honesty is valued and practiced consistently, you give your children one of the greatest gifts possible: a strong moral compass to guide them throughout their lives. You're laying the foundation for them to build strong relationships, succeed in their future careers, and become individuals others can rely on. And in a world that sometimes seems to have lost its way, couldn't we all use a few more trustworthy individuals?

So, keep at it, even when it's challenging. The small, daily choices to prioritize honesty and integrity add up over time. You're not just raising honest kids; you're shaping the trustworthy adults who will lead our world tomorrow. And that, my fellow parents, is essential work.

Loyal - Sticking Together in a World of Ghosting

Loyalty might seem old-fashioned in the age of "swipe left," but it's more important than ever. Teaching kids to stand by their friends, family, and values gives them a solid foundation in a shaky world. To be honest – loyalty can be tricky to navigate in today's fast-paced, ever-changing social landscape.

A father, Bill, once remembered when his daughter, Sarah, came home from school one day, absolutely devastated. Her best friend since kindergarten, Ellie, had suddenly started ignoring her and hanging out with a new group of girls. "She ghosted me, Dad," Sarah said, tears streaming down her face.

If you're like Bill, you might have to Google what "ghosting" means the first time you hear it. (For the record, it's when someone abruptly cuts off all communication without explanation.) But the pain in Sarah's voice was all too familiar. We've all experienced the sting of betrayal or abandonment at some point.

This situation opened an excellent opportunity for Bill and Sarah to discuss loyalty. They discussed what it means to be a good friend, how to communicate when relationships change, and the importance of staying true to one's values even when difficult.

But loyalty isn't just about friendships. It's about family, community, and standing up for your beliefs. Here are some ways we can help our kids understand and practice loyalty:

1. Model loyalty in your relationships: Kids learn by example. Show them how you maintain long-term friendships, support family members through tough times, and stay committed to the causes you believe in.
2. Teach the difference between loyalty and blind obedience: Loyalty doesn't mean always agreeing or going along with everything. It's about support, respect, and honesty.
3. Encourage long-term commitments: Whether it's a sports team, a club, or a volunteer position, help your kids stick with activities even when they get challenging.
4. Discuss loyalty conflicts: Sometimes, loyalty to one person or idea might conflict with loyalty to another. Help your kids navigate these complex situations.
5. Celebrate loyalty: Recognize and praise acts of loyalty when you see them, both in your family and the wider world.

Let me share a story illustrating how these ideas can play out in real life.

One summer, Sarah's best friend, Ellie (yes, they reconciled after the "ghosting" incident – kids are resilient!), moved to a different state. Sarah was heartbroken. Instead of letting the friendship fade away, her parents helped her find ways to maintain the connection.

They set up regular video chats, helped Sarah write good old-fashioned letters (remember those?), and even planned a visit for the following summer. It wasn't always easy – there were times when Sarah felt it was too much effort or scheduling conflicts made it frustrating.

However, they used these challenges as opportunities to discuss the value of loyalty. They talked about how good friends are worth the effort and how maintaining relationships through difficult times strengthens them.

The real test came when Sarah made new friends at school. She worried that spending time with them might be disloyal to Ellie. This led to a great conversation about how loyalty doesn't mean exclusivity. We can be loyal to multiple friends, just as we're loyal to different family members.

Over time, Sarah and Ellie's friendship evolved. They weren't in constant contact like before, but they maintained a strong connection. Sarah also learned valuable lessons about keeping relationships over distance and through life changes.

Let's talk about family loyalty. Family loyalty can be complex in today's world of blended families, long-distance relatives, and busy schedules. Here are some ideas to strengthen family bonds:

1. Create family traditions: Whether it's a weekly game night, an annual camping trip, or a special holiday ritual, traditions create shared experiences that strengthen loyalty.
2. Teach family history: Share stories about relatives, look at old photos together, or create a family tree. Understanding their roots can help kids feel connected to their family legacy.
3. Encourage sibling support: Foster a culture where siblings stick up for each other and celebrate each other's successes.
4. Show up for each other: Make it a priority to attend each other's important events, whether they're school plays, sports games, or music recitals.
5. Create a family mission statement: Sit down together and discuss your family's values and goals. This can give kids a sense of being part of something bigger than themselves.

Here's a family activity idea to explore loyalty: Create a "Family Loyalty Challenge" week. Each family member picks someone to show extra loyalty to – a friend, a family member, or even a cause they care about. At the end of the week, share your experiences and what you learned. This can lead to great discussions about loyalty in different contexts.

Teaching loyalty doesn't mean your kids will never experience betrayal or disappointment. But it does give them the tools to build solid and lasting relationships and to be the kind of friend and family member others can count on.

As parents, we might sometimes worry that teaching strong loyalty will make our kids vulnerable to peer pressure or unable to leave toxic relationships. That's why it's crucial to couple lessons on loyalty with discussions about healthy boundaries and self-respect.

Loyalty should never mean staying in harmful situations or compromising one's values. Ensure your kids understand that true loyalty includes being honest with friends and family, even when

it's difficult, and that sometimes the most loyal thing you can do is help someone make a positive change.

In our digital age, loyalty takes on new dimensions. Help your kids navigate online friendships and understand that loyalty applies in digital spaces, too. Teach them not to share friends' personal information or photos without permission, stand up against cyberbullying, and be mindful of how their online actions might affect others.

Lastly, remember to show appreciation for your kids' loyalty. When they stick by a friend going through a tough time or defend a family member, acknowledge their actions. Let them know that their loyalty is seen and valued.

By fostering a deep understanding of loyalty, we give our kids a powerful tool for building solid and meaningful relationships. In a world that often feels disconnected and transient, the ability to form lasting bonds is indeed a source of personal power.

Helpful and Friendly - Raising Kids Who Care

Raising helpful and friendly kids can feel like swimming upstream in today's me-first culture. But trust me, it's worth it. These qualities make the world a better place and boost your child's self-esteem and social skills. Plus, let's be honest – helpful and friendly kids make parenting much easier!

Picture this: a shy 10-year-old boy named Alex helps a lost toddler find his mom at the mall. A local newspaper captures the story with a photo of Alex's face beaming with pride. This heartwarming tale illustrates how even small acts of kindness can make a significant difference. Not only did Alex help someone in need, but such experiences often serve as huge confidence boosters for children, showing them that they have the power to positively impact others' lives.

Family therapist Dr. Margaret Jones notes, "These moments of helping others are invaluable for a child's development. They reinforce empathy and build self-esteem in ways that can shape a child's character for years to come."

But how do we cultivate these qualities in a world that often rewards self-promotion and individualism? Here are some strategies that have worked for families I've known:

1. Model helpfulness and friendliness: Kids learn by example. Let them see you helping neighbors, being friendly to strangers, or volunteering in your community.
2. Encourage empathy: Help kids understand others' feelings. When reading books or watching movies, ask questions like, "How do you think that character feels?" or "What would you do in that situation?"
3. Create opportunities to help: Give kids age-appropriate tasks at home. Let them help you cook, do laundry, or care for pets. This teaches them that helping is a normal part of daily life.
4. Praise effort, not just results: When kids try to be helpful or friendly, acknowledge their effort, even if things don't go perfectly.
5. Teach friendship skills: Discuss how to start conversations, be a good listener, and resolve conflicts.
6. Promote inclusivity: Encourage kids to reach out to classmates who might be left out or to befriend the new kid at school.

Let's talk about how these ideas play out in real life. There was a family—I'll call them the Garcias—who were struggling with their 8-year-old daughter, Maria. Maria was naturally outgoing but tended to dominate play and wasn't great at sharing or considering others' feelings.

The family started a "Kindness Jar" in their home. Whenever someone in the family did something helpful or particularly friendly, they got to put a marble in the jar. When the jar was full, the family would do a fun activity.

At first, Maria saw it as a competition, rushing to do helpful things just to get marbles. But over time, something interesting happened. She started noticing when others were being kind or helpful. She began to see how these actions made people smile and how it felt good to be the cause of that happiness.

One day, Maria came home excited because she'd helped a classmate struggling with math. "I didn't even think about the marble, Mom," she said. "It just felt good to help."

That's the magic of cultivating helpfulness and friendliness – it becomes its own reward.

But let's be honest – it's not always easy. Kids (and adults!) have grumpy days. Sometimes, being helpful feels like a chore. And in some situations, kids might worry that being too friendly could make them vulnerable.

That's why it's essential to couple lessons on helpfulness and friendliness with teachings about boundaries and safety. Kids need to know it's okay to say no sometimes and trust their instincts if a situation feels uncomfortable.

Here's a family activity idea to explore helpfulness and friendliness: Start a family "random acts of kindness" challenge. Each week, try to do at least one unexpected kind thing for someone else. It could be as simple as leaving a nice note for a neighbor, helping a classmate with homework, or picking up litter in your local park.

At the end of each week, share your experiences. What did you do? How did it make you feel? Who did you help today? How did the recipient react? This encourages helpful and friendly behavior and reinforces the positive feelings that come from these actions.

Let's address a common concern often heard from parents: "But what about my introverted child? I don't want to force them to be outgoing if that's not their nature."

This is a great point. Being helpful and friendly doesn't mean your child needs to be the life of the party. Quiet acts of kindness are just as valuable as grand gestures. For introverted kids, helpfulness might look like:

- Writing encouraging notes to friends or family members
- Taking care of a class pet over the weekend
- Offering to share notes with an absent classmate
- Helping to clean up after a family meal without being asked

The key is to help your child find ways to be helpful and friendly that feel authentic to them.

Another important aspect of teaching helpfulness and friendliness is helping kids navigate the digital world. In an age of social media, these qualities take on new dimensions. Discuss with your kids how to be a positive presence online. This might include:

- Leaving supportive comments on friends' posts

- Sharing helpful information or uplifting content
- Standing up against cyberbullying
- Being mindful of how their posts might affect others

Remember, the goal isn't to raise kids who are helpful and friendly 100% of the time (that's unrealistic for anyone!). The aim is to foster a general orientation towards kindness and a willingness to lend a hand.

As your kids grow older, you can introduce more complex aspects of helpfulness, like community service and volunteerism. These experiences can be enriching and eye-opening for kids, helping them to develop a sense of social responsibility and global awareness.

Lastly, acknowledge and appreciate your kids' helpful and friendly actions. When you notice them being kind or going out of their way to help someone, let them know you saw it and that you're proud of them. This positive reinforcement can go a long way in cementing these behaviors.

Courteous and Kind - Manners in the Digital Age

Okay, let's face it – teaching manners in a world of text-speak and emojis can feel like a lost cause. But here's the thing: being courteous and kind never goes out of style, online or off. These qualities are the WD-40 of social interactions – they help everything run more smoothly.

A parent overheard their teenage daughter, Mia, coaching her younger brother on how to politely disagree while in a group chat. "Just because it's online doesn't mean you can be rude," she told him. "Treat people online like they're sitting right next to you." I couldn't have said it better myself!

But how do we instill these values in a world where face-to-face interactions are becoming less common and online anonymity can bring out the worst in people? Here are some strategies that have worked for many families:

1. Model good manners: Kids learn by example. Use "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" in your daily interactions. Show them how to disagree respectfully, both in person and online.
2. Explain the 'why' behind manners: Help kids understand that manners aren't just about rules but about showing respect and consideration for others.
3. Practice digital etiquette: Discuss appropriate online behavior, including how to write respectful emails, disagree politely in comments, and think before posting.
4. Role-play different scenarios: Act out situations where manners are essential, both in-person and online. This can help kids feel more prepared when they encounter these situations in real life.
5. Encourage empathy: Help kids consider how their words and actions might make others feel. This is crucial for developing both courtesy and kindness.
6. Praise good manners when you see them: Positive reinforcement can go a long way in encouraging courteous behavior.

Let me share a story illustrating how these ideas can play out in real life.

The Wilson family came to a counselor because they were concerned about their 11-year-old son, Jack. He was a good kid, but he had a habit of interrupting others and sometimes made insensitive comments without realizing it. They were worried this behavior would affect his friendships and future relationships.

They started by creating a "Manners Matter" chart. Each day, family members would put a sticker on the chart when they caught someone else using good manners. This shifted the focus from calling out bad behavior to recognizing and celebrating good behavior.

They also introduced a "pause and think" strategy. Before speaking or posting online, Jack was encouraged to ask himself three questions:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it kind?
3. Is it necessary?

If the answer to all three was yes, then it was okay to say or post. If not, it was time to pause and reconsider.

The family also started having regular discussions about online interactions. They would share examples of courteous and discourteous behavior they'd seen on social media and discuss how different approaches might make people feel.

Over time, Jack became more mindful of his words and actions. He started to take pride in his improved manners, and his parents noticed that his friendships seemed stronger and more positive.

Let's talk about kindness. Kindness is another beautiful and powerful tool in a world that can sometimes seem cruel. It costs nothing but can often change everything. Teaching kindness goes hand in hand with courtesy but frequently involves going beyond basic good manners.

Here are some ways to foster kindness in your kids:

1. Encourage random acts of kindness: Challenge your kids to do one kind thing each day, no matter how small.
2. Volunteer together: Find age-appropriate volunteer opportunities in your community. This can help kids develop empathy and a sense of social responsibility.
3. Create a kindness jar: Write down kind acts on slips of paper and put them in a jar. Read them together at the end of each week to celebrate and reinforce kind behavior.
4. Practice self-kindness: Teach kids that being kind to themselves is just as important as being kind to others. This can help build self-esteem and resilience.
5. Discuss the ripple effect of kindness: Help kids understand how one kind act can inspire others and create a chain reaction of positivity.

Here's a family activity idea to explore courtesy and kindness: Have a "digital manners" dinner where everyone shares one way they showed courtesy or kindness online that week. Brainstorm ways to spread more positivity in your digital interactions.

Remember, teaching courtesy and kindness is an ongoing process. There will be setbacks and moments when your kids (or you!) need to remember to use their best manners. The key is to treat these moments as learning opportunities rather than failures.

Don't ever let a failure define who you are. Never give up. As Elvis Presley said, "When things go wrong, don't go with them." Get back up and keep going in your direction.

It's essential to help kids understand that being courteous and kind doesn't mean being a pushover. You can teach them to be assertive while still being respectful. For example, they can learn to say "No, thank you" firmly but politely when they don't want to do something.

In the digital age, courtesy and kindness take on new dimensions. Here are some specific digital manners you might want to discuss with your kids:

- Respond to messages promptly
- Ask permission before tagging someone in a photo or sharing their content
- Avoid ALL CAPS (which can come across as shouting) unless expressing excitement
- Be mindful of tone in written communications, as it can be easily misinterpreted
- Respect others' privacy, and don't share personal information without permission
- Think twice before joining in on negative comments or gossip online

As mentioned before, remember to extend courtesy and kindness to yourself as a parent. You're doing important work. Celebrate the small victories, forgive yourself for the inevitable missteps, and remember that by focusing on these values, you're helping to create a more positive world for your kids to grow up in.

By raising courteous and kind kids, we're not just making the world and family life a nicer place – we're giving our children valuable skills that will serve them well throughout their lives, personal relationships, education, and future careers. In a world where technical skills can be automated, these human skills of courtesy and kindness are more valuable than ever.

Obedient - Following Rules Without Being a Pushover

I can almost hear your eyes rolling. "Obedient? Really? I want my kids to think for themselves!" I get it. We're not talking about blind obedience here. It's about teaching kids to respect rules and authority while knowing when and how to question them respectfully. It's a delicate balance but an important one.

Let me share a story that illustrates this balance. Once, there was a boy named Tyler. He was 15 and wanted to stay out past curfew for a concert. His parents' first instinct was to say no. Instead, they discussed why the rule existed and how he could earn more trust and freedom. It wasn't about saying "no" but teaching him to navigate rules and negotiate respectfully.

Here are some strategies for teaching healthy obedience:

1. Explain the 'why' behind rules: Help kids understand that rules aren't arbitrary but exist for good reasons – often for safety or fairness.
2. Allow for negotiation: Be open to discussing rules and potentially adjusting them as your kids grow and demonstrate responsibility.
3. Model respectful questioning: Show kids how to ask about or challenge rules in a respectful way.
4. Praise good judgment: When kids follow the rules or make good decisions, acknowledge it.
5. Discuss consequences: Help kids understand that breaking rules often comes with natural consequences beyond just getting in trouble.
6. Encourage critical thinking: Ask kids to consider what might happen if specific rules didn't exist.
7. Teach the difference between rules and values: Help kids understand that while rules can change, values (like honesty and kindness) should be consistent.

Let's explore how these ideas play out in real life. The Johnson family was struggling with their 12-year-old daughter, Zoe. She had started pushing back against every rule, turning their home into a constant battleground.

They met with a counselor who started by having a family meeting where everyone could voice their opinions about the household rules. Zoe was surprised to learn that some rules she hated (like limited screen time) were supported by current research on child development.

They then created a "Rule Review" system. Every month, the family would sit down and review one household rule. They could discuss whether the rule was working, needed to be adjusted, or was still necessary. This gave Zoe a sense of input and control while teaching her how to discuss and negotiate rules respectfully.

They also introduced the concept of "earning" more freedom. Zoe could demonstrate responsibility in certain areas to "level up" and gain more privileges. This turned rule-following from a chore into a way to earn more independence.

Over time, Zoe became less combative about rules. She learned to express her opinions respectfully and to understand the reasons behind different rules. The family reported fewer conflicts and a more harmonious household.

You might ask: "But what about when my child encounters unfair rules or authority figures?" This is where teaching discernment becomes crucial. Here are some points to discuss with your kids:

1. Not all rules are good. Sometimes, rules are outdated, unfair, or even harmful. It's okay to question these, but there are right and wrong ways to do so.
2. Choose your battles: Help kids learn to discern which rules are worth challenging and which aren't.
3. Respectful resistance: Teach kids how to express disagreement or concern about a rule in a respectful, constructive manner.
4. Understand the consequences: Help kids understand what might happen if they break a rule to learn if it's worth it.
5. Seek support: Encourage kids to come to you or another trusted adult if they struggle with a rule or authority figure.

Here's a family activity idea to explore obedience and critical thinking: Create a "Family Constitution." Sit down together and decide on your family's core values and the basic rules that support those values. This discussion could also lead to developing a family Mission Statement.

Cheerful - Finding the Bright Side (Even When It's Cloudy)

Life isn't always sunshine and rainbows; teaching our kids to be cheerful doesn't mean ignoring the tough stuff. It's about developing resilience and a positive outlook, even when things get hard. Think of cheerfulness as an emotional life jacket – it helps us stay afloat when life gets stormy.

I remember a camping trip where everything went wrong – rain, mosquitoes, forgotten supplies. But instead of complaining, we turned it into a game of finding the silver lining in each mishap. We called the hard things “dragons.” Overcoming those hard things was called “slaying dragons.” When something else went wrong, someone shouted, “Slaying another dragon!” After a short chuckle, we moved on. Those “disaster” stories are now some of our favorite family memories.

But how do we foster cheerfulness in a world that often seems filled with reasons to be anything but? Here are some strategies that have worked for families I've known:

1. Model positivity: Kids learn by example. Try to approach challenges with a positive attitude.
2. Practice gratitude: Make it a habit to share things you're thankful for, even on tough days.
3. Reframe negative situations: Help kids find the potential good in difficult circumstances.
4. Encourage problem-solving: Instead of dwelling on problems, focus on finding solutions.
5. Celebrate small victories: Acknowledge and appreciate the little positive things each day.
6. Allow for all emotions: Teach kids it's okay to feel sad or angry, but we can choose how we respond to these feelings and how long we allow them to remain.
7. Promote a growth mindset: Help kids see challenges as opportunities to learn and grow. It's just like slaying imaginary dragons.

Let me share a story about how these ideas can play out in real life. The Thompson family noticed that their 9-year-old son, Marvin, had become increasingly negative. He would focus on what went wrong each day and seemed to have lost his natural cheerfulness.

To work through this issue, the Thompsons started a family gratitude jar. Everyone wrote down one thing they were grateful for each day and put it in the jar. On tough days, they'd pull out a few slips and read them together as a reminder of the good stuff in life.

They also introduced the “Three Good Things” exercise. Before bed each night, Marvin would share three good things that happened that day, no matter how small. At first, he struggled to find anything positive to say. But over time, he started noticing more good things throughout his day, almost like he was on a scavenger hunt for positivity.

They worked on reframing negative situations. When Marvin would say something like, "This homework is too hard, I can't do it," they'd encourage him to reframe it as "This homework is challenging, but I can figure it out if I keep trying."

Slowly but surely, Marvin's outlook began to change. He approached challenges more resiliently and could easily find the bright side of difficult situations.

It's reasonable to wonder: "But what about when horrible things happen? I don't want my child to be unrealistically positive." This is a valid point. Toxic positivity – the belief that we should always be positive, no matter what – can be harmful. Here's how to strike a balance:

1. Acknowledge the difficulty: It's okay to say, "This is hard," or "It's normal to feel upset about this."
2. Feel the feelings: Encourage kids to express and process their emotions rather than suppressing them.
3. Look for lessons: Once the initial emotion has been acknowledged, gently guide kids to consider what they can learn from the situation.
4. Focus on what can be controlled: Help kids identify what aspects of the situation they can influence or change.
5. Practice self-compassion: Teach kids to be kind to themselves during tough times.

Try this family activity idea to explore cheerfulness and resilience: Create a "Cheer Up Kit" together. Fill a box with items that make each family member feel better when they're down. This could include favorite books, funny movies, stress balls, coloring supplies, or photos of happy memories. When someone's having a tough day, they can turn to their Cheer Up Kit for a boost.

Remember, teaching cheerfulness isn't about forcing a smile 24/7. It's about developing the emotional tools to navigate life's ups and downs with grace and optimism.

In our digital age, cheerfulness takes on new dimensions. Social media can sometimes feel like a highlight reel of everyone else's best moments, making it hard for kids (and adults!) to maintain a positive outlook. Here are some tips for fostering digital cheerfulness:

1. Curate positive feeds: Help kids follow accounts that inspire and uplift them.
2. Practice digital gratitude: Encourage kids to use social media to express appreciation and spread positivity.
3. Take social media breaks: Sometimes, the most cheerful thing we can do is step away from our screens and engage with the real world.
4. Discuss digital vs. reality: Help kids understand that social media doesn't always reflect real life, and that's okay.
5. Use technology for good: Explore apps and websites that promote mindfulness, gratitude, and positive thinking.

Don't let this book be only about the children; remember to nurture your cheerfulness as a parent. Parenting can be challenging, and it's okay to have bad days. But by working on our

ability to find the bright side, we're modeling cheerfulness for our kids and making our lives more enjoyable.

Here's something to ponder: Cheerfulness isn't just about feeling good. It's a practical life skill that can open doors and create opportunities. People are naturally drawn to those who can maintain a positive attitude, even under challenging circumstances. Helping our kids develop this skill sets them up for success in their future relationships, education, and careers.

Remember that the goal isn't to raise cheerful kids 100% of the time (honestly, that would be weird and a little creepy). The aim is to give them the tools to bounce back from setbacks, find joy in everyday moments, and approach life's challenges with a "we've got this" attitude.

By fostering cheerfulness, we're not just raising happier kids – we're contributing to a more positive world. And in today's often stress-filled and divisive climate, couldn't we use more of that?

Thrifty - Raising Responsible Consumers in a Throwaway World

Teaching kids to be thrifty isn't just about saving money—it's about respecting resources and the planet. In a world of fast fashion and instant gratification, this can be a tough sell, but it's vital for their future (and the future of our planet).

For example, when kids want a new phone, don't just buy the latest model. Take a moment to research options together, compare prices, and even check out refurbished options. This could be a great lesson about needs vs. wants and making informed choices.

But how do we instill thriftiness in a culture that often equates spending with happiness? Here are some strategies that I have seen work:

1. Model thrifty behavior: Let your kids see you making thoughtful purchasing decisions, repairing items instead of replacing them, and finding joy in non-material experiences.
2. Teach budgeting: Help kids create and manage their budgets, whether for ways to spend their allowance or a specific event like a birthday party.
3. Encourage saving: Set up savings accounts for your kids and teach them about interest and long-term financial planning.
4. Practice delayed gratification: When kids want something, encourage them to wait and save for it rather than buying it immediately.
5. Discuss needs vs. wants: Help kids differentiate between things they genuinely need and things they want.
6. Explore second-hand options: Introduce kids to thrift stores, yard sales, and online marketplaces for used items.

Let me share a story about how these ideas can play out in real life. The Martinez family were concerned about their 13-year-old daughter, Sofia. She had developed a habit of impulse buying, especially clothes and accessories she saw influencers wearing online.

They started by giving Sofia a seasonal clothing budget to address the issue. She could spend it however she wanted, but once it was gone, that was it until the following season. At first, Sofia blew through the budget quickly on a couple of trendy items. But as the season wore on and she didn't have money for other things she wanted, she started to rethink her approach.

They introduced the concept of cost-per-wear. Sofia started considering how often she'd wear an item before buying it. They also explored second-hand and vintage shopping, turning it into a treasure hunt for unique pieces.

They discussed the environmental impact of fast fashion, watched documentaries, and read articles on the topic. Sofia was shocked to learn about the waste and pollution caused by the fashion industry's "quick change" vacillating tendencies.

Over time, Sofia's attitude towards shopping changed. She became more thoughtful about her purchases, started upcycling some of her old clothes, and even organized a clothing swap with her friends.

Let's look at another concern: "But I don't want my kid to feel deprived or left out if their friends have more." This may be a concern. Here's how to strike a balance:

1. Focus on values: Help kids understand that their worth isn't determined by what they own.
2. Encourage non-material sources of happiness: Foster hobbies, relationships, and experiences that bring joy without costing money.
3. Teach smart shopping: Show kids how to get what they want at better prices through sales, coupons, or buying used.
4. Discuss trade-offs: Help kids understand that choosing to save in some areas allows for spending in others.
5. Lead by example: Show that avoiding unnecessary purchases is okay, even as an adult.

Here's a family activity idea to explore thriftiness: Give your kids a budget for a family outing. Challenge them to plan a fun day within that budget. This teaches planning, budgeting, and the idea that you can spend less to have a good time.

Don't forget that teaching thriftiness isn't about being stingy or miserly. It's about being a responsible consumer and steward of resources. It's a valuable life skill that will serve your kids well into adulthood and help them stay debt-free.

In our digital age, thriftiness takes on new dimensions. Here are some tips for fostering digital thriftiness:

1. Discuss in-app purchases: Many games and apps are designed to encourage spending. Teach kids to be aware of these tactics.
2. Explore free alternatives: There are often free versions of apps or software that work just as well as paid ones.
3. Teach digital minimalism: Just as we can declutter our physical spaces, we can declutter our digital lives, too.
4. Use technology to save: Introduce kids to apps that help with budgeting, finding deals, or selling unused items.
5. Consider digital subscriptions: Talk about the cumulative cost of subscriptions and whether each provides enough value to justify its cost.

Lastly, as a parent, remember to apply thrifty principles to your own life. Kids learn more from what we do than what we say. By making thoughtful consumer choices yourself, you're setting a powerful example for your children.

Here's a final thought: Thriftiness isn't just about pinching pennies. It's about understanding the actual value of things—not just their monetary cost but also their cost regarding resources, labor, and environmental impact. By helping our kids develop this understanding, we're raising more conscious consumers who can make informed choices in a complex world.

Again, the goal isn't to raise kids who never spend money or enjoy material things. The aim is to give them the tools to make thoughtful decisions about resources – financial and otherwise. This skill will serve them well in all areas of life, from managing their first paycheck to making large purchases as adults.

By fostering thriftiness, we're helping our kids be better with money and contributing to a more sustainable world. In today's era of overconsumption and environmental challenges, couldn't we all benefit from a thriftier approach to life?

Brave - Courage in the Age of Cyberbullying

Bravery today often looks different than it did in the past. It might mean standing up to a cyberbully, being the first to apologize, or admitting when you're wrong. Teaching bravery is more important than ever in a world where our kids face new pressures we never dreamed of.

A friend once mentioned that when her daughter, Evie, came to her, visibly upset, to show her some mean comments on her Instagram post. Instead of deleting the app, they talked about how to respond with courage and kindness. Evie made a video about online bullying that inspired her whole school.

But how do we foster bravery in a world that can seem scary and overwhelming? Here are some strategies that have worked for other families:

1. Redefine bravery: Help kids understand that bravery isn't about being fearless but about doing what's right even when you're scared.
2. Encourage small acts of courage: Celebrate when kids try new things, speak up for themselves, or face their fears.
3. Model brave behavior: Share your own experiences of being brave, including times when you were scared but did the right thing anyway.
4. Teach problem-solving skills: Help kids develop strategies for facing challenges so they feel more confident in difficult situations.
5. Discuss brave historical figures: Share stories of people who showed courage in the face of adversity.
6. Role-play difficult scenarios: Practice responding to bullying, peer pressure, or other challenging situations.
7. Emphasize that it's okay to ask for help: Teach kids that reaching out for support when needed is a form of bravery.

Let me share a story about how these ideas can play out in real life. The Chen family had an 11-year-old son, Kevin, who was struggling with anxiety and was avoiding situations that scared him.

To help with his fears, they started by creating a "Bravery Ladder" for him. At the bottom were small acts of courage, like raising his hand in class. At the top were more significant challenges, like trying out for the school play. Kevin would work his way up the ladder at his own pace, celebrating each step.

They also introduced the idea of a "Courage Journal." Each night, Kevin would write down one brave thing he did that day, no matter how small. This helped him recognize the everyday acts of courage he was already doing.

His parents talked to him about "bravery role models" – people Kevin admired for their courage. He chose his grandfather, who had immigrated to a new country, and a classmate who stood up to bullies. They discussed what made these people brave and how Kevin could apply those qualities in his own life.

Over time, Kevin's confidence grew. He started taking risks, speaking up more in class, and even joining a new after-school club. His parents were amazed at the transformation.

An oft-heard concern is: "I don't want my kid to do dangerous things in the name of being brave." This is a valid worry. Here's how to strike a balance:

1. Distinguish between bravery and recklessness: Teach kids that true bravery involves thoughtful risk-taking, not impulsive actions.
2. Discuss assessing risks: Help kids learn to evaluate potential consequences before acting.
3. Emphasize moral courage: Focus on bravery in standing up for what's right rather than physical daring.
4. Teach personal autonomy: Kids should know it's okay to say no to things that make them uncomfortable or that they know are wrong, even if others pressure them.
5. Discuss digital courage: In today's world, brave actions happen online. Talk about how to be courageous in digital spaces.

Here's a successful family activity idea to explore bravery: Start a "Brave Family Challenge." Each week, family members share a fear or challenge they want to overcome. As a family, brainstorm ways to face that fear and support each other in taking brave steps.

Teaching bravery isn't about eliminating fear. It's about giving kids the tools to act despite their fears, stand up for what's right, and face life's challenges confidently.

In our digital age, bravery takes on new dimensions. Here are some tips for fostering digital bravery:

1. Discuss online ethics: Talk about the courage to do the right thing online, even when it's unpopular.
2. Teach digital assertiveness: Help kids learn how to respectfully disagree online and set boundaries in digital spaces.
3. Encourage positive online actions: Praise kids when they use social media to support others or spread positivity.
4. Discuss cyberbullying response strategies: Role-play how to respond to or report cyberbullying.
5. Model digital courage: Show kids how you handle online challenges or conflicts with bravery and integrity.

Acknowledge your bravery as a parent. Raising kids is an act of courage in and of itself. You're setting a powerful example for your children by recognizing and valuing your own brave actions.

Finally, consider this: Bravery is about the small, everyday choices to do what's right, to be kind, and to try again after failing. By helping our kids recognize and value these everyday acts of courage, we're preparing them to face life's more significant challenges with confidence and integrity.

The goal isn't to raise fearless kids. The aim is to raise children who can acknowledge their fears but not be paralyzed by them. We want to nurture kids who have the courage to be themselves, to stand up for others, and to do what's right even when it's hard.

By fostering bravery, we're helping our kids feel more confident and contributing to a more just and compassionate world. Couldn't we all benefit from more courage in today's complex and often intimidating world?

Clean - It's Not Just About Tidying Up

When we talk about being "clean" in the context of the Scout Law, we're going beyond just picking up toys (though that's important, too!). It's about caring for yourself, your space, and the environment. It's about respect – for yourself, others, and the world around you.

We turned cleaning into a game in our house. The "five-minute tidy" became a daily challenge – see how much you can clean in five minutes. It made tidying up feel less like a chore and more like a fun family activity.

But how do we instill this broader sense of cleanliness in a messy and chaotic world? Here are some strategies:

1. Start with personal hygiene: Teach kids that taking care of their bodies is an act of self-respect.
2. Make cleaning fun: Turn tidying up into a game or a race against the clock.
3. Teach environmental responsibility: Help kids understand how their actions impact the planet.
4. Discuss digital cleanliness: In our online world, "clean" also means being mindful of our digital footprint.
5. Connect cleanliness to health: Help kids understand how cleanliness contributes to their well-being and the health of others.
6. Encourage organization: Teach kids that organizing things can make life easier and less stressful.
7. Lead by example: Let your kids see you taking care of your own spaces and the environment. Learn "Leave No Trace" indoors and out.

Let me share a story about how these ideas can play out in real life. The Patel family struggled to get their kids, Amir (8) and Priya (6), to keep their rooms tidy and help with household chores.

They started by creating a "Clean Team" concept. The family became a team working together to keep their home clean. They made colorful charts where kids could check off their daily and weekly cleaning tasks.

Then, they introduced the idea of "Clean for a Cause." For every week the kids met their cleaning goals, the family donated to a local environmental charity. This helped the kids see how their actions could have a positive impact beyond their own home.

They had fun with cleaning. They created cleaning playlists with upbeat music, and sometimes, the kids would clean in silly costumes. They even had "glow in the dark" cleaning sessions where the kids would use UV flashlights to find hidden dust or spots.

For personal hygiene, they created a "Self-Care Spa Day" where the family would wear collagen essence face masks, clip nails, and discuss the importance of caring for their bodies.

Over time, the kids started to take pride in their clean spaces. They even began noticing and picking up litter in their neighborhood, showing how the concept of "clean" had expanded beyond their personal spaces.

Let's address a common concern: "But I don't want to be the cleaning police. I want my kids to have fun and be kids." This is a valid point. Here's how to strike a balance:

1. Set realistic expectations: The goal isn't perfection but progress.
2. Make it a team effort: When everyone pitches in, cleaning feels less like a chore and more like a family activity.
3. Allow for messy play: It's okay for things to get messy sometimes. The key is teaching kids to clean up afterward.
4. Emphasize the benefits: Focus on how good it feels to be in a clean space rather than the cleaning itself.
5. Give choices: Let kids have some control over how and when they clean (within reason).

Here's a family activity idea to explore cleanliness: Have a family "eco-audit." Look at your daily habits and brainstorm ways to reduce waste and be kinder to the environment. Small changes can make a big difference!

Remember, teaching cleanliness isn't about creating neat freaks. It's about fostering a sense of responsibility for oneself and one's environment.

In our digital age, cleanliness takes on new dimensions. Here are some ideas for fostering digital cleanliness:

1. Discuss online reputation: Help kids understand that what they post online can stay for a long time.
2. Teach email organization: Show kids how to keep their email folders efficient.
3. Talk about data privacy: Teach kids to be "clean" with their personal information online.
4. Encourage computer file decluttering: Like physical spaces, digital spaces benefit from regular tidying.
5. Discuss "clean" language online: Help kids understand the importance of respectful communication in digital spaces.

Lastly, acknowledge your own efforts to maintain cleanliness. Parenting can be messy (literally and figuratively), and it's okay if things aren't always perfectly tidy. By showing your kids that you value cleanliness while being realistic, you're setting a balanced example.

Here's a final thought: Cleanliness isn't just about appearances. It's about creating environments – physical and digital – that support our well-being and the well-being of those around us. By helping our kids develop good habits around cleanliness, we're setting them up for success in many areas of life.

Remember, the goal isn't to build kids obsessed with cleanliness. The aim is to nurture children who understand the value of caring for themselves, their spaces, and their planet. We want to raise kids who see cleanliness not as a chore but as a way of showing respect and responsibility.

By fostering cleanliness in this broader sense, we're not just raising tidier kids – we're contributing to a more responsible and sustainable world. And in today's era of environmental challenges and digital clutter, couldn't we all benefit from a cleaner approach to life?

Reverent - Respecting Beliefs in a Diverse World

Being reverent isn't only about religion or being quiet. It's about respecting others' beliefs and values, even when they differ from our own. This skill is crucial for our kids to learn in our increasingly diverse world.

We once lived in a neighborhood with families from all different backgrounds. The neighborhood started a tradition of "culture nights," where families would share foods, stories, and traditions from their heritage. It was a fantastic way for our kids to learn about and respect different beliefs and cultures.

But how do we teach reverence in a world that sometimes seems divided by beliefs? Here are some strategies that have worked in other families:

1. Model respect: Show respect for different beliefs and cultures in your own words and actions.
2. Encourage curiosity: Foster a sense of wonder about different cultures and belief systems.
3. Teach active listening: Help kids learn to truly listen to others, especially when they have different viewpoints.
4. Discuss commonalities: Help kids see the shared values that underlie many different belief systems.
5. Celebrate diversity: Make it clear that diversity should be celebrated, not feared.
6. Teach critical thinking: Help kids learn to think critically about beliefs while still being respectful.

Let me share a story about how these ideas can play out in real life. The Rodriguez family was concerned about their 10-year-old son, Marc. He had made insensitive comments about a classmate's religious practices, which they wanted to address.

They started by encouraging Marc to learn more about his classmate's religion. They found age-appropriate books and videos and helped Marc think about questions to respectfully ask his classmates about their beliefs.

They introduced a "Beliefs and Values" journal. Each week, their family learned about a different culture or belief system and wrote down what they found interesting or admirable.

They also talked about the importance of finding common ground. Marc was surprised to learn that many values he held dear – like kindness and honesty – were also important in his classmates' religion.

They discussed the difference between respecting beliefs and agreeing with them. Marc learned that he could disagree with an idea while still showing respect for the person who holds that belief.

Over time, Marc became more open-minded and respectful. He even stood up for his classmates when others made fun of their religious practices.

You may ask, "But what if I disagree with certain beliefs or practices? How do I teach reverence without compromising our values?" This is a valid question. Here are some possible solutions:

1. Distinguish between people and ideas: Teach kids to respect individuals even if they disagree with their beliefs.
2. Encourage critical thinking: It's okay to question beliefs, but teach kids to do so respectfully.
3. Focus on understanding, not agreement: The goal is to understand different perspectives, not necessarily to agree with them.
4. Discuss your beliefs: Be open about your family's values while acknowledging that others may see things differently.
5. Address harmful beliefs: Teach kids that while we should respect people, we don't have to respect beliefs that harm others.

Try this family activity idea to explore reverence: Create a "Respect Ripple" challenge. Each family member tries to do one thing each day to show respect for a different belief or culture. At the end of the week, discuss how these small acts of reverence might create ripples of understanding in your children's schools and the community.

Remember, teaching reverence isn't about watering down your own beliefs. It's about fostering respect and understanding in a diverse world.

In our digital age, reverence takes on new dimensions. Here are some tips for fostering digital reverence:

1. Teach respectful online disagreement: Show kids how to express different viewpoints online without resorting to insults or disrespect.
2. Encourage fact-checking: Teach kids to verify information before sharing it, especially concerning different cultures or beliefs.
3. Explore diverse digital content: Find online resources that honestly expose kids to different cultures and viewpoints.
4. Model digital reverence: Show kids how to engage respectfully in online discussions about beliefs and values.

Respect your beliefs and values, and don't be afraid to share them with your children. You're setting a powerful example by showing that you can be confident in your beliefs while respecting others.

Here's a final thought: Reverence isn't about being solemn or serious all the time. It's about approaching the world and its people with wonder, respect, and humility. By helping our kids develop this attitude, we're preparing them to engage meaningfully with our varied society.

Please don't forget that the goal here isn't to raise kids who unquestioningly accept every belief or idea they encounter. The aim is to nurture children who can navigate a diverse world with respect, understanding, and confidence in their own values. We want to raise kids who can build bridges across differences and find common ground with people from all walks of life.

By fostering reverence, we're raising more respectful kids and contributing to a more understanding and peaceful world. And in today's often divided and polarized climate, couldn't we all benefit from more reverence?

Charting Your Course - The Conclusion of Our Journey

As we draw this learning adventure to a close, I hope you will reflect on the profound journey we've embarked upon together. Through the lens of the highly respected Scout Law, we've navigated the turbulent waters of modern parenthood, seeking to raise children and sculpt future leaders endowed with integrity and respect.

The 12 points we've explored—Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent—aren't just words on a page. They're a compass and a blueprint for building successful and good human beings. These values serve as a much-needed compass in a world that often prioritizes achievement over character.

Remember, the goal isn't perfection. It's progress. Parenting is a journey filled with triumphs and challenges, laughter and tears. There will be days when you feel like you're nailing this whole parenting thing and others when you wonder if anything you're doing is making a difference. Trust me, it is.

Each time you model trustworthiness by keeping a promise, you're laying a foundation of integrity. Whenever you encourage your child to be helpful, you nurture their sense of community. When you guide them to be thrifty, you're teaching them to be responsible stewards of resources. These small, daily actions will shape your child's character over time.

As you move forward, remember that these principles are flexible. They can and should be adapted to your family's unique circumstances and values. The key is consistency and authenticity. Your children will learn more from what you do than you say, so strive to embody these values yourself.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Your missteps can be powerful teaching moments. When you mess up (and you will—we all do), use it to model accountability, apologize sincerely, and show how to make amends. This teaches your children that integrity isn't about being perfect; it's about owning our actions, always striving to improve, and getting back up when we fall.

As your children grow, the way you apply these principles will evolve. What works for a toddler won't necessarily work for a teenager. Be prepared to adapt your approach, always keeping the core values at the heart of your parenting.

We've shared stories throughout this book—the families who turned struggles into strengths, the children who learned to navigate complex social situations gracefully, and the parents who found new ways to connect with their kids. Your family's story is still being written. Every day is a new chapter, a new opportunity to infuse these timeless values into your modern life.

Parenting in today's world is no small feat. You're raising children in an era of unprecedented technological change, shifting social norms, and global challenges. But armed with these principles and your unwavering love, you're equipped to guide your children through whatever comes their way.

So, as we conclude, I want to leave you with this thought: You're not just raising children. You're building the adults who will shape our future world. By instilling in them the values of the Scout Law, you're sending them out into the world not just with knowledge but with character. You're nurturing individuals who will lead with integrity, treat others with respect, and approach life's challenges with courage and optimism.

Thank you for joining me on this journey. As you continue on your parenting path, remember that you're not alone. We're all in this together, working toward a common goal - building good kids who will make the world a little bit better.

Here's to the adventure of parenting, the joys and challenges that lie ahead, and the incredible kids you're building. You've got this!

About the Author

J Epperson is a seasoned business professional and a dedicated leader with over five decades of Scouting leadership and volunteer service. With a career spanning numerous industries and roles, J has consistently demonstrated a commitment to excellence, integrity, and service—principles deeply rooted in his life through his long-standing association with the Boy Scouts of America.

A proud Eagle Scout, J's journey in Scouting began in his youth and has continued throughout his life. He comes from a family where the values of Scouting were not just taught but lived. As the youngest of four brothers—all Eagle Scouts—J learned the importance of responsibility, leadership, and service to others early. This tradition of excellence in Scouting extended to his family, where he has proudly raised three Eagle Scout sons, each embodying the values and skills that Scouting imparts.

J's dedication to Scouting goes beyond personal achievement. He is a recipient of the prestigious Silver Beaver Award, a recognition given to Scouters of exceptional character who have provided distinguished service within a council. This honor reflects his unwavering commitment to the growth and development of young people and his ability to lead and inspire others in the Scouting community.

In his professional life, J has built a successful career with leadership roles across various sectors, including finance, auditing, compliance, and business consulting. His extensive experience has equipped him with a keen understanding of the challenges and opportunities that businesses face, and he has consistently applied the principles of integrity, loyalty, and service in every aspect of his work. Whether in the boardroom or the community, J is known for his strategic thinking, ethical approach, and dedication to helping others succeed.

J's passion for mentoring and guiding the next generation is evident in his volunteer work. He has spent countless hours leading Scout troops, organizing community service projects, and serving on committees to strengthen Scouting programs. His leadership has impacted his family and numerous other young men who have benefited from his guidance and example.

In this book, "Building Good Kids: A Modern Parents' Guide—Using the Scout Law as a Compass to Guide Our Children's Character," J draws on his rich experiences in both Scouting and business to offer parents a blueprint for instilling solid morals, values in their children. He believes that the principles of the Scout Law—trustworthiness, loyalty, helpfulness, friendliness, courtesy, kindness, obedience, cheerfulness, thriftiness, bravery, cleanliness, and reverence—are timeless guides that can shape and build the character of the next generation.

Through his writing, J aims to share the wisdom he has gained from a lifetime of service and leadership. His book reflects not just his experiences but a call to action for parents to embrace the values that have shaped his life and those of his family. J Epperson continues to be a beacon of integrity and service, inspiring others to lead lives of purpose and character in their personal and professional endeavors.