

Create a Happy and Harmonious Home

Experienced & Effective
Parenting Advice



CREATE A HAPPY AND HARMONIOUS HOME

Experienced & Effective Parenting Advice

Second Edition



By

MASTER AMANDA OLSON

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Ask Master Mom

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FROM THE AUTHOR

My name is Amanda Olson, and I have two kids of my own – both grown and both engaged to be married this year. (I am secretly hoping to write about Masterful Grandparenting in a few years!)

Some of you may be saying, “Only two kids? That’s it? How hard could it be?” I understand your skepticism. However, I have thousands of martial arts students who I have helped raise. Many now have children of their own and are hopefully passing on the lessons I so carefully and sometimes a little compellingly taught them.

After working with thousands of families over the past 35 years in so many different capacities, I may not have seen every problem and solution, but I would say it’s pretty close. I am a true believer that *it takes a village to raise a child*, so think of me as part of your village. I hope to be an empathetic, experienced ear and a source of wisdom while you journey through these early through teen years of parenting. There is very little I haven’t seen or experienced firsthand, either through raising my own children or helping other families navigate the unpredictable waters of parenting over the years.

My training in child rearing began with my little brother. That’s not to say that my parents weren’t doing a great job, but I was the big sister and

for whatever reason took it upon myself to teach him everything I knew about life. From when to be quiet to how to make it look like you ate most of your peas and carrots off the plate at dinner, I wanted to share my vast teenage wisdom. I am happy to say he has grown up to be a well-adjusted member of society with five children of his own, despite my unsolicited mothering.

In all seriousness though, I am a Master Martial Artist in Taekwondo and a Master Instructor. In my martial arts association, it takes about three years to earn a black belt. It then takes two more years to earn a second-degree black belt, two years to earn a third-degree, three years to earn a fourth-degree, and so on, adding an extra year for each rank. I earned my Master Instructor Rank in 2002 and earned my most recent rank of Eighth-Degree Black Belt in 2014. I am aspiring to the rank of Ninth-Degree Black Belt, which I will be eligible for in the seemingly distant year 2022.

During this time in my career, I have not taken a break and continue to teach classes for students of all levels. I teach instructors how to teach and how to communicate effectively with students of all ages and abilities. My students each of have a personal story and differing needs. Some are timid; some are strong-willed. Some have been abused or bullied, and some are the bully. Some have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Down syndrome, hearing impairment, autism, obsessive-compulsive disorder or oppositional defiant disorder. Regardless of their limitations, I have seen complete transformations in these children's confidence, coordination and behavior.

I have helped children go from unfocused little devils to respectful and happy members of the community. I have helped parents teach their children at home how to build confidence, how to show humility, how to ward off bullies and how to stop bullying. I have taken well-adjusted children and shown them how to excel beyond what they thought was possible. I have helped extremely timid children step out of their shells and take charge of life. Children who would never raise their hand to ask a question are now standing up in front of large groups with confidence to speak.

I love the potential in all children, and I love being a part of their growth. I love being able to give parents a few simple tips to help keep home life fun and to help in any way I can as they work through child

rearing. It's something that makes my everyday life special and fulfilling. In my work, it is never the same day twice. That is how I like it – fun, energetic, challenging, and often unpredictable, just like kids.

My first experience in teaching Taekwondo was when I was a young (12-year-old), naive assistant to the assistant martial arts instructor in my hometown of Panama City, Florida. I had all of two years of training in Taekwondo, and my job was to work with the youngest and newest children who came into the studio to learn martial arts. I was nervous at first, and my instructor often had to correct me. It was then I discovered that I love working with people. Those early years are when my passion for teaching and helping others began.

I liked learning what motivated the students and how to present my lessons in a way that would make them smile and want to come back for more. My joy for this was so strong that when my father opened his martial arts studio in Fort Walton Beach, I continued my internship as an instructor under his tutelage. I went to every instructor seminar he held, and even to this day, I study, train, learn and continue to perfect my chosen craft of instructor and leader. I have studied how to relate to and motivate children of all ages with varying situations, backgrounds and challenges. Outside of martial arts, I have been through hundreds of hours of training on working with children. In addition, I worked in my early years as a child care provider and pre-school teacher, and I have served as a church leadership team member for child, teen and parenting courses. I have seen pretty much all of the issues that kids and parents deal with.

My lifetime of learning has prepared me for this position and title of Master Mom®. This journey began for me some 40 years ago. Today I spend a good portion of my time training instructors and focusing on helping parents and children not to merely survive childhood, but to live together as peaceful, cooperative and loving families.

I see so many parents struggling with disrespectful and disobedient children, and I want you to know there is a better way than losing your cool or giving in. In this book, you will find out there are simple steps you can take to cut through the chaos, exhaustion or confusion. This often requires small changes in routine or structure at home that will ease the difficult days. These things you do now will also, more importantly, prevent bigger problems in the future. And whether your children are infants or teenagers,

you can do things now to transform a difficult or negative course into a positive and loving one. That's my goal – to bring peace and togetherness to your family, right where you are today.

I have chosen five topics that I find most families face frequently, which cause them a lot of thought and sometimes anxiety: Building Confident Children at Home, Stress in Children and Teens, Quality Family Time, Peer Pressure, and Health and Fitness for Kids and Teens. There are myriad subtopics under these, so if you need help or advice regarding something I don't cover, or if you have any questions, please reach out to me at Amanda@AskMasterMom.com. You may also visit my website AskMasterMom.com, or if you are local, check out my academy at OlsonsMA.com. I would love to hear your questions and your success stories of all types. I know we all love to talk about our kids, and I am your open door – ready to listen, ready to advise and ready for you!

From my heart to yours, I wish to help you create a happy and harmonious home.

Sincerely,

Master Mom® Amanda Olson

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for reading *Create a Happy and Harmonious Home: Experienced and Effective Parenting Advice*.

First, I want to congratulate you! You have become the caregiver and role model for a child. This may be as a parent, grandparent, foster parent or other significant person in a child's life.

Now, what next? What do you really do after that?

You have been given the arduous task of never making a mistake from this moment on and for the rest of your life. Don't feed them the wrong things. Don't let them watch the wrong things. Make sure they are the smartest, most advanced or most athletic children in everything they do. And by all means, make sure they are always perfect little angels whenever any other human being – from the mail man to the school principal – is within earshot of you or your children. If you can at least do all of that, you will have mastered parenting!

A little daunting isn't it?

All parents have been embarrassed, appalled and shocked about things their children have done in public. Maybe it was the time your child threw

up all over your boss, or blurted out to your best friend, “You smell funny!” or started belching loudly at the restaurant. Or maybe it was the time he disrespected you in front of other parents, or stuck her tongue out at the teacher, or told the pastor that church was boring, or wrote about the time you had too much to drink and how funny it was in an essay contest at school.

Rest assured, we’ve all been there. You are *so* not alone! Internet videos of other people’s children are funny until moments like these actually happen to you! And trust me, they will.

So how do we handle that? How do we teach them manners, good behavior and common sense without losing our minds? How do we teach them to be well disciplined, friendly and thoughtful?

That is where I come in – Master Mom – to help you become a true master of parenting!

Let’s get started!



“Mrs. Olson has been very instrumental in teaching me the values of patience, integrity, and leadership. Not only her martial arts skills and instruction are extraordinary and helpful, but also her intentionality to make her students better people through character development is outstanding and genuine. With her experience as both a professional martial arts instructor and parent, she provides a fresh perspective on parenting skills that are truly helpful for parents and consequently help their children.”

Marco Garci – 3rd Degree Black Belt &
Certified Instructor, Medical Student
at South Carolina University

1

BUILDING CONFIDENT CHILDREN AT HOME

When we think of children with confidence, we think of those children who sing on stage or go on a famous TV talk show and act as if they are in the privacy of their own living room. No inhibitions, no fear – just boldness and self-assurance. Those are pretty high standards and not really the norm.

I remember as a kid hoping at one of those come-up-on-stage dinner theater shows to never get called up on stage from the audience. It was a huge fear of mine and I would slink down in my chair hoping no one would see me. It worked!

However, that fear carried over into the classroom. I was afraid to raise my hand and ask a question, or worse, to have the teacher call on me for an answer. It wasn't that I didn't know the answer. I just knew my face

would turn red, I would start sweating, and a frog the size of my fist would lodge in my throat. It's an awful way to go through school.

I also remember a pivotal moment in high-school when I decided I was tired of being afraid. I decided to just start raising my hand, asking questions and putting that “pick me, pick me” look on my face that every teacher hopes to see from their students. It was just a switch. I decided to stop caring what others thought. I literally made the decision to stop being afraid. It worked. My body might still have those physical tell-tale signs of nerves like blushing or sweating, but the frog never really showed up, and I took on the “fake it ‘til you make it” mentality. Interestingly enough, public speaking is one of my strengths as an adult.

As a teacher I can really identify with the child in the group who is shy. That's the child I call upon – the quiet one who knows all the answers. I also encourage the ones who shut down and refuse to speak or move. It takes time, a gradual culling of the nerves and extra support and praise. But most times, it results in the child being able to stand up and speak or perform. I know the freedom that confidence gives, and I know the bondage the lack of it can bring. That's why it is such an important topic for me. I've learned to live in freedom from fear and want to help others do the same.

Be Honest and Straightforward

Children accept what is around them and make it their own. If you endeavor to be smiley, pleasant and friendly to others, your child will get the idea. Teach eye contact by doing it. Be honest and straightforward. Make the rules clear before you start something, and have lots of fun times. Expect people to be friendly, and they almost always will be. Point out the good bits of disappointing situations, and your children will do the same. For example, "The match was cancelled because of the weather. Now we have more time to make our Christmas cards."

Make Them Feel Secure

Your child needs to feel secure. This is achieved by being there for your kids, listening to them, giving them quality time, making it clear that

you think they are great and showing how much you enjoy them and value their company. When your children want some attention, give it to them wholeheartedly. Look at them and give them your full attention. Children are more responsive to voice, tone and attitude than to what you actually say! So don't waste words when a smile and a hand hold is all that is needed. If there is some distraction – cooking dinner, tending to your crying baby, rushing to get somewhere – then promise attention at a specific time later, and keep your promise.

Try to Always Listen to Them

Being able to listen to children is a brilliant skill to have. If a child says something like, "I'm no good at math," then don't contradict this by saying, "Oh I think you do very well in math." This ends the conversation and the child gets no chance to explore with you what is actually going on. A better response is "Oh dear – you are feeling bad about the math today." Then, with any luck, your child will elaborate on how he or she feels, and you will be positioned to offer support.

Help Them Overcome Fear

Parents of shy children let's talk about how to help them overcome that fear. We talk about *building* confidence, and this is very true. Building your confidence takes practice, but the really cool thing is that every time you practice, even a little, you build more confidence. The only thing you really need is a tiny bit of guts and faith to take one small step forward. Then you can push yourself into a world of freedom to pursue the life you want and really deserve.



"Thank you all for being like my second family and making me into the confident and driven person I am today. You have played a tremendous role in my entire life. My instructorship and martial arts training at the school is the majority of the reason I got appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point."

Ethan McInturff – 3rd Degree Black Belt &
Certified Instructor, Student at West Point, Army

Support Is Crucial

Knowing that someone will be there after you launch yourself into the world to help you recover is so very important. For children who are afraid, helping them learn to try is essential. Not pushing them or forcing them, but patiently supporting them. Sometimes that may mean you need to do something new with them. Volunteer to coach or work in the classroom. Go on the field trips or sit in the audience. I did a lot of performing in school, and knowing I had friends or family in the audience really boosted my confidence. I knew at least one person out there would think I was amazing!

Give Your Children Feedback

Feedback is also key in helping to build confidence. Let your children know how proud you are of them when they take a chance. Let them talk about the experience, and reward their efforts. As I mentioned before, you can build your confidence with practice, just like anything else. Start small, take little steps, and then build up slowly. Also, talk about the failures. I remember one time when I was singing, and my voice cracked. Someone came up to me afterwards and said, that was great except for that one note.

So my failure was noticed, but I lived to tell about it! Seriously though, I would not recommend that type of feedback. I once heard a make-up artist say, “Stop looking at the magnifying mirror to get ready in the morning. No one can see all of those flaws, and it just makes you feel ugly!” Truth! The same applies to feedback for your kids. Focus on the positive and let a lot of those little insignificant things go that no one really pays attention to anyway.

Encourage Them to Feel Good about Themselves and Their Achievements

It’s okay to let your child struggle a little bit while they are learning. It’s even okay if they fail at something. Over the years in my martial arts experiences, I have seen countless friends, family members, students and peers fail in different elements of martial arts as they strive to learn, improve and move up the ranks. Whether it be in competition or earning a new belt. I have rarely seen people quit because of failing and in almost every instance they have become stronger because of it. Often, the best lessons in life result from failure.

Now, having said that, I do not like failing, and it is hard to watch others try hard at something and fail – whether is a test in school, an entire class in college or competing at a sporting event. So how do we balance building confidence with failing so that our children will have what it takes to try new things and to be able to hold it together and move on after a failure? We have to be intentional about it. We have to create opportunities to succeed. Try small tasks that children will be successful at to show them they can do it. Increase the difficulty, and as they struggle, encourage and offer suggestions on how to improve. Even young children can learn this, and in fact, the younger they learn this lesson, the more often they will rely on it as they grow older. Confidence will come as one small success builds upon another. Praise efforts so that the child feels he or she has earned success, not that it was simply given. Create situations to make success happen but don’t make it so obvious that they know you let them win or that no effort was required. It’s funny how many times I challenge children in my classes, and they comment, “That was too easy!” Most children want to know they can accomplish something that took effort.

The achievable tasks you present to your children need not necessarily be of the academic or sporting variety. Perhaps looking after a pet or younger sibling may be more appropriate. For example, playing in a cooperative way, making something, or helping with a household job like cooking or washing the car.

Use realistic and specific praise, and really mean it. Say, "I like the way you've chopped those carrots," rather than blanket praise like, "That's nice honey." Pick out something specific on which to comment favorably. Always do that first. If there is room for improvement, set another challenge. For example, "Next time you can do the onions too." Children need to know they are doing okay, but at the same time, they like to feel they are moving towards a higher goal and that you trust they will get there! I use this technique multiple times a day in my martial arts classes and teach instructors to do the same. Giving specific praise for a job well done really does make a world of difference rather than a blanket "Good job."

Being able to approach a variety of situations with confidence makes life so much more pleasant, relaxed and interesting whether you're at work or social events, learning something new or spending time with family and friends. The skills needed to feel confident, self-reliant and assured can be taught to children at a young age and will remain with them for a lifetime. Teaching these skills to your children is straightforward, fun and rewarding and will give them skills to build upon as they grow and mature.

2

STRESS IN CHILDREN AND TEENS

Everyone has stressful days where nothing seems to go right. You're running behind, the refrigerator breaks, the kids are going crazy, and you have an important deadline to meet. All you want is a quiet place to sit and do nothing where you can calm down and feel the cool breeze on your stressed and tired face. However, this is not the type of stress I would like to address in this chapter. The stress I am talking about is the type that affects your health and your ability to function comfortably at home, school, work or social situations. The type of chronic stress that brings tears or outbursts on a daily basis. The type of stress that stops you from participating in the things you normally do or would like to participate in. This, of course, can lead to depression which can be very difficult to overcome.

Each Child Is Different

Everyone is wired differently, and our children are no exception. Everything that causes you stress can also cause them stress. On the other hand, they are individuals, so it is important to understand what causes them to become stressed.

Here is a simple example from my family. Being late to anything causes my daughter a lot of stress. The stress manifests itself by putting her in an agitated state. My son, however, tends to be completely unaffected in the same situation. Because I know this about my daughter and she knows it, we can work to make sure we are on time. As a grown woman now, she knows this about herself and takes steps on her own to be on time and gets a lot of stress relief by planning ahead.

Stress Can Hinder Performance

If your child is in a stressful state, it can be extremely difficult to perform well at school or at other activities. Imagine having to give a speech after your best friend just dumped all of his problems on you, making you late so you don't have time to organize your thoughts before being thrust on stage with expectations to be brilliant. A nightmare, right? When kids arrive at school after having a stressful morning, it is very difficult for them to focus their best, and they have difficulty socializing. As parents, we need to understand how our kids function and how we can help them be their very best.

Talk about It / Take a Time-out

There is a lot of pressure on children of all ages to behave well, make good grades, perform well at their chosen extracurricular activities, apply themselves, make good friends and myriad other things. If your child or teen is showing signs of stress, it is time to stop, talk about it and make an action plan to fix it. It may mean that you need to cut back on activities to relieve time management stress, or it may mean making a schedule and a game plan for each day. You may also find that some intervention with a classmate or teacher or even some counseling is in order. Whatever the

answer is, taking a time-out to discover the cause and find a solution is very important for the health, growth and happiness of your child. You have to think of chronic stress the same way you would think of an illness. You wouldn't let pneumonia go unchecked or untreated. Don't allow stress to do long-term damage to your child and family. The consequences can be just as deadly.

One Family's Example

I worked with a family and their five-year-old son some years ago. The boy was having trouble relaxing at night to go to bed, and through talking we discovered that he was insecure about what the next day would bring. He didn't know if it was a school day or not and if he was going to his sports practice or if the babysitter was coming – things like that. We created a calendar to put on his bedroom door with pictures of what was happening each day so he could know in advance what was going to happen. Because he couldn't read yet, on school days there was a picture of a schoolhouse. They put a picture of a church on Sunday, a picture of a karate guy for martial arts days, and a smiley face for Saturdays. It seems simple, but it really helped the little boy. He enjoyed looking at it and making his calendar each month. He eventually grew out of the need for the pictures and understood the concept of days of the week and weekends, but for that time in his life, it was important to address his stress.

Build Trust

Now, at that level, stress is not life-threatening. However, the mother learned what was causing the stress and knew what to look for in the future. The boy learned that his mom cared about his well-being and was there to help him. This was a small action with a powerful result. It built trust and understanding between parent and child which continued through their lives.

Relationship Stress

Another area that can be the cause of stress is relationships. Learning how to get along with others, knowing who safe people are to hang out

with, and finding a peer group you can connect with is not easy for a lot of children. Younger children are very self-centered individuals, and they are learning that they can't always get their way. If they are slow to learn this, other children will not want to play with them or be their friend because they will view them as being mean or not nice. It's important for you to teach them to care about others. Being disliked by others can cause a lot of stress. Take time to observe how your children interact with others on the playground or on the team. How kind and cooperative are they? Are they letting others push them around? Stay in touch with how they are doing at school and how well they are getting along with others in class. It may be something simple like a conversation on how to behave or something much more complicated like needing to change classes because of a bully.

Belonging to a Group

For teenagers and young adults, fitting in and belonging to a peer group is so very important to them. This is a time when kids really learn who they are becoming, how the world perceives them and how to handle conflicts. I am in a unique position as a martial arts instructor because I work with lots of teenagers. I enjoy this age group because they are full of potential and ideas and wonder. Helping them learn how to communicate, how to be themselves and how to accept others is a rewarding thing to be a part of. In my decades of work with teenagers, there is one quality among their age group that has never changed. They want to be accepted for who they are, even as they are really just figuring that out for themselves. Culturally, terms like jock, nerd, airhead and prep came into being in the '50s and '60s in the U.S. Movies and books portray teens as being labeled into a certain group in high school, and each is associated with a specific stereotype. The need to belong and identify with a certain group is powerful and challenging for teens to manage.

Actively Seek Positive Peer Groups

My advice is to actively seek peer groups you believe will be a positive influence on your teen. I know many of my martial arts students who come to me as teenagers are coming for that very reason. Their parents want them to find positive role models and be in an environment that encourages

respect for others as well as themselves. A place where they can learn a really cool art that will empower them and also protect them from bullying or other dangers. I know the teens in my classes always arrive early to talk and hang out. I love seeing them make friends, become confident socially and feel comfortable around peers and adults. I speak from years of experience when I say that a quality, character-focused martial arts program can benefit a teen in ways no other program can. They learn self-discipline, kindness, cooperativeness and confidence that will last a lifetime.



"When I joined, I was really, really shy. I didn't like talking to people or taking Leadership. I was actually really chubby as a child, so wanting to be healthy was definitely a part of it, and I also just felt really confident whenever I did martial arts. I think I'm way more confident than I was now. I'm not afraid to talk in front of people and take Leadership, so I think martial arts has helped me grow as a person and a martial artist."

Michelle Franks – Student at
Olson's Martial Arts Academy

If you are the parent of a teenager, then you know that teens face a lot of pressure in their daily lives. Demands on their time have increased greatly, and the pressure to succeed and get ahead of their peers can seem overwhelming. When you factor in the stresses of simply being a teenager trying to find your place in society, it is no wonder that many teens feel overwhelmed and exhausted. Many teens need to be taught how to manage their time and social lives as well as learning how to manage the stresses that accompany increasing responsibilities. As teens, they are starting to manage their own schedules, get jobs and join clubs or other organizations. They have to make sure they follow through on their commitments and still make good grades. It is a big learning curve from parents taking care of all of that for them. Teach them how to manage their time and their stress.

Provide a Stress Relief Outlet

One of the first things that you should do for your teen is to give her an outlet to relieve stress. Your teenager is constantly bombarded with text messages, phone calls, emails, instant messages and friend requests – just to name a few. Everyone needs time to recharge, and this is especially true for your stressed teen. You should get her interested in another form of activity that completely enables her to be away from otherwise stressful demands or work. Such activities can range from reading a book or participating in a sport to extracurriculars like choir or perhaps band.

If you are unable to find an activity which interests your teen, then you should consider making it mandatory that all work and stress come to a pause for at least one hour each evening at home. Your children may complain that they do not have the time to stop working; however, giving them the time and the space to relax is very important. It is definitely an effective way of helping them manage teenage stress.

Always Be There to Assist Your Children

Another thing you can do is ensure that your teen knows you are always there for him or her. Keeping all lines of communication open, between you and your child is extremely important. Remember to listen carefully and let them vent about whatever frustrations they have when they do come to you. Research shows that one of the biggest complaints from teens is that their parents either minimize their problems or do not make any effort to understand what they are saying or where they are coming from.

Help Them Find a Trusted Counselor

Also, let your child know that if he feels uncomfortable talking to you about certain things or events that have impacted his life, then he should seek advice from another trusted adult. You can always suggest a counselor at school, a youth pastor at church, or perhaps a favorite aunt or uncle. This gives them the sense that they can always get help through other means, even though they do not wish to tell you what the exact problem is. This

will be effective in managing their stress as they will not end up bottling up too many emotions or feeling that they are suffering alone in the situation.



“Taekwondo has really helped me with my confidence level. In fact, it's probably been the most contributing factor in my entire life. It gave me a way to speak out and really express myself 'cause I'm not a very artistic person, but when I come here, I feel like I can just really gain that confidence that I was lacking before up to the point I could teach and lead people.”

Jordan Click – 4th Degree Black Belt & Certified Instructor, Student at College of William & Mary

Be Conscious about Health and Fitness Issues

In stressful situations, you might experience a brief compromise to your stress threshold that needs management. You may observe slight anxiety ranging to more severe medical concerns which could require professional advice. Most health care professionals suggest keeping a stress journal to enable you to chart your stress threshold and find out what your stressors are.

Stressors are situations which cause your stress threshold to decrease. You generally respond to them, or you are triggered by them. One course of action is to avoid unnecessary stress and manage unavoidable stress using coping mechanisms. Your younger child may not be able to keep a stress journal but you can keep one for him.

Help your child by getting him or her involved in physical activities. Increasing physical activity not only strengthens your body and helps you fight disease, it can improve your emotional resilience as well. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, exercise produces endorphins which act as natural painkillers and help you sleep. Exercise also

reduces fatigue and improves alertness so you can perform better. Research shows that the more sedentary we are, the less our bodies and minds are able to cope with stress, and this can be responsible for anxiety and depression.

Going for a run and other gentle exercises are known to reduce levels of stress and increase well being. Aerobic activity is one of the best known methods of relaxing because of the inhalation of air. However it should not be overdone and should not put undue stress on other regions of your body. If you begin a new exercise routine, make sure you have had a complete physical in advance.

Seek Healthy Recipes and Nutrition

Seek out recipes that are easy, quick and healthy. Teens eat a lot and need to have healthy choices on hand. Good food can help with energy levels and focus. Check with your family doctor to make sure everyone in the family is getting the right foods for them to stay healthy. Also, sharing a meal together a few times a week can help as well. Is often easier to talk about stressful things when everyone is relaxed around the table.

This is important for those who have developing children. They need to eat well since good food can heavily influence their growth, behavior, health and well-being. Cater to picky eaters by trying new recipes (easily accessed online). Inviting children to help prepare family meals will increase their interest and help educate them about nutrition. This will also help them become more independent, lessening stress on caregivers that do the majority of the cooking.

Make Time for Fun

How you think really does matter. It's no real secret that people with a positive outlook on life tend to suffer less from the effects of stress. Having fun and indulging in good humor can help everyone relax and laugh. So don't stop playing games as a family because your children reach a certain age. You may adapt your family activities to incorporate new technology or to experience a selection of their video games and music.

Even as they mature into adulthood, reading together and doing fun activities to strengthen family ties should never stop.

Know How to Help

Teenagers today face an immense amount of stress in their daily lives. There is constant pressure to do well in school, get accepted into college, get scholarships to pay for it, keep a part-time job, and maintain a social life. Many teens cannot handle stress on their own, so parents who know how to manage teenage stress effectively will help to mitigate some of the problems they are facing. As I have said before, stay in tune with your children's lives, talk about the day and how they are doing, and know who their friends are. This type of caring communication can go a long way in warding off harmful long-term stress.

3

CREATE QUALITY FAMILY TIME

When I think back on my childhood in elementary school, I have fond memories of spending some great time with my parents and younger brother. We went camping and boating, played ball in the front yard, hung out at the beach and went to the movies. We played board games and card games, traveled and genuinely enjoyed being together. That's not to say it was all roses and butterflies. My brother and I had to be assigned to our own sides of the back seat on car trips, got in trouble arguing about silly stuff and even got grounded a few times. There were times when my dad got us lost or mom lost her cool. Times when parks were closed, or when we just missed the last ferry to Disney. Whether things were going right or wrong, they are times we can all look back on and laugh about.

Growing up, I was your typical latchkey kid in the '70s and '80s and spent a lot of time doing things after school like Girl Scouts and soccer. In

the summer, I visited various relatives for a week, attended summer camps and enjoyed hanging out at home playing baseball in the front yard or riding my bike. Both of my parents worked full-time jobs and even some part-time jobs to make extra money. My mom was going to college at night and spent a lot of time on the weekends studying and doing homework.

So, in short, it wasn't like I spent all of my non-school time with my family. I am mentioning this because despite our busy lives, my parents made it a priority to make the time we did have together count. As a family, we cleaned the house, worked in the yard, went to church and made the most of our free time by having fun. We learned to work together, play together and live together as a happy unit. To this day I enjoy getting together with my family. Now that my brother and I have children of our own, it just keeps getting more and more fun.

Planning Ahead

In order to have more family time, you often need a little pre-planning. Setting aside some “fun money” for unexpected opportunities will allow you to take that family outing or weekend getaway without straining your budget. I remember a time when my parents surprised my brother and I with a night at the amusement park. We had been there before, but this seemed extra fun because it was unexpected. I don't know if my parents had some additional time off or received a bonus, but they used that moment to create a great family memory.

Another planning tip is to involve the kids. When my children were young, we planned a trip to Disney. They knew weeks in advance about it, and we got all the maps and information together around the kitchen table. We talked about rides or shows we wanted to be sure to see. Each of my children had a special piggy bank to save up money for souvenirs. They did little chores around the house to earn money, and their grandparents kindly chipped in. When it came time for the trip, everyone was excited because they knew they would experience something they had been thinking about and planning for weeks. The kids were also excited about having money to spend on items of their own choosing. It was a great family teamwork time, and we had lots of fun in the planning and adventure.

Learn to Delegate

Freeing up some time for yourself as a parent can really help everyone. You are in a better mood and have the energy to have fun with the kids. It's hard to have the energy to play catch or ride bikes when you've been cleaning, doing yardwork or folding laundry all day. Assign a few chores to everyone, and you might be amazed at how much more free time you have. Teaching everyone the skills they will need to perform the chores might take a bit more time in the beginning, but once everyone gets in the swing of things, you'll probably wish you had delegated much sooner. Try to include even the youngest family members to avoid leaving anyone out. Although they might only be able to perform the simplest of chores, it's important that they feel like they are part of the family "team." You might even display the list of chores in picture frames on the wall, so that everyone sees how they can help.

Maintain a Family Calendar

Keeping a family calendar that everyone can refer to is also a great way to save time. If you've ever made three separate car trips when one would have sufficed, you probably have a good idea of how poor planning can waste time. The solution? Create a family calendar and schedule, place them in picture frames, and display them prominently on the wall. This allows everyone to see what everyone else is doing in a single glance. You can also hang a large envelope beside the calendar to keep tickets, schedules, maps and other items relevant to individual schedules in one place. I know some larger families who have a big bulletin board for their monthly schedule of activities.



"The Olson's program has helped to instill and reinforce character values that are important at home including discipline, dedication, sportsmanship, and goal-setting. ...It's also where everyone learns to support one another and value differences. ...We feel very fortunate to have the Olson's influencing our children's lives and as partners in raising them to be confident, driven, and good people."

Karin & Lincoln Olsen – Parents of Students at
Olson's Martial Arts Academy

Treat Yourself to Some Leisure Time

Once you've implemented a few time saving tips, celebrate your new free time by planning a fun leisure activity for the entire family. Plan a short family vacation, go on a picnic, or just take a walk through the neighborhood park. Be sure to take a few photos of your family enjoying these activities together. Then, display them in picture frames throughout your home, as a reminder of the effectiveness of your new time saving methods. Once everyone realizes how much fun these free-time activities can be, they will probably be even more enthusiastic about implementing additional time saving methods.

Participate in Outdoor Activities

There are so many things that a family can do to unite. For instance, you can participate in fun outdoor activities that all of you are fond of. These might include swimming, theme parks, bird watching, water sports, hiking, camping, and so much more. These activities, of course, lead to stress relief as an added bonus!

Engage in Do-It-Yourself Projects

You may also consider undertaking various exciting do-it-yourself projects, such as building models, making photo collages, painting ceramics or starting a good home improvement project. Rich and fulfilling family events are never forgotten. Just remember to take lots of pictures (or even videos) of your fun activity, so that you can also enjoy looking through them together in the future.

Another all-time favorite is board games. There are dozens of great board games for the entire family to play together. Younger kids enjoy the popular Thomas and Friends DVD Bingo while older kids might refresh their grip on good old Monopoly. You can even go online and look for do-it-yourself escape rooms at home and even mystery “who done it” games where everyone gets to play a character. There are so many options for unique family time games.

Working Parent Guilt

There is a lot of information out there that can make you feel guilty for working outside the home. You may feel pressured to allocate a certain number of hours weekly to family dinner, games, and quality time. Well, as a latchkey kid with two working parents and lots of great memories, I can say it's all about the quality, not the quantity. You can relax. Make the time you do have together count. If you do stay home, mom or dad, the same is true. Sometimes it is not the parents who are busy, but the kids! Make the time you have count by doing things together, whether it's a big vacation or at-home movie and pizza night. I never once thought that my parents didn't spend enough time with me as a kid. We were all just living as a family doing the best each could do.

On another note, if you don't have what may be considered a traditional family, make a family of your own with friends and other relatives. I know many people who find themselves transplanted into communities where they know no one. They make friends, get involved with groups and organizations and create a network of support and friendships outside of their immediate family. Family is a feeling. That's what you want to create, an atmosphere of family – of bonding and trust

between people. You can do that. You can give your children the comforting sense of family.

Strong family bonding is essential for each of its members. Families that don't spend much time together are missing out on a lot of things. Try to talk more, keep your communication channels open, share your thoughts and dreams, keep up to date on each other's lives, and spend quality family time together.

4

PEER PRESSURE

“**B**ut everyone else was doing it!” An extremely frustrating phrase for parents to hear. You think your rules, your values and your “lines in the sand” are well known to your kids. But this particular phrase is one that children use to justify their actions, and they think you will agree with them. Because after all, if everyone else is doing it, it *must* be okay. Just like everything else, kids must be taught. Through observation, they learn a lot about what is and is not allowed or acceptable. But more often than we anticipate, we must have a serious sit-down conversation with eye contact explaining the rules. I like to have my kids repeat back to me what I just said so I know for a fact they got it. That way, there can be no further excuses for “doing what everyone else does.”

Fitting In

There are many reasons why kids fall prey to peer pressure. The most obvious is to fit in and be accepted. This happens to all of us. We've laughed at an off-color joke, gossiped, or gone along in situations when we knew we shouldn't have. We are all guilty. It gets dangerous, however, when kids from a very early age don't build confidence in themselves and go along with bad behavior rather than to doing what they know is right. They can easily fall into substance abuse, thrill seeking behaviors like speeding or shoplifting, or unhealthy sexual behavior. We all know how dangerous these things can be for our teens, and the time to start preparing them for NOT giving in to peer pressure is when they are young. Talk about it with your six-year-old. Let them know they have a safe place to land (you) if they get laughed at or left out because they didn't want to follow along.

Stay in Touch

If you are dealing with a teen or older child, stay on top of things. Help them find good friends and good places to hang out. Teens and pre-teens want to be in groups, and if they are not accepted, they will find groups that will accept them. Unlike when I was a child, they can find these groups online with social media. Compared to face-to-face encounters, virtual networking can be equally or more dangerous. One solution is to make your home a place where kids can come and hang out while you are there. Make sure if they are hanging out with friends, you know who these kids are. What are they into? Ask questions. It's not spying, it is protecting. And as a parent on the other side of this, trust me – they will be grateful for your protection later.

Fear of Being Bullied

Another reason children fall for peer pressure is because of fear. They are afraid if they don't "join in," they may be hurt. Maybe someone is bullying, and they join in so they aren't the one being bullied. Or, someone stronger or "cooler" is forcing them to do something they don't want to, and they feel powerless to stop. In these situations, some real intervention from a counselor, school official or other trusted authority figure may be

needed. If someone, such as your teen, lacks confidence or support, it can be very easy for him or her to fall in with the wrong crowd. Teens especially need confidence and support to feel secure about who they are and the choices they are making.

As a parent, you are your children's immediate and most important support system, and you can help them stay grounded. While it is important for your children to be social, you must also teach them to know when and how to draw the line. The rest of this chapter will detail some specific actions you can take to better prepare your child to deal with peer pressure.

Set a Good Example Yourself

Children learn more from what we do than what we say. If we're always busy trying to keep up with the Joneses, we can't expect our children to resist pressure from their own peers. If we keep overspending on the latest designer brands simply because fashion magazines tell us to, we can't teach our children to resist the peer pressure of spending beyond their means to fit in. We have to stand our ground before we can instill the will and the power in our children to resist peer pressure.



"You two have been a mentor, instructor, friend, boss, role model and much more to me over the years... Who I am today is rooted heavily in my time spent training and teaching at the school and continues to define me as I grow...I have started to see how I have grown as a person; becoming more respectful, courteous... learning to lead, how to follow, how to work well at a job and much more."

Hayden Hale – 4th Degree Black Belt &
Certified Instructor, Veterinarian

Help Children Select the Right Role Models in Mass Media

Engage in meaningful discussions with your children after you read a book, watch TV, see a movie, or pass a billboard together. Talk to them about what they like or dislike about the characters in stories, shows or ads. Explore with them who they want to be like when they grow up and why. To help you get started, the *Enchanted Collar* books come with a full set of worksheets to help parents guide their children through the moral lessons embedded in the stories.

Provide Unwavering Emotional Support to Your Children

They must have an internal moral compass to steer clear of treacherous paths. They need a solid foundation, an emotional "rock," someone confident enough to withstand peer pressure. Be that rock for your children. On your daily commute, ask them about the events of their day at school. Talk to them about what they did, how they felt and how they could have reacted differently, if necessary. Listen to them with an open heart. Look at things through their eyes. Walk a mile in their shoes. Above all, keep reminding them that when the crowd goes mad, they don't have to give in to peer pressure and go mad too.

Communicate Often

A non-judgemental conversation with your child about his choices and friends will help you better understand the situation. Don't be too harsh critiquing him, even if you happen to notice any sudden, unfavorable changes in behavior. Criticism will only shut your child out, making it harder for you to understand him. Instead, be firm and compassionate in trying to understand what he is really going through, so you can talk him through the process.

Build Up Their Self-Esteem

Children with a strong sense of self are less likely to be led astray by their peer group. Teenagers often feel pressured to join with their peers in doing something wrong because they don't feel like they belong. A clique – even if those in the group are bad influences – can give teens with low self esteem an important feeling of acceptance and belonging. As the parent, if you help build up self-esteem, you can help them avoid these negative peer groups.

Know Who Your Child's Friends Are

Don't relegate your knowledge of your child's peer group to faceless names. Invite your child's friends over occasionally, and take the time to learn about their families. If possible, initiate conversations with the parents of your child's friends so that you have a clearer idea of their backgrounds and values, and know to watch for potential red flags.

Encourage Your Children to Participate in Hobbies and Activities That They Like

The possibility of your child meeting like-minded friends increases exponentially in such scenarios. Here, your child will find it easier to be themselves, instead of squeezing their personalities into a mold to fit in.

Teach Your Child the Importance of Saying 'No'

Your child should know that it is okay to distance herself from any activity or person with whom she is uncomfortable. Also talk about the consequences of saying, “No” with your child. Too many children buckle under the pressure of being excluded from the “cool group.” Let your child know that you will always be there to love and support her unconditionally, even when it feels like the entire world is going the other way. Finally, talk her through various uncomfortable scenarios that she might encounter, and demonstrate how and when she can decline to participate.

Set Clear Boundaries

At the end of the day, your child will model behavior based on the example that you set. Establish clear boundaries about what is and is not considered acceptable in your household. Your child must be aware of these boundaries and be taught to respect them. Be strict and firm with any deviations, so that your child is clear about your expectations.



"You were like a second mother to me. You taught me discipline, self-control and all the other lessons which are taught. Each day I recall a lesson which you taught me, and it helps me through life. Courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and respect being the main five. Additionally, the biggest lesson you helped me learn was discipline. At martial arts throughout a majority of my life, there were rules which had to be followed and they required discipline to maintain them. I believe that one of the greatest teachings a kid can learn is to establish rules and boundaries and stick to them. ESPECIALLY if it is difficult... And I've never said it but thank you for being one of the most influential people in my life who have made me who I am today."

Carter McClendon – 3rd Degree Black Belt &
Certified Instructor, Eagle Scout, Student at Liberty
University

Embrace Your Authority

Authoritative is my preferred method of parenting and teaching. An authoritative parent does all the things we have discussed but does it

without using “fear” or “punishing” the child. To me, consequences are very different from punishment. If a child knows the consequences ahead of time to a nonpreferred behavior or decision they make, then they know what consequences they will be facing. Punishment, on the other hand, implies pain or even revenge. Allowing the child to help choose the consequences of their actions will help them understand why they should think about the consequences before they make a bad decision. Often, the child comes up with something requiring more discipline than you would have imposed.

Authoritative means that you are in charge because you are the one with the most knowledge and wisdom. You are set in authority over your child for protection and teaching, but you are not authoritarian – not a dictator, in other words. A dictator sets rules and laws that do not allow for discussion or consider unique situations. If your child cannot count on you to be reasonable and open to discussion, then they will find it very hard to come to you with future problems. A six-year-old’s problems are not nearly as complex as a 16-year-old’s. If at a young age, your child learns to trust you as an authority figure and not an authoritarian one, you will have their trust for a lifetime.

I would also like to mention here that someone with authority guides others into making decisions. If you do everything for your child without letting her learn to do it for herself, then she will not be able to function well as an independent individual in society. She will find it difficult to make decisions and plans. This can be very debilitating in adulthood. They’ve always been told what to do, how to do it and even what they should want. Decision-making is a very real skill and needs to be addressed and taught early. Children with good decision-making skills grow into confident adults. They are clear on what they want, and they are clear about how to set goals to achieve what they want.

My goal with my children, as well as with my students, has been to create confident individuals who can function independently without me. I had a cancer scare when my children were five and seven. My biggest fear was that I had not yet taught them everything I wanted to teach them. I also realized that I should teach them how to live happy, successful and fulfilling lives on their own. If I’m always around, wonderful! However, if I’m not, I know they will be okay – truly okay. The very wonderful part is

that at the ages they are now, 26 and 28, we are friends. We enjoy each other's company. We share the joy and pain of life together. I still have wisdom to share, but not as often. They are making their own life decisions, and I am very proud and happy about the choices I see them making.

Every parent must decide for themselves what their complete parenting role is with each of their children. I hope that my life experiences on the other side of 25 years will give you guidance, hope and confidence that you *can* succeed in raising confident children of your own.

Don't Be Afraid to Mediate

Many parents are reluctant to interfere with their child's social group for fear that it will alienate their child even further. However, should the need arise, don't hesitate to involve yourself in the situation. Talk to the other children's parents or your child's school teachers about any problematic behaviors that may be stemming from his or her peer group. If necessary, limit the amount of time your child is allowed to spend with children you consider to be negative influences.

Encourage Your Child's Positive Choices

Children thrive on encouragement and positive reinforcement. Let your children know when they are making good choices, so that they instinctively gravitate towards similar actions and people.

Teach Your Child the Importance of Compassion

A child who is sympathetic to peers will also be quicker to recognize situations where he is being treated unfairly. Teaching your child about compassion will also prevent him from indulging in behaviors that could be detrimental to the well-being of others.

Peer pressure is not just applicable to adolescents and teens. It can also affect much younger children. In toddlers and pre-schoolers for instance, peer pressure may manifest itself through social exclusion. Your child may suffer from this, or he may be the initiator. If unaddressed, this can

negatively impact your child's self-confidence and make him more susceptible in later years. Begin talking to your child about peer pressure early, and keep these channels of communication open so that he has all the tools he needs to become a confident, well-adjusted human being.

5

HEALTH AND FITNESS FOR KIDS AND TEENS

This is an important topic and a difficult one to get into without possibly hurting someone's feelings or sounding judgmental. I added this topic to the book because I was the slightly overweight slow kid in elementary school who no one wanted to pick to be on their team. This was back in the '70s when coaches used this method to split everyone up for a game of basketball. Now we know it can be pretty rough on a child's self-esteem to go through that every day, and it can lead to bullying. Sometimes a friend would pick me just so I wouldn't be the last one left, but very often it would end up being me and some other poor kid hoping just to not be last! So, that being said, if your child is struggling with weight and not being able to keep up with other kids, I have some tips here that might help. I know from experience what it is like to feel inadequate, and I also know how it feels to overcome. I think that is why I can be such

a patient instructor for all ages when I see people working hard to improve their mind and body through martial arts.

Exercise Is No Longer Built into the Day

Every year it seems there is a new product that makes our lives easier and new distractions that can keep us entertained – but sedentary – for hours. I have to say, I am so glad I don't have to carry buckets of water up from a river every day or wash my clothes in a hand cranked wash tub! I also love having my smartphone with me for all kinds of reasons, from safety to entertainment. I don't think we need to demonize technology, but we do need to make sure we find ways to stay healthy and active.

Today, kids have everything they need for hours of entertainment conveniently located in their family computer or smartphone. Even shopping can be done with the click of a mouse. As a result, they are inherently more sedentary than previous generations. The exercise we got naturally through bike rides to our friends' houses and playing outside are not an intrinsic part of their daily lives. Exercise now has to be intentional.

Create Healthy Habits

Establishing fitness habits at an early age can lay the foundation for a lifetime of healthy habits. The habits you instill now as a parent are habits that will continue with your child for a lifetime. If you teach your children the importance of being active and your family leads an active lifestyle, your children will simply get in the habit of running, exercising, and staying fit. This habit will be likely to continue through college and adulthood. I know this was true for me. Once I started martial arts, I could feel the way my body was changing. I was able to do pushups for the first time and was gaining strength. My weight started to level off, and I found I enjoyed feeling healthy and strong. The great thing was that my coordination improved as well, so other physical activities did, too. Even my gym coach at school noticed the difference. I started believing that *I could* when before I just thought *I can't*. Your child doesn't have to do martial arts to gain these benefits. Choose something he or she is really interested in. Something that they can do to start with and then grow and improve with. Golf, tennis, weightlifting and dance are great options as they don't involve having to

keep up with other children on a team. Kids can progress at their own pace and feel good about their progress as opposed to being compared as the slowest or weakest member of a team. If your child is already fit and a healthy weight, still encourage him to find something he can participate in to gain all the mental benefits exercise and teamwork have to offer.

Fitness Is Psychologically Important

Pre-teens as well as teens are in the awkward years. Exercise can release endorphins, reduce that antsy pent-up energy kids this age get, alleviate tension and boost confidence. Because of this, the teenage years are a great time to instill the importance of regular exercise. Patterns of behavior that begin during adolescence are likely to continue through to adult life. Young people should be encouraged to engage in age-appropriate physical activities that offer variety and enjoyment.

Going to the gym will help teenagers maintain fitness. Several gym membership packages include entrance to swimming pools and exercise classes offering a wide variety of physical activity. However, some teenagers may find it difficult to commit to a structured gym environment, and membership may be expensive, so you may consider team or individual sports as another outlet.

Team sports are a great way for kids to achieve the recommended levels of exercise. For those not interested in being on a team, there are many individual sports they can choose from. One that comes to mind right away for me is martial arts! I have lots of students who love the fact that they are participating 100 percent of the time in the class. No waiting around or sitting on the bench. Golf and tennis are also great options for sports that don't necessarily require a team.

Whether the confidence comes from knowing your child can outrun a bully or from knowing he or she is healthy, strong and fit, fitness is a definite bonus. Who wouldn't want to equip their children with extra confidence as you send them to middle and high school?



“When I first started in Taekwondo, I was bullied. Just coming here and being with the Olsons really helped me to overcome. Now I feel confident. I feel like I can stand up to bullying. I feel way better than I did.”

Chandler Taylor – 4th Degree Black Belt & Certified Instructor

Improve Grades

Helping your pre-teen establish fitness habits will build the foundation for healthy living throughout life. It is also likely to improve cardiovascular health, grades at school, confidence and psychological well-being.

In fact, in 2018, the largest annual comprehensive study of Canadian teen health, the ParticipACTION Report Card, partnered with a team of pediatric neuroscientists, exercise scientists, clinicians and practitioners to release an *Expert Statement on Physical Activity and Brain Health in Children and Youth*. This Expert Statement found that physical activity improves cognition, brain function, and mental health. Chief Scientific Officer of the ParticipACTION Report Card and Director of the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute’s Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group Dr. Mark Tremblay said, “Regular physical activity, even in short bursts, can help kids’ brains on many levels. Kids who are more active have increased self-esteem and are generally more focused and less stressed compared to their less active peers. For example, students who exercise before a test show stronger brain function than those who don’t. Furthermore, kids with brain-based disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder or ADHD, may experience even greater improvements in learning and thinking as a result of regular physical activity.”

Studies have also shown that kids continue to do well on tests several years later because they exercised when they were 11. I believe that the focus required to learn a physical skill like hitting a ball, paying attention to rules and mentally preparing for a challenge is one reason that academics can improve as a result of involvement in sports.

Whether you encourage your children to take part in team sports, train independently in activities like golf or martial arts, or simply encourage them to ride their bikes, run, or help with yard care, encouraging your children to be active will make a big difference in their lives.

Engage Them in Regular Recreational and Competitive Team Activities

Most schools offer regular recreational and competitive team activities. Competition can help motivate teens to give more effort to the activity so they can either win individually or help their team win.

Teens should be encouraged to play a variety of sports that can be played all year round. Team games are fun, and teenagers enjoy exercising with friends. Group sports can be continued outside of school, so look out for local recreational teams and leagues that you can participate in as a family.

However, not everyone is interested in competitive sports, so introduce teens to different activities such as karate, dance or skateboarding. At this age, they like to try new things. Even if a hobby isn't physically demanding, it will help to maintain fitness.



“...Growing with the Olson's environment of teamwork, respect of one's self and others, perseverance and healthy attitudes/habits, our kids are now confident but respectful, strong but not bull, successful but not arrogant, young man and little lady.

Israel & Carmina – Parents of Students
at Olson's Martial Arts Academy

To help with performance in these physical activities, the body needs to get the right balance of nutrition to perform at its best – not just physically, but mentally as well. Again, my advice here is to talk with your family doctor or licensed nutritionist to make the best decision for your child and your family.

Regular physical activity increases the likelihood of teenagers remaining healthy in adulthood. Teens can keep active by going to the gym or playing team sports. Simply walking to school will promote fitness so it doesn't have to be expensive or complicated to find ways to better your health.

CONCLUSION

“What did one rocket scientist say to the other rocket scientist?”

“Relax, it’s not parenting!”

Raising children is the most important job in the world, and it is a wonderful and challenging life experience. It is also one of those jobs you don’t understand until you have children of your own. I know for myself, and I now understand why my mom always said, “Be safe,” every time I left the house. I thought she was overprotective. Today, I still say this to my kids even though they are approaching 30!

As you go through this journey with your children, you will at first be all knowing in their eyes. Keeper of all of life’s answers. Then, as they grow into teenagers, all of a sudden you are the least intelligent and most out of touch human on earth. And finally, when they go to buy their first home or car or have kids of their own, it comes full circle and you again have so much knowledge. It’s a cycle that I’ve lived through with my own children and have seen happen so many times with my students. I remember a parent telling me about helping her child apply for college. She said, “Seems like you need a college degree just to fill out the paperwork!” Our children

will need us well beyond high school so establishing a strong sense of family will continue to be important.

As parents, we play a very important role in raising children in a safe and loving environment. When parents recognize and deal with their children's most challenging traits in a positive manner, they go a long way in building the child up to be confident and happy. All parents face challenges raising children. There is no exception. Don't be afraid to connect with others for support, it's always good to have a knowledgeable friend or mentor.

Creating a stable family environment and raising children should be a joy. The family of a child, however you define it, is critical for development in all stages of life. My hope for each family, and the reason I write about family, is so that you will, no matter the challenges, ultimately have a happy and harmonious home.

Yours Truly,

Master Mom® Amanda Olson

Create a Happy and Harmonious Home

Experienced & Effective Parenting Advice

About The Author:

Master Instructor, Amanda Olson is recognized across the country as a leader in teaching instructors how to teach. She has led teaching seminars and communication seminars for entrepreneurs, teachers, and other professionals as well as written training and curriculum manuals for both.



She is a founding member of the American Martial Arts Institute and works daily in her Academy, Olson's Martial Arts, with her husband, two children and 1,000's of students.

Her 30 plus years of teaching and working with families gives her a very unique perspective and approach to helping children and teens navigate into adulthood as successful, fulfilled and happy citizens who are now starting families of their own.

She recently founded Ask Master Mom - a parents resource online at AskMasterMom.com. Her goal is to partner with families by being part of the "village" to help in raising and developing the leaders of the future. She is a highly experienced and successful, coach, martial artist, and teacher. Seeing children grow and succeed to live their dreams is one of her greatest joys.



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