

DAD ON PURPOSE

BOOK ONE: NEWBORN TO 10 YEARS OLD

Intentionally Raising Your Children



DAVID BAUER

Chapter One

Guiding Principles

WHEN you become a parent, you're inundated with grand visions of greatness. You imagine your kid turning out perfect, and you becoming the best dad ever. It's a dream that could come true. It did for me. It happened because I was a Dad on Purpose. My wife and I approached parenthood as our one shot to raise kids and feel confident about both the kids we raised and how we raised them.

From an early age, I knew I wanted to be a dad. While my own father was a great provider, he wasn't around enough for me to truly know him. I gleaned a few lessons from my parents, but they didn't appear to have a plan to raise kids. The scene at home was often chaotic; Mom struggled to manage five kids alone while Dad was at work. She resorted to harsh discipline because that was all she knew. Deep down, I felt there had to be a better way. Like many others, I vowed never to raise my kids the way I was raised.

Observing others

My wife and I dated for five years before marrying, and then another five passed before we decided to have children. Over those ten years together, we saw a range of styles of child-rearing among our friends and family. While we saw positive outcomes, the majority seemed to result in negativity and discord among the parents and children.

Taking note of what did not work, my wife and I devised our own approach, which forms the basis of the practices and advice presented in this book. We were perfectly suited to implement this plan. Although my wife did not always agree with every aspect (as I tend to be more extreme), she trusted me when she did not have a better plan. She complemented me as the ideal partner on our journey to raise successful adults.

Our results

While we refrain from naming names, our three daughters have blossomed into independent women. They secured jobs shortly after college that enabled them to achieve financial independence within three months of graduation. Presently, they all live in their own apartments in and around New York City, excelling in key roles at start-up companies. After several years in the workforce, each found remarkable partners to whom they are currently engaged or married. We are immensely proud of our daughters; they have learned to be financially, emotionally, and spiritually independent. Our relationships are strong, and we eagerly expect to become grandparents, although none have arrived as of yet—hence the impetus to complete this book.

We agree on these 12 principles

Our success hinged on adhering to strict principles in raising our daughters. While not everyone may concur with our approach, we found that consistency and a unified attitude were crucial. Collaborating to raise them required unwavering adherence to these principles, especially in their presence.

Below is our list of 12 guiding principles, each accompanied by a detailed explanation:

- 1. Joint cooperation:** You and your partner must be united in this

endeavor. A consensus must be evident in front of your children at all times.

2. **Set expectations or expect nothing:** Set clear expectations for yourself and your children to minimize problems and ensure accountability.
3. **Routine and consistency every day:** Kids thrive on routine and predictability, making consistent behavior essential for a stable environment.
4. **Just bite, no need to bark:** Act swiftly and explain actions without resorting to threats, fostering accountability.
5. **Your kid doesn't need a friend, they need a parent:** Emphasize your parental role over friendship to provide guidance and discipline.
6. **When you cry, you get nothing:** Discourage manipulation through tears by setting firm boundaries and staying consistent.
7. **If I step on it, I throw it out:** Instill responsibility and respect for belongings by enforcing consequences for carelessness.
8. **No is bigger than yes:** Prioritize agreement between partners to avoid conflicts and keep consistency in decision-making.
9. **Watch your mouth; they hear everything:** Be mindful of your language and tone, as children absorb and emulate your behavior.
10. **Lists work and set expectations:** Use lists to communicate clear expectations and track progress effectively.
11. **Read to your kid until they read to you:** Foster a love for read-

ing by engaging with your child through books, gradually transitioning to independent reading.

- 12. Reflection allows for correction:** Regularly assess your parenting approach and discuss areas for improvement with your partner to ensure ongoing growth.

1. Joint cooperation

Put simply, you and your partner must be in this together. In front of the kids, you both must be on the same side, all the time. Behind closed doors, quietly, you discuss, compromise, use other tools, and make united decisions. There must be agreement in front of your kids, or this will never work. Without joint cooperation, you can literally stop reading this book and try something else.

Going one step further, you and your partner must agree to implement all twelve guiding principles for my way of raising kids to work. Joint cooperation is working together to set expectations for yourselves and your kids. Some principles are harsher than others, like “when you cry, you get nothing.” Sounds pretty cold. But after listening to girls cry over what seemed to me the dumbest things, I needed some kind of response. This phrase blurted out of my mouth, and then I walked away. It worked. The kid stopped crying and talked to me. We made it a principle to ensure my wife never gave in to crying, either. We work together very well.

If you and your partner don’t have joint cooperation, raising kids together will be a struggle. It will be difficult to have a strong connection with your kids, as they will pit you and your partner against each other when they see you disagree. Kids see everything, especially parents who disagree. If these principles are not introduced early, expect pushback from your kids. That shouldn’t be a surprise. It’s when they push back, and you and your partner’s response is the same that makes all the difference in raising kids. Enforce together and win the battle or disagree and lose the war.

Joint cooperation means you and your partner understand that there will be pushback, but you stay on the same side. Being united in front of your kid is the most important thing—more important than anything your kid wants, let's face it. Your kids seeing you and your partner on the same side, all the time, is the most stabilizing environment you can have for your kids—even if they constantly disagree with you. And they will. Having a kid means you're busy for the next twenty years, pretty much all the time. And that gets extended as you have more kids by twenty years. I'm not kidding. Your entire world will be controlled by your kids, even with my approach. These are the facts.

A productive life, with great kids and a loving relationship with your partner is the goal I grew up with. Unfortunately, many relationships and families have one or both parents feel miserable as soon as they walk in their door. Two couple friends broke up after the kids left for college—these were our closest, “raising our kids” friends. Little did we know how miserable these two couples were. Joint cooperation was missing from both their relationships when it came to raising their kids. We saw it and heard it all the time. Was that why they split? It didn't help.

Raising kids was one of the best parts of my relationship with my wife. We completely agreed that after raising the kids, we wanted to be in love as much, if not more, than when we had started. We wanted kids that were respectful and gave us time to enjoy each other while raising them. It took planning and “joint cooperation”. I loved being a dad raising three girls. But I couldn't do it alone. Some can, but I couldn't. Despite having a great partner, these girls created incredible worry and stress to raise them to be healthy, safe, smart, and curious. Having a partner who believed in joint cooperation relieved much of that stress when I had someone who was on my side, by my side.

2. Set expectations or expect nothing

Simple phrase, difficult to implement. It's daily. It's the second guiding

principle for a reason, important enough for you to say this phrase out loud three times: “If I don’t set expectations, I can expect nothing.” Parents have difficulty raising their kids for many reasons. And this simple phrase, implemented correctly, solves many of the problems you and your kid encounter.

Easier said than done

Set expectations for yourself first. You need a plan to have overall expectations for your kids’ lives. Those expectations change how you raise them. And at times, dealing with the next thirty minutes feels overwhelming. Because even thirty minutes sometimes seems like a really long time when you’re with your kids. You need a plan as your kids grow, and setting expectations for yourself and for them will make this journey more purposeful.

Expectations for yourself

You’re going to get tired, frustrated, miserable, and mean. It’s inevitable. If it happened to me and everyone I know, it will happen to you. If you don’t have a plan for these situations, or even understand they’re coming, your response can cause more harm than good, enabling more bad behavior.

Set your own expectations when you’re not feeling as cheery as you want to be. Most of the time, it’s just sucking it up. Do you think your kid cares if you’re miserable or not in the mood to be their dad today? She doesn’t. Nor does he. Move on. Use another tool. This book is full of them. Find one and use it. Or start dreaming about what could be next.

Celebrate when expectations are met

There will be moments of joy that are beyond anything you knew existed when your kid meets the expectations you have set. How you deal with these joyous feelings is as important as how you deal with expectations

not being met. Validating success is an incredibly important part of setting expectations.

When expectations are met, we need to celebrate. With yourself. With your kids. They need to see you satisfied. And yes, you need to be able to be satisfied. Is that hard for you? Impossible for my parents. Never saw them satisfied. If it is, you need to work on it. Your kids need to know: **YOU CAN BE SATISFIED!**

Setting expectations for your kids

You need to make sure your kid knows:

1. You love them, always.
2. You can be satisfied when their behavior meets your expectations.
3. You will let them know when they are not meeting your expectations—always!

It's easy to think your kid knows you love them given all you do for them. But words are powerful. Looking in their eyes, connecting and letting them know they can count on you, and you love them needs to be part of your daily life. To this day, I tell my girls that I love them every time I talk to them.

How can your kid know you can be satisfied? Let them know they have succeeded in what you've set as the expectation. Whatever that expectation is, including not screaming in their highchair, being ready for quiet time, or looking clean and ready for school when it's time to go. Kids love to hear they're doing a good job; let them know.

This book is all about setting expectations and what happens when your kid doesn't meet your expectations, or their behavior is inappro-

priate. There is a significant impact on your kid when you react to inappropriate behavior the same way every time. They will stop if they see consistency.

3. Routine and consistency

Kids love consistency and predictability. It's a stabilizing environment for them when what happens next is what they expect. If you want your kid to behave as expected, you must consistently praise good behavior and react appropriately to inappropriate behavior. Being consistent while integrating a routine into all your daily processes creates a stable environment for your child.

The words "regimen," "routine," "consistency," and "ritual" are throughout this book to underscore this key principle. As you set expectations for your child, it's critical to exhibit reactions to their actions, this builds trust. If you react one way one day and differently another, your child will lose confidence in their relationship with you.

Starting something new requires planning how you'll sustain it for years to come, both at home and away. For example, setting up a timeout chair requires finding the best location in your house; the chosen spot will likely remain in use for two years or more, depending on the number of children you have. Some practices, like sleep routines and using music, require careful consideration to keep consistent behavior when traveling.

When consistency wanes, your child becomes confused. Their brains learn through repetition, whether it's how to sleep or wash. Disrupting that consistency disrupts their understanding of the world around them. Tantrums often occur not just because a child is tired but because they expect the world to conform to their thinking; they don't yet grasp that others may think differently.

4. Just bite; no need to bark

Act, explain why—never threaten.

Before having children, we saw many of our friends with kids trying strategies that didn't yield positive results. We paid close attention to the children's reactions, the parents' responses, and the outcomes when misbehavior occurred. This experience was invaluable training and helped my wife and me align on how we would raise our own children. These discussions took place well before we became parents.

We began working together early on to ensure clarity in our actions and intentions right from the start. We were determined not to conceal our expectations but to parent intentionally, with mutual cooperation, and clearly defined roles. Our guiding principle was simple: avoid making threats; instead, act and provide an explanation. For instance, many parents typically address a problem like this:

"If you don't stop hitting your sister, I'm going to send you to your room." We changed this approach to: "You're going to your room because you hit your sister. Don't hit your sister. If you hit her again, you'll go to your room. Every time." This approach teaches your child that they will see immediate consequences for their actions as soon as they engage in inappropriate behavior.

5. Your kid doesn't need a friend; they need a parent

Your kid is not your friend. "Wow!!?" You're not their friend? NO, you're their parent. If your vision was to be your kid's best friend, this book is not for you. Are you friends with your parents? Really? OK, stop reading this book. You're not going to learn anything.

This Book is entitled DAD ON PURPOSE.

You are not your kid's friend. They will be spitting and vomiting on you until they're two, you'll be cleaning their butt until they're three, running away from you starting at three, lying to you starting at six, not doing what you say at eight, and weaseling out of chores at eleven. They'll sneak out, get drunk, drive recklessly, cost you a ton of money. None of my friends act this way. You would only put up with all of this for your kid. No one else deserves this much of your life, except your kid. And no one else will give more back than your kid. It's worth it. No one knows better than me.

As soon as you realize you have obligations as a parent to set expectations for your kid, and for there to be consequences for your kid not meeting them, you'll figure out that your job as a parent is the most important job you've ever had. You and your partner are the only ones to set expectations for your kid. As said earlier, if you don't set expectations, you can expect nothing.

You need to be able to set expectations that you and your kid can both live by. Expectations like sleeping, eating, and washing are tasks and skills needed to live a normal life. You and your partner will be instructing your kid and setting expectations upon the completion of these tasks on a daily basis for years. You want consistency and regimen to achieve a predictable and stable environment for your kid.

6. When you cry, you get nothing!

As noted above, this may sound pretty cold. The truth of the matter is, I was frustrated with what felt like hours of whining and crying by my girls. One of the girls had a sudden outburst over something that seemed really trivial at this point, and I just said it, "When you cry, you get nothing!" Then I turned around and walked out of the room with this little two-year-old crying. She literally stopped crying, walked into the room I was in, and started crying again. I repeated the phrase, "When you cry, you get nothing!" and walked away again.

After walking away the second time, the kid stopped crying, came to where I was sitting in another room, and hugged me. Then she talked to me about something completely different. Not sure why it worked, but it did. And it turned out to work from that point on.

My wife didn't like the phrase at first, but she tried it and walked away, and it worked. Again, great joint cooperation.

The truth of the matter is, when your kid cries, you want to run and save them. It's instinctual. It's also the most basic way your kid owns you. They are incredibly brilliant beings. Your kid will learn early that crying is how you get what you want. Food, sleep, diaper change all start with the kid crying. This behavior is learned like all others, through repetition and success.

As kids get older and start being able to communicate, crying is their way of still getting what they want when they can't use words yet to express themselves. Kids will cry when:

1. They're hurt or fell, are sick, or truly hurting from something. This rule doesn't apply!!!
2. They're frustrated because they can't express themselves, which is why this rule exists to teach them your expectations. When they respond and their frustration calms down, good understanding and bonding occur. When they become inconsolable, this expression works to remind them that there is no consoling from you when they're crying.
3. They know how to express themselves, and they're just not accepting that they don't get their way—this expression certainly applies.

This expression is meant to convey that you'll never get your way manipulating people with crying or pouting because you don't get what you

want. This phrase is setting an expectation. If you give in to crying after saying this, you're owned. Set the expectation the first time you hear them crying for something you just can't believe they're crying about. Never stop enforcing this expectation. The phrase works!

7. If I step on it, I throw it out

Another controversial expression and expectation arose after I stepped on a jack. Wow, that hurt!! Every jack on the floor was thrown out at once. The entire neighborhood heard me screaming and yelling after stepping on that jack, "If I step on it, I throw it out!"

While your kid is your responsibility, they are also like roommates. Roommates must have rules. Leaving toys on the floor is really bad roommate behavior. And since they're your kid, not even paying rent, they use your space to hold all their stuff. And what stuff is actually theirs? Nothing is truly theirs is my argument. If they leave a toy on the floor for someone to step on, that toy is gone.

Here's another way of looking at this. After throwing out a few toys, I never stepped on a toy again. Because I had set the expectation quite clearly: if I step on it, I throw it out. After the "jacks incident," two more toys were left out, both thrown away. Who remembers the toys? Somehow, magically, the girls never left their toys on the floor again.

This goes back to an earlier guiding principle: never bark, just bite. Do I actually throw the toy out? Usually, I do. Why? Because all toys are eventually discarded. What if it's a phone? Why does your kid have a phone? And why is it on the floor? You certainly take it away for as long as you want. If a kid leaves a phone on the floor, they don't deserve to have it.

8. No is bigger than yes

Why? Because it's always easier to not do something. You don't need to

change anything by doing nothing or saying no to something. Once you say yes, you're committed as far as your kid is concerned. If neither of you wants to do something, then don't do it. Situations occur often when your kid wants something, and you and your partner are not in agreement. Stop. Don't do anything. No is bigger than yes; nothing goes forward thus nothing to regret.

The rule is really about you and your spouse. When someone goes forward with something the other one doesn't want, it's hell. "I told you so" comes up, and the "I told you I didn't want to do this" fight that eventually happens. One of the reasons "no" is bigger than "yes" is that it limits disagreements between you and your partner.

If one of you always says no, you both need to discuss whether something else is going on. But that doesn't change the rule. Being consistent will help your relationship when you disagree. And raising kids will be full of this. Use this tool to help make decisions when you disagree.

Joint cooperation means you and your spouse are always on the same side when it comes to your kid. The kid will see division and use it against you both. Let your kid know it was discussed and that no is bigger than yes. They can learn that rule early and often—as long as you're consistent.

Don't let your kid play you against your spouse; they always want to do that, consciously or unconsciously. It's just too easy to get into a situation where you're trying to explain yourself to your kid. Don't do that.

By making this a consistent rule, the other kids in the house learn that no is bigger than yes, and no explanation is needed as they've heard this their whole life. When your parents see that no is bigger than yes, they will stop being afraid to say no to your kids. They need to be as consistent as you are. Good luck with that. But if they see what you do, they will at least know how you manage it and how your kids respond.

9. *Watch your mouth—they hear everything*

Admittedly, this is one of my bigger problems. Growing up in a very acerbic home where my mom's sarcastic responses and mean tones were the norm, I found myself doing the same thing early on in my relationship with my wife. It wasn't until I started replaying conversations and reactions that I started watching my mouth and tone. This has been a work-in-process for me my whole life. As I had found out from the things I can still remember from my parents, this way of talking leaves an ugly memory and hurt feelings.

Kids hear everything; I mean everything. Talk to your kid and interact as often as necessary. Constantly at the beginning. As time goes on, you need to start listening. When they're born, you do 100% of the talking and they do 0%. By the time they're ten, it's pretty much 50-50. And by the time they're eighteen, you're closer to 0% and they're at 100%. Maybe it should be that way if you did it right.

Words that come out of your mouth should be considered, but natural. You love these beings. They need to hear that every day...and more than once a day. I tell my daughters I love them every time I talk to them. Words that stand for feelings are the most important. But then other words come out of your mouth. Choose wisely. Less is better when it's punishment. Let them tell you why you're upset through an incident report, another tool.

Your harsh words can be like knives. Be incredibly careful. Don't focus on the kid but the deed. Use your words like you'll be reading them in the news the next day. It can happen fast. Get in the habit early that words and your mouth can have an enormous impact on your relationship with your kids.

When every interaction turns sour, then you need to get others involved. It's likely a listening problem. Your kid will ignore you if they don't want

to be affected by the words coming out of your mouth. They always hear you, but they choose to listen. You must keep in mind they filter and twist what you say just like you do.

10. Lists work and set expectations

Expectations are clear with a list. You either do it, get it, finish it, or you don't. But if it's not on the list, how are you sure the person you want to do something knows to get it done? Using lists helps to:

- Set clear expectations
- See the status of an item—done or not
- Show when all expectations are met—the list is complete

While requirements change and new things are needed, avoid constantly altering the list. Celebrate completing a list, and if more items are necessary, start a new list.

Maintaining a list for various purposes proves beneficial. For instance, I have packing lists for five days, seven days, and thirteen days. All relatively the same standard packing requirements with subtle differences for longer durations. Having standardized lists prevents overlooking essential items or allows for additions when necessary if items are forgotten during a trip.

Likewise, for your child, having a list for their schoolwork enables both you and them to check progress and decide when tasks are completed. A list provides your child with a tangible means to meet your expectations.

11. Read to your kid until they read to you

Reading a book with your child is a fantastic way to bond, especially when starting at an early age. Books are not just objects, but opportu-

nities for shared experiences that will eventually empower your child to read independently.

Incorporating reading into your daily routine will help foster independent thinking and a lifelong love for reading in your child. If your child receives an excess of toy gifts, consider trading some for books. This allows your child to choose experiences to share with you.

During the ages of four to five, your kid will start trying to read. They may even memorize their favorite books and recognize words by sight. While true independent reading usually begins around first grade, start encouraging your child to read to you as soon as they're ready. Initially, it may not be as enjoyable for them because it requires effort and may be slower than when you read to them.

Begin by taking turns reading together, with both you and your child sharing the reading responsibilities. As time goes on, gradually transition to having your child do more of the reading while you patiently listen and support their progress. Help them get through words and find the right books for their level.

12. Reflection: What can I do better tomorrow?

When you're intentionally raising your children, it's essential to cultivate the habit of reflection. Taking time with your spouse to debrief at the end of the day, discussing both the successes and challenges met, can be incredibly valuable. Even seemingly minor incidents may hold insights for future interactions, whether they went well and should be replicated or could be managed differently next time.

Consistency in this reflection process is key. By openly discussing your observations and experiences, you and your spouse not only connect but also have the opportunity to gain experience and grow together. This

post-game review isn't about assigning blame but rather about self-improvement and teamwork.

Engaging in reflective conversations not only strengthens your relationship but also enhances your parenting efforts. It shows intentionality and a commitment to continuous improvement. Reflecting on interactions with friends, family, and others reinforces the importance of thoughtful action and shared learning experiences.

As you navigate the journey of raising your children, remember that you and your spouse are each other's allies and witnesses. While others may offer support and advice, only you understand the unique dynamics of your family life. By reflecting together, you reinforce your partnership and reinforce your commitment to providing the best possible upbringing for your children.

Final thoughts

Raising your kid intentionally requires a commitment to these twelve guiding principles. They serve as a foundation for setting up expectations, boundaries, and consequences throughout your kid's upbringing. Each principle is both philosophy and practice for setting expectations.

A kid-centered life results in a self-centered kid. Not what this book is about. It's essential to distinguish intentional parenting from revolving your life solely around your kids; instead, aim to create a balanced environment conducive to mutual growth and fulfillment. While parenting is undoubtedly challenging, it's also profoundly rewarding. Good luck on your journey!