

How To Raise GREAT Kids

The following information is a summary of the research conducted by Craig Swanson who is one of the premier educators in the United States. Craig has been recognized as the “Teacher of the Year” three times in his teaching career. Since 1982, Craig has taught at the high school level and is nationally known for his expertise in working with the adolescent. Craig has served as a classroom teacher, coach, assistant principal, and now as principal at Lutheran High School in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The following information acquired in 1999, summarizes the responses of 65 parents and/or children who responded to the question: “Describe what you feel were the most important things you did as a parent to enable you to raise such a positive and successful child.” It is my hope that through Craig Swanson’s innovative vision for excellence, the qualitative data acquired and presented in the following document will serve as galvanizing insights to parents who today are in the midst of trying to raise positive and successful children.

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1. Spend time together as a family (71% reported this)

“Make sacrifices to be with children. Be around to watch children grow up. Be involved. Attend games. Practice with children. Camp together. Do Boy Scouts together. Have special TV show to watch together as a family on regular basis. Go to Museums, zoos, parks, bicycle rides.....”

“I always wanted to know where my children were and the details of their activities and would justify this by telling them: “If we are ever in a bad earthquake, I want to know what pile of rubble I should search in to find them.”

“I always felt like I was a top priority for my parents and they were proud of me.”

“The biggest thing my parents did for me was spend time with me.”

“We took our children with us to everything we did from the day they came home from the hospital to now. They knew our friends and we knew theirs.”

“My house wasn’t always dusted, but I was there for all the track meets.”

“We truly enjoy being with them and make a point of planning FUN family activities and vacations with them.”

“We think doing things as a family is critical for children. Our kids know that we would rather spend time with them than with anyone else.”

other.”
“Our children would go to each other’s event to support and show respect to each

children.”
“We always felt it was important to be physically present in the events of our

“Had backyard BBQs with their friends.”

“Keep your home open to your children’s friends”

“Never place your job first over your children.”

2. Place God First

(60% reported this)

- Develop a spiritual foundation in marriage and in the lives of children.

“Honor your spouse. Putting them first and showing respect and love gives kids great security. Kids should not ever have to take sides.”

“We feel that putting God first and foremost as governor of our family is the number one, most essential thing that we have done in our family.”

“We must put God first in our lives and it is through Him that all things are possible.”

“We parents must practice what we preach and have a personal relationship with Christ on a daily basis. We believe that first and foremost teaching our children about God and the importance of our faith helped develop them.”

“We memorized Scripture together and talked about our faith.”

“We did mission projects or service projects together.”

“We try to “walk the talk.”

“We brought up our daughters to love, honor and depend on God for all that they know.”

- Pray for children and with them.

“We prayed with our children at every meal and every evening.”

“We prayed for healthy babies, wisdom as parents, well rounded development of our children, and for their spouses...it is never too early to start praying for their spouse.”

- Consistently seek God’s wisdom and guidance through prayer and Bible study.

“God is discussed in everyday issues so our children can see His existence in every facet of life.”

“Begin each school year by surrounding each child in prayer before leaving for school and then in the car on way to school during the year.”

- Maintain consistent church attendance.

“Having a network of true believers as family friends is so important.”

“ We always try to worship together as a family. Going to church comes first even before playing for a sports team on Sunday.”

“Expose children to God’s word at an early age. It was a given that our family went to church each Sunday.”

“We went to church as a family even if it was the morning after the Prom.”

“My parents took me to church every Sunday and showed me in their actions everyday how important Jesus was to them.”

3. Love, Love, Love . (32% reported this)

- Children need to know that they are truly loved unconditionally.

* No strings attached... no restrictions... no conditions...

- Children who know they are loved gain a sense of security, belonging, and support.

- Need to know that no matter what happens or how badly they “mess up” their parents’ love will never change.

- Communicate everyday to children that you will love them forever.

- The greatest gift that parents can give their children is genuine love.

- Children need guidance and discipline, but that will be most effective when they know that they are truly loved unconditionally.

- There is no substitute for hugs and kisses. No one can ever have too many.

4. Listen, Listen, Listen (28% reported this)

- Listen and talk WITH children rather than AT them.

“If you are a good listener, you show you care more about your children than you do yourself at the time you are communicating.”

“We spent a great deal of time listening to them attempting to listen to whatever they wanted to share with an open mind.”

“Listen without judgment to children and their ideas. Don’t always advise or critique. Let them know that they can make a decision and I will support their decision.”

“Our son knows that he can ask questions or for our opinion on any subject or simply discuss anything on his mind.”

“We strive not to only speak, but to listen Not just to tell our kids what to do and how to do it and when to do it.”

“We encourage our children to share their feelings. Even if they disagree with us, we still listen and consider their viewpoint. A parent should be able to listen carefully, then come up with a plan to guide them.”.

“We felt we were pretty strict parents, but there was always open communication. We discuss everything with our children. Our children never had a fear about talking about anything.”

5. Establish Boundaries (24% reported this)

- Parents need to verbalize their expectations – teach manners and respect-- follow through with discipline – no empty threats – teach right from wrong.

“A parent should have the authority to lay out the rules.”

“We do not allow sleeping over at a friend’s house. We see no reason why the boys should sleep over at a friend’s house that live close by. They can play there and I will pick them up at 10:00 or 11:00, but I think sleepovers are asking for trouble.”

“I always expected my children to keep their commitments. They learned to think before they agreed to do something and to honor commitments that they made.”

“After giving a spanking always end in a prayer and commitment to change the behavior. If you include Jesus in punishment, you cannot pray in anger.”

6. Develop Character (23% reported this)

“Help children set high morals and standards. We expected them to work hard and to do their best. The grade was not important, it was the effort that counted.”

“We always speak to our children about important values, putting God first, family second, others before ourselves. Treat others with respect.”

“I believe that academics are important, but I stressed to my sons that citizenship and character were more important.”

“Being truthful and open teaches an important value to children.”

“Dad taught us HOW to work HARD. We had high expectations to develop our talents and skills. All homework was to be completed before play.”

“Give them responsibility at a young age – sweep the patio, set the table, etc.”

“We are very intentional on teaching values: Responsibility (for actions, school work, tasks around the house); Faith/Trust (in God, in us, relatives and friends); Integrity (telling the truth, communicating appropriately).”

“Help children discover their God given gifts and abilities. Always giving 100% is difficult and probably impossible. But trying to do this is being a good steward of God’s gifts.”

“Our children were taught respect for their family, friends, leaders of all situations, and respect for themselves.”

“We teach our son to treat people with respect and to help them whenever he can.”

7. Be consistent (20% reported this)

“Hold children accountable for respecting elders, completing chores, cleanliness, school and church attendance.”

“My parents are on time, they do what they say they will do, and I can always count of them for advice.”

“We try very hard to stay consistent and not retract the rules we have established as a family.

“Give clear direction and enforce limits on behavior. Emphasize ‘do this’ rather than ‘don’t do that.’”

“We were consistent. We had a set of rules and guidelines for behavior. We set clear boundaries. We let them know when they had done something wrong and why it was wrong and how it could affect them or others.

“Train—know you are training no matter what you do, therefore, think about your actions in that light. NEVER act out of anger. Anger never trains positively, but it does train.”

“Express that an action or behavior is “unacceptable” rather than “bad, stupid, foolish...”

“Consistency gives a child security. They don’t have to guess what mom and dad are going to think or do.”

8. Foster Independence (17% reported this)

“We would gradually allow our children more and more freedom, or control, over their lives”

“We gave our child the opportunity to face challenges and fall flat on his face and then gingerly pick him up... he was a quick study and figured life out early on.”

“We wanted to teach our son to face his own problems and try to overcome them by solving them instead of blaming something or someone else. Don't run away from problems.”

“We gradually increased the amount of trust and freedom we gave the children and then would try to keep our mouth shut and let the children learn some things for themselves.”

“We told our children that we trusted them with our whole heart and that they would be the only ones that could change that level of trust and they just never have”.

9. Eat Dinner Together (15% reported this)

“We shared some of our best moments at the dinner table. Sitting around the dinner table was the best – we would laugh, listen about everyone's day and share devotions sometimes.”

“We had nightly family dinners at the table. We would take turns saying the prayer. We would share our day of frustrations and joys and discuss future plans.”

“We developed the habit of having dinner with only candlelight to hide the rest of the world except those around the table.”

10. Serve as Positive Role Models (14% reported this)

“Children will not always believe what you say, but they will believe what you do. As parents we must set the example of a Christian.”

“Children imitate behavior of their parents. One of the most important parts of being a Christian parent is modeling our faith to our children. Be a role model – have compassion on others, be giving, put the best construction on everything.”

“I knew that what my parents taught me was right, because I saw them practice what they preached.”

11. Mom stay at home (12% reported this)

“We decided it was important for me to stay at home with our children rather than put them in childcare. You will never find anyone who loves children as much as their parents.”

“The decision we made for mom to stay home was the best one we could have made for our children. I know this is a privilege that I am thankful for.”

12. Limit the amount of TV (8% reported this)

“Watching TV is like eating ‘empty calories’... rather than fruits and vegetables.”

“Activities like football, baseball, chess, board games, homework help a child develop mentally, physically, and emotionally. We don’t let them watch junk on TV or listen to gross music.”

“We made an agreement with our kids that there would be no cable TV in our house. We bought a VCR to screen what our kids would watch.”

Miscellaneous Closing Thoughts:

- * It is crucial to give children positive feedback and encouragement.
- * It helps to remember that our children are on loan to us from God.
- * Don’t sweat the small stuff – we have tried to not get worked up over stuff that doesn’t really matter. We never paid our kids for grades, however, of the three, we probably saw a total of 5 B’s in all the years of school combined.
- * Say thank you a lot. Catch children doing something well and say thank you.
- * I wish I could think of something more original and profound. Sometimes I am really dumbfounded when I think how blessed we have been with our three children. When I hear other parents talk about the difficulty they have had with their children, I wonder why I have been so fortunate. I am so very thankful that the Lord has chosen to bless us so abundantly as a family. Give me ten sliding houses before giving me a trial with my children.