

# Raise Capable, Confident Kids

Avoid 5 Destructive Parenting Myths

By Kimberly Gonsalves, CPDT, CPCC

*Certified Positive Discipline Trainer*

*Certified Professional Co-active Coach*



# A Note from Kimberly

Parenting can feel relentless. Our children are constantly growing and changing and testing the limits. Our family lives are busy to the point of chaos, with little time for sharing quiet, loving moments. No wonder we parents feel like we're on a roller coaster ride!

Parenting is hugely challenging! It "pushes our buttons" and brings up issues we may still be working on ourselves. Few things are more humbling. Yet, with the right information and perspective, parenting can be the most satisfying thing we do in our lives.

This report, *Raise Capable, Confident Kids*, addresses one key to effective parenting, helping you reflect on your own values and goals for your child in the long run. You'll be challenged to think about what has shaped your current thinking on parenting and discipline choices in particular. Specifically, you'll

- Explore the impact of a long-run perspective on your daily discipline decisions
- Learn to avoid the short-term traps that short-change your kids and short-circuit your own enjoyment as a parent
- Discover 8 Long Run action steps you can take today to help your child develop the life skills she'll need to become capable and confident

Parents don't cause children to misbehave, but how you react to misbehavior has a lot to do with whether or not it continues! So, don't let these pervasive but destructive parenting myths pull you into ineffective parenting that sabotages your efforts to raise a caring, capable child! If you want what most parents want—confident, resilient and respectful kids - then check out these new perspectives on five old, worn-out parenting myths.

If you need support in learning how to use effective discipline that's mutually respectful and helps children learn life skills for the long run, I can help you, as I've helped countless other parents. Together we'll explore your specific challenges, and develop a Long Run action plan that's aligned with your values and helps you use positive tools that are effective both short-term and in the long run.

I look forward to connecting with you on your parenting journey.

To raising capable, confident kids,



## Myth #1...Your Status as a “Good Parent” Depends on How Your Child Behaves



Do you ever feel like your child's behavior puts you on display for the world to judge? If she's good, you look like a good parent. If she's not...

Do you worry that if your child is rude or disruptive, people will assume you are, too, or will think you're a bad parent? That's a lot of pressure!

### *Short-Term Trap: The “Quick Fix”*

The problem with this myth is that it tempts you to rely on “quick fix” discipline tactics. You just want the misbehavior to stop! And you'll resort to ineffective tactics like threats, bribes, or rewards to make it happen - or you'll completely cave on holding a limit, just to avoid a meltdown. None of these tactics address the underlying reason for your child's behavior, nor do they help your child see that the behavior is unacceptable and learn what to do instead.

*“Long Run” Action step: Examine what's driving your decisions day to day.*

Take an honest look at what's driving your parenting decisions day to day. Are you focused on looking good in front of others, or are you focused on teaching in a way that best supports your child's long run growth and learning?

When you're clear about what you really want to teach your child, it's much easier to be confident and consistent about your discipline choices.

## Myth #2...If You Love Your Children, You Can't Do Too Much for Them



Maybe it snuck up on you over time

You began “doing for” your children when they were younger and less capable. But years later, are you functioning more like a personal valet? Still dressing them, schlepping all their stuff in and out of the car, making their beds, managing their homework, and tracking down their misplaced items because that feels like what “good” parents do? It’s exhausting!

If this sounds like you, you’re in good company. Unfortunately, you’re fallen prey to the myth that if you love your child, you should do everything you can for him. What’s the problem?

### *Short-Term Trap: Pampering*

There are several ways parents fall into pampering. One is by catering to your child’s every whim or generally making her life as easy as possible. When you do this, you communicate a sense of entitlement to your child (“Others are responsible for taking care of my needs”). The second way parents fall into pampering is by doing things for a child that she can do herself.

Pampering creates a sense of entitlement in children and sends the message, “You’re not capable.” Ouch! Just the opposite of the resilience skills she’ll need to navigate life successfully.

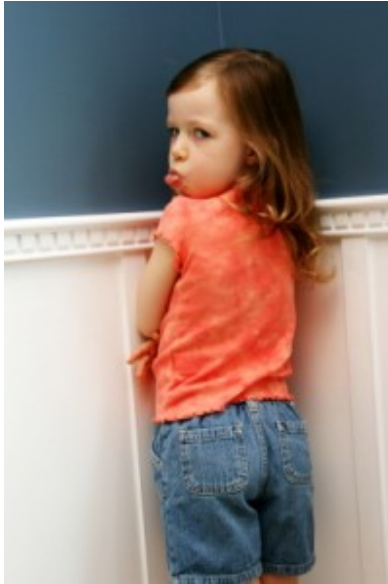
In fact, children do best when they are encouraged to take over responsibilities for themselves as soon as they're able to. It's usually messy at first (think of a toddler's first attempts at feeding himself), but well worth the pride a child feels when they reach competence with a specific skill.

*“Long Run” Action Step: Give your child responsibilities at home, and take time for training.*

Yes, it takes longer. Yes, you can do it better and more efficiently. But you're not the one who needs to learn the skill, right? Show your child how to do the task herself. Work on it together at first, then give her an opportunity to practice, and be ready to step in and help if needed. Finally, let her do it alone. If she's not so good at it, be encouraging and spend time on a little more training. Then, try again.



## Myth #3...To Get Kids to do Better, First You Have to Make 'Em Feel Worse



Do you struggle to find the punishment that “fits the crime”?

Wonder what your child’s “currency” is, so you can take it away and really get their attention to motivate a change in behavior? Do you rely on the element of surprise to make a punishment extra effective?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you’re being influenced by myth #3.

A lot of parents think that punishment is the best way to help children learn from their mistakes. Learning a lesson should be painful (or at least uncomfortable) if the learning is to “stick,” right?

Turns out this isn’t true. Recent research from the field of neuroscience shows that we learn better when we’re in a positive emotional state (feeling hopeful, positive, focusing on strengths and being in resonant relationships). Being in a negative state (feeling negative or fearful, focusing on weakness, being in dissonant relationships) just makes us defensive and fires up the older (evolutionarily speaking) parts of the brain that control the fight, flight or freeze instinct.

In fact, fear and shame physically diminish the brain’s capacity for high-level thinking and problem solving.

## *Short-Term Trap: Making the child “pay” for his mistakes.*

Doing this leads to resistance and turns your child’s attention away from the learning opportunity and thinking about what he can do differently next time. Instead, he’s compelled to defend himself.

“Where did we get the crazy idea that in order to make children do better, first we have to make them feel worse?” – Dr. Jane Nelsen, author of *Positive Discipline*

## *“Long Run” Action steps: Learn how to connect (or re-connect) with your child before you correct him.*

By listening, demonstrating empathy and taking time to make a positive emotional connection with your child before you correct him, you’ll help create that positive emotional state which is so critical for learning to take place.



While punishment often makes a behavior stop (usually just temporarily), effective discipline goes much further, teaching your child how to think a situation through and helping her learn the skills needed to be able to do something different next time.

## *Use effective discipline that teaches.*

By maintaining a connected, loving presence with your child, and using discipline that helps your child integrate both the feeling and thinking parts of the brain, you’ll help your child develop the ability to regulate her emotions and become a good decision maker and problem solver. Over time, your child will develop an internal (versus external) locus of control. An internal locus of control is much like that old definition of character: Doing the right thing even when no one is watching.

## Myth #4 – “Do As I Say, Not As I Do” Is An Effective Teaching Strategy



While that may have seemed true a generation ago, the truth is that kids learn by watching what you do, not what you say. In fact, emotional intelligence and self-discipline are the keys to effective leadership in parenting and in life. We simply can't teach what we ourselves have not yet learned.

### *Short-Term Trap: When Your Actions Don't Match Your Words*

When you know the right thing to do and communicate it to your child, but your own actions don't match your words, you create a confusing disconnect for your child. The old adage that “actions speak louder than words” is true. As an example, if you yell at your child, shouting “Don't you dare yell at me!” you are demonstrating a lack of self-control (and a lack of respect for your child) and asking your child to demonstrate greater self-control than you have. If you spank or roughly grab your child to stop a behavior you don't like, but insist that your child “Use your words!” to work out problems with siblings or peers, your actions send the message that “might makes right”.

### *“Long Run” Action steps: Model the behavior you want to see.*

Practice “walking your talk” in all your relationships: with other adults, with your child, and with yourself. If you want your child to be respectful to others, treat her with respect. If you value honesty, be honest. If you berate yourself or others when mistakes are made, you can bet your



child will imitate you. In the same way, when you model treating others with integrity and respect, your child will notice and will copy what you do.

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” – Mahatma Gandhi

### *Treat Mistakes as Wonderful Opportunities to Learn.*

Mistakes really are part of the process of learning. Think about the last time you learned to do something. Did you do it perfectly on your first try? Probably not. Most parents want their children to have the courage to take risks and stretch themselves so they can continue to learn and grow. Well, making mistakes is part of that process!

We all make mistakes – the key is to learn from them. Share a mistake that you’ve made with your child, and what you learned in the process. Around the dinner table one night, ask everyone in the family to share a mistake made, and what they learned from it. Avoid lecturing! Just try to listen and acknowledge the learning.

Part of the process of learning from mistakes involves learning to take responsibility. Help your child learn how to take responsibility for his mistakes by asking him to come up with strategies to fix the mistake or make amends. Asking, “What ideas do you have for fixing this problem?” is a good start. If your child has trouble coming up with ideas, you can ask whether he’d like your help to brainstorm together. When you help your child think through how to correct a mistake, and do it in a loving, constructive way, your child will be on the path toward learning to take responsibility for his mistakes. Fixing mistakes or making amends is an important step, and restores a child’s sense of capability and confidence in himself.

“A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.” – Albert Einstein

## Myth #5...Your Child's Happiness is Your First Priority



The old adage is true: “If Mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy!” Emotions are contagious! As the parent and leader in your family, you set the emotional tone for your child and your home. If you’re happy and relaxed, that will influence your child. If you’re stressed, anxious, depressed, or angry, your child will likely mirror your emotional state.

*Short-term trap: Neglecting Your Own Needs.*

Putting your own needs on “perma-hold”, thinking your marriage, your health, and your own dreams can wait indefinitely is a recipe for burn out and resentment.

*“Long Run” Action Step: Establish a regular routine of self-care.*

Self-care is not selfish; it’s essential for all human beings. It’s especially important for people who are taking care of others. Taking care of yourself benefits you and your family. You will be better able to regulate your own emotions, and more resilient under stress. You’ll have more energy, more patience, and stand a better chance of keeping your sense of humor (a terrible thing to lose!). Schedule time for things that renew your spirit and recharge your batteries. Exercise. Get enough sleep. Eat well. Nurture your own adult relationships, especially with your spouse or partner. And schedule some fun time away from your kids, too!



## *Ask for help!*

Before you get to “overwhelm”, ask for help. Whether it’s having your partner take over for a couple hours, hiring a sitter, or simply asking your kids to help more, know that asking for help is a sign of strength (and sanity!), not weakness.

By taking good care of yourself and creating healthy habits from the time your children are young, you’ll be in a position to really enjoy parenting. Parenting is a marathon, not a sprint!

# Next Steps...

I hope that exploring these myths has helped you identify ways of thinking that may be getting in the way of developing capable, confident kids. Even better: if you've been inspired to take a "Long Run" step toward doing something more effective, in a way that's sustainable for you.

My mission is to help you build strong and loving relationships with your children, and to enjoy more connection, calm, and confidence – and less frustration – by using effective discipline that teaches the skills kids need for long run success in life.

It's never too late to make changes if things aren't going the way you'd hoped! And, you don't have to do it alone. I'm committed to helping you parent in wise ways that reflect your values.

I offer a number of resources to help you implement informed, thoughtful strategies that you can use right now to be a more effective (and less frustrated) parent and raise a wonderful, caring, confident child. From free tele-classes to [parenting classes, workshops, Win-Win Parent Coaching](#), and [Individual Coaching](#), you'll find lots of options and resources for your parenting journey, whether your kids are preschoolers or teens.

When you identify the underlying beliefs that drive your habitual interactions with your child, you'll get new clarity on your behavior and your child's. I hope you will put these "Long Run" steps into action, so you can teach your child the skills she'll need to become capable and confident, and give yourself permission to take care of your own needs along the way.

Enjoy the journey!

