

Want to Raise Successful Kids? Science Says Do These 5 Things Every Day

inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/want-to-raise-successful-kids-science-says-do-these-5-things-every-day.html

June 22,
2019



My poor daughter. She's happy and healthy, and has loving parents and a stable home.

But, she also has a dad who scours scholarly articles to find the modern consensus on best practices in raising kids.

I hope we're not treating her like a guinea pig. But I do think we're careful to make small adjustments in the ways we try to raise her, having pored over some of the most useful and interesting strategies out there.

I think the five daily habits I'll describe below are among the most compelling.

1. Stay on top of them.

It can be exhausting, and sometimes you think your words are going in one ear and out the other. But British researchers found that parents who articulate high expectations are more likely to have kids who grow up to be successful -- and avoid some key pitfalls. '

Specifically, a study of 15,000 British girls over 10 years, from ages 13-14 to 23-24, found that those whose parents who consistently displayed high expectations for their children were:

- More likely to attend college.
- Less likely to become pregnant as teenagers.
- Less likely to have prolonged periods of unemployment.
- Less likely to get stuck in dead-end, low-wage jobs.

The key: The kids didn't necessarily like hearing all the "high expectations," and they didn't always react civilly to hearing it. But at the end of the day, they heard it.

As a press release from the University of Essex put it: "Behind every successful woman is a nagging mom? Teenage girls more likely to succeed if they have pushy mothers."

2. Praise them correctly.

There are two main ways that parents praise their kids. The first is for their innate abilities. The second is for their effort. Examples:

- Innate ability praise: *Great job! You're so smart!*
- Effort praise: *Great job! You worked hard and figured it out!*

Bottom line upfront: When you praise kids, praise them for effort, not abilities.

This comes from [the work of Carol Dweck](#), a professor of psychology at Stanford University. Most of her work revolves around teaching the difference between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset.

You can see this here: If you praise me for my innate intelligence, you're praising me for (a) something I had nothing to do with achieving, and (b) something I can't do anything myself to improve.

But you praise me for my effort, you're encouraging me to develop exactly the muscles you want me to develop to be successful in life.

If you're a relatively new parent, and think this kind of distinction matters more when your kids are older, think again. The effects of these praise strategies are quantifiable even children are as young as 1 to 3 years of age.

3. Take them outside.

This one's simple. And when the weather's nice, it's also highly enjoyable for both kids and for you.

Think about this: Those of us who work in offices hear constantly that sitting all day is killing us. And yet, what do we ask our kids to do for six or seven hours a day? Sit in classrooms.

It's off the charts insane. Instead, science shows you should encourage them to play outdoors as much as possible.

Researchers in Europe tracked how much outside activity that 153 boys, aged 6 to 8, had every day. The correlation was striking:

"The more time kids ... spent sitting and the less time they spent being physically active, the fewer gains they made in reading in the two following years. [It] also had a negative impact on their ability to do math."

4. Read to them correctly.

This one is so important, especially when they're younger. Parents of highly successful kids are the ones who read to their kids when they were little.

And it turns out there's a right way and a wrong way to read to them.

The wrong way is simply to read. We've all been there (I plead guilty); sometimes you're so exhausted reading to your kids that you're almost on autopilot. I could probably recite the entire Ladybug Girl series of books from memory at this point.

But when you can, the more effective thing to do is to engage your child while reading. Ask them to read parts of the books. Ask them what they think will happen with the plot. If they're too young for that, ask them to turn the pages for you.

As an example, neuroscientist Erin Clabough suggests that if you read the book, "Are You My Mother," to your young child, ask him or her to walk through the plot as it happens.

"What would you do, if you were the baby bird?" she suggests asking. "Even for books you've read together 216 times, your child can come up with a different way the character can react, a different decision the character can make."

5. Make them do chores.

I swear this is a real thing. It comes from Julie Lythcott-Haims, who was the dean of freshmen at Stanford University and wrote the *New York Times* bestseller *How to Raise an Adult*.

Lythcott-Haims cites the Harvard Grant Study, a famous 81-year-old longitudinal study, which found that people generally need two things to be successful in life. The first is love; the second is work ethic.

How do we develop work ethic as young kids?

You've got it: By doing the dishes, mowing the lawn, taking out the garbage, walking the dog, cleaning our rooms -; all the stuff that kids often balk at and parents have to nag them about (see #1, above).

"By making them do chores ... they realize I have to do the work of life in order to be part of life. It's not just about me and what I need in this moment."

Now, here's the drawback as a parent. Have you ever seen what the dishwasher looks like after you asked a 9-year-old to load it? Ever had to follow after your 7-year-old with a bunch of plastic bags to pick up after he or she walked the dog?

Yeah. The point is that especially in the early stages, it would probably be a lot easier if you just did the chores yourself. The point is: Well, the point is that that's not the point.

Moms and dads of America (the world, really). We're all in this together. Maybe we'll get our thanks when our kids are grown.

Published on: Jun 22, 2019

Like this column? Sign up to [subscribe to email alerts](#) and you'll never miss a post.

The opinions expressed here by Inc.com columnists are their own, not those of Inc.com.

By early 2012, almost six years after its founding, [Austin-based Yeti Coolers](#) was hitting its stride. The maker of [high-end coolers](#) for the hook-and-bullet set had grown to 20 employees and finished the previous year with \$29 million in sales, which would earn the company its [third consecutive appearance on the Inc. 5000](#). Roy and Ryan Seiders, the co-founders, had faith in the company they'd bootstrapped, but they were concerned about having all their wealth tied up in it. "We homed in on the idea of bringing in an equity partner that could help us take some chips off the table and be a resource for us as we navigated the next stages of growth," Roy says.

The Seiders fielded pitches from more than a dozen private equity firms before agreeing to sell Cortec about 70 percent of the company. While neither party will disclose the price, Roy admits that Cortec's wasn't the most lucrative offer on the table. But Cortec's proposal had an intangible the brothers' truly valued. "They gave Ryan and me a ton of confidence that we'd be in the right hands," says Roy.

So far, that confidence appears to be justified. Yeti has become a cult brand that last year brought in \$779 million in revenue and raised \$288 million in its October IPO. (Roy's holdings are worth more than \$170 million.) The now-700-employee company has dropped "Coolers" from its name--thanks to an assist from Cortec in navigating the necessary trademark battles--and expanded the product line beyond \$400 heavy-duty coolers to include drinkware (mugs and tumblers), bags, lawn chairs, and even an off-road electric scooter.

Yeti has extended its distribution from regional to national to international, including Australia and Japan. Once aimed exclusively at fishermen and hunters--that is, people like the Seiders--the company has now expanded its sales into other consumer sectors, such as suburbanites for their backyards and barbecues.

"They were a cooler company. That's all," says David Schnadig, managing partner at Cortec, of Yeti circa 2012. "They had 11 SKUs and two colors. So we sat down and said, 'Where do we want to go? Where can we go? Where shouldn't we go?' And we came up with a shared vision."

The Seiders and Schnadig, now the board chair, laid out a road map. First, they tested every element of their cooler to try to ensure that even if competitors created cheaper knockoffs--and they did--Yeti couldn't be bested on quality. Then they agreed that Yeti should move into less expensive offerings, like \$200 soft coolers and stainless steel drinkware--specifically, mugs and tumblers priced from around \$25 to \$50. All have proved to be profitable.

"They brought an entrepreneur mindset," Roy says of the Cortec team. "We prided ourselves back in those early years on making quick decisions. Cortec brought that same energy around being decisive, moving the ball down the field--and if it doesn't work, course-correct and move on."

Another advantage Cortec has offered: the cold objectivity of seeing things from a distance. The affable Roy admits that before Cortec, he'd stuck with vendors, marketing agencies, or employees the company had outgrown. The PE firm wasn't about to let that happen. "So where I might have a personal connection to a person or vendor because they were there in those early years," Roy says, "that outside perspective recognizes, 'OK, they were great at one time, but we're beyond that.'" Cortec also brought in a CEO, Matt Reintjes, who had experience in outdoor products, to pilot the company's growth. That allowed Roy to focus on his obsession with product development. (Ryan has gone fishing--literally--though he still weighs in on some decisions.)

Today, Yeti and Cortec compare notes weekly. It's far less intense than those first three or four months. "In those early days, I was talking to Dave every single day by phone, bouncing ideas," Roy says. "They're very hands-on. And that's what we needed."

From the July/August 2019 issue of *Inc.* Magazine