

# BeAGreatMama.com



Nurture a Happy & Close Relationship with your Children

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### **Writing Credits & Thanks Go To:**

Alice Seba, who started it all.

Laurie Ayers, who added her flair.

Many mommies who were willing to admit their mistakes

# Introduction

Any mama will testify that we've probably all at one time or another felt like we've lost our *Mother of the Year* award.

Our children do not come with instructions booklets, and even if they did, it'd probably be in a language we couldn't understand! We do the best we can with what we have.



**We all want the best for our kids.**

We want them to be successful, happy and yes, we hope that they would be perfect little angels that never misbehaved.

Of course, life isn't like that and just like with our first two guides, **nobody expects perfection.**

## Mommy Mistakes

We all make mistakes. Seriously – everybody! If you think you know a perfect mom – it's only because you probably don't know her well enough! LOL!

I've asked moms I know online to share some of the biggest mistakes they've made and the lessons they learned from them. These stories are peppered through the guide so that you can be encouraged to know that you are not the only mama out there that feels like they don't always measure up.

*Be A Great Mama* is all about being a positive role model and influence in your children's lives, so that you can have a great relationship and they can grow up to be happy and successful individuals.

Some of the best parenting advice ever given came from a facilitator of a new parents-to-be class. It wasn't a labor and delivery class but rather one to give an idea what to expect from our new blessings.

She told all of the excited and nervous parents, "Your child will bring you the most joy you will ever experience in you life." (We all smiled with a certain bit of naïveté).

Then she continued, "And they will also bring you the worst pain you will ever experience... and I'm not talking about the delivery process." (Some parents looked horrified and others just dazed and confused what she could possibly mean by that last part!)

Trust me; her words were right on – dead center, bulls-eye.

## **A Word from Mama Kelly**



I can personally testify that motherhood has been the greatest source of both joy and pain in my life.

I want to share some deeply personal things with you – and I'm not entirely sure that I have the emotional fortitude to survive it right now so please bear with me – and be glad that tears drops don't show up on web documents ;)

Most of us come into motherhood with dreams of sweet snuggles, kissed boo-boos, fun family time and an abundance of proud moments watching our kids grow into adults.

I know I did.

I was sure that I would be the best mother ever.

And not because I had a great example growing up either.

Far from it.

My parents were alcoholics, though I didn't know about my mom's drinking until I had moved out of the house at 16. (Had I known – it sure would have explained a lot.)

My mother had a lot in common with the mom in 'Mommy Dearest' – right down to throwing all of my clothing into the center of my bedroom if she found anything out of order.

Looking back now I realize she was bitterly unhappy with life and took it out on the only person she could. She divorced my dad when I was nine and went through a failed marriage and engagement in the next few years.

I could fill pages with stories of the things she did but let me try to sum it up in one. She kept me isolated by not allowing me to go to friends homes or have friends over. She found every excuse to ground me and 'groundings' lasted a month at a time.

I was beaten with a leather belt until I was around fourteen. Some weeks I couldn't wear shorts or skirts to school. I had to hide the welts she left on the back of my thighs. One of the last beatings took a bad turn and I ended up with a broken tail bone.

Soon after she started to date my dad again and he moved back into the house. That put a lid on the physical abuse but she turned her aggression into verbal attacks. She criticized everything I was or did. Too fat, too clumsy, too slow. She was very controlling. I didn't do any of the things most young teens do. No afterschool activities, no group outings. It was home or school or babysitting for me – so I did a LOT of babysitting ;)

At sixteen I took a job at a local restaurant. I think she hated that I had some element of a social life at my job. She made up a story about me having sex with a co-worker in his car in front of our home and used it as an excuse to kick me out of the house. It was surreal to me because I was absolutely still a virgin and had only barely been kissed – but I didn't take any time to argue about it – I was thrilled to be free!

I think she hoped her story would turn my father against me but it didn't. He moved out and rented an apartment for the two of us.

As an adult, I learned so much more about my mom. Enough to begin to understand her bitterness with life and her complete lack of mommy skills. My grandmother had been a pretty bad mom herself, getting divorced, chasing after multiple men and leaving her daughters to be raised mostly by their grandmother who had also been through multiple relationships. Turned out my mom had been a pregnant high school drop out when she married her first husband to flee her unhappy home.

With a clear view of three generations of ‘bad moms’ – I looked forward to parenthood with fear and trembling and a determination that I would not be like them.

Fortunately – I did have the advantage of one great example of a Great Mama to learn from and be nurtured by as a teen.

My mom’s first marriage had given her two sons and a daughter who sadly, she abandoned to pursue another relationship while her little girl was not yet two years old.

As a child I knew I had two older brothers who appeared for visits now and then. But it wasn’t until I was around 12 that I found out I had a sister. Being so young when her mother left, she had never established a relationship with her – but as a young married woman with a new baby girl, she wanted to meet her mother and learn about the ‘other family’ she had.

Imagine what it was like for me as a pre-teen to discover that I had a sister! I fell in love with her immediately and she embraced me completely. I baby sat for her often and she finagled as much extra time for me to spend with her as possible – which soon naturally put her at odds with our mom.

In my sister I found the unconditional love I had never known from a woman before. Ten years my senior, she felt more like a mother figure than a sister most of the time – but she never tried to ‘mother me’. She was simply supportive and encouraging. She showed interest in my interests and told me I was pretty and smart and through her eyes I started to believe it.

Through this nurturing relationship and from years of watching her mother her own children – I learned what it was to be a ‘good mom’ and to put the needs of your children high on your list of priorities. Not to mention, seeing my sister’s long standing healthy relationship with her husband.

## **Bad Mom/Good Mom**

Is there really such a thing as a good mom or a bad mom?

Yes – I think so.

My mother was truly a terrible parent. She was cruel and uncaring. To this day she swears that she only dealt out the discipline I needed as a ‘wild child’. Though what I did that was so wild she doesn’t say.

I don't bother to have conversations with her about it but I have a sister in law who has tried to get her to confess her wrong doing to no avail. For all I know, through the alcoholic haze, maybe mom does think she was only doing what was necessary.

In any event, I chose to forgive her many years ago. I don't hold the past against her anymore – but I don't give her much access to the present either. Some people are toxic and we can and should do what is necessary to protect ourselves from them. On the other side of things, I believe my sister is an amazingly good mom. Not just because she stayed home with them and baked cupcakes for every class event... but because she treasured her children and let them grow into their unique selves.

Now ask me where I think I fall in all this? LOL!

When Sean was born I was so sure that I would be a great mom. I would be loving, kind, nurturing, creative, patient, stern when needed and compassionate always.

For the most part – I think I've done ok – but with several notable exceptions.

Like the time Sean (four years old) had a temper tantrum in the car at the Meijer's Gas Station and I reach in to give him a 'little swat' on the mouth but missed and hit his nose – which erupted in crazy 'way more than you would expect for a little swat' nosebleed all over his jacket – making him scream like I'd just broken it ☹

And the time Sean (seven years old) stomped his foot and screamed in my face in the dining room and I lost my temper and delivered a not so little swat to the side of his face and then watched in horror as an angry red hand mark appeared across his cheek.

And the time Sean (twelve years old) made me so angry that I pulled a belt out of his closet and told him to bend over so I could give him what he had coming... only he was wearing droopy skater pants and I missed his behind and left a welt on the back of his thighs that made me weak at the knees and sick to my stomach.

I have to tell you that I'm ashamed to record these terrible acts of abuse for the whole world to see.

No matter where you fall in the 'spanking' arguments, I think we can all agree that a mother should not raise a hand in anger towards her children.

I am grateful that these incidents stand out to me as glaring examples BECAUSE they were so few and far between. In each instance I learned something about myself, my temper and my parenting abilities.

Trust me when I say there were many more times over eighteen years that I wanted to raise my hand in anger but did not. I learned to get a grip on myself before getting a grip on my son. I learned that discipline is better delivered when calm and that a practical consequence is the best way to let a child learn from their mistakes.

Some of the greatest challenges for me have come in the last two years. Letting my 'manchild' grow into a man was harder than I ever expected it to be.

Yet, somehow – we made it.

Sean turned 18 this summer and just as a good friend promised me would happen at the right time – I found the ability to start asking instead of always telling and am starting to find some peace in letting him make his own choices.

What about you? Whether you're just starting out or you're at the finish line like me – you probably have some days in your memory you're not altogether proud of. Please don't beat yourself up. Learn what you can from your mistakes. Make apologies to your children with a sincere heart and determine to grow from it.

If you worry about being a 'bad mom' I will encourage you to connect with other moms you respect and seek help for areas you struggle in. Having just one strong nurturing relationship in my life made all the difference for me.

And enjoy the rest of this guide. It has some great information for you to use on your way to being a Great Mama.

Kelly McCausey  
Owner, Mom's Talk Network

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly McCausey". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the printed name and title.

# Be a Role Model & Teacher:

Demonstrate how your children should behave and relate to other people with your own example.

You may have read the poem by Dorothy Law Nolte, PhD titled *Children Learn What They Live*. If so, it bears repeating; if not, it's sage advice:



*If children live with criticism,  
They learn to condemn.*



*If children live with hostility,  
They learn to fight.*



*If children live with ridicule,  
They learn to be shy.*



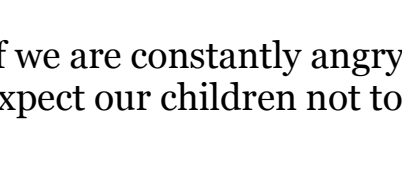
*If children live with shame,  
They learn to feel guilty.*



*If children live with encouragement,  
They learn confidence.*



*If children live with tolerance,  
They learn to be patient.*



*If children live with praise,  
They learn to appreciate.*



*If children live with acceptance,  
They learn to love.*



*If children live with approval,  
They learn to like themselves.*



*If children live with honesty,  
They learn truthfulness.*



*If children live with security,  
They learn to have faith in themselves and others.*



*If children live with friendliness,  
They learn the world is a nice place in which to live.*

If we are constantly angry and yelling (which we'll talk about a bit later), how can we expect our children not to use anger in their interactions with other people?

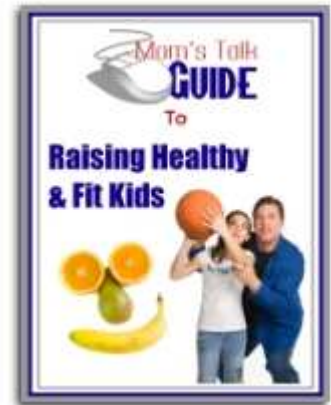
Did you know that if the person riding a horse is nervous or uptight, the horse will pick up on that behavior and be very difficult to ride? The filly will become very stubborn and not want to follow the commands of the rider.

Maybe that's where the term "stubborn as a mule" comes from? Or as it relates to the children, perhaps that is when we say the child takes after his father! (That's a little joke; I just wanted to check to see if you were still with me!)

Likewise if you want your children to choose healthy foods, make sure that you follow a healthy diet as well. I can't really see Junior enjoying his carrot sticks while you are woofing down a Dairy Queen Buster Bar, can you? *Although, they are mighty tasty, oh the vanilla ice cream, fudge, peanuts, caramel and crisp chocolate coating ... ah but I digress.*

You know what I'm saying! And no closet eating either, your kids will know if you're raiding their Halloween stash!

If you want them to read each night, make sure they see you reading regularly as well. Better yet, read with them. Younger children love sit on your lap while you read.



## Mommy Mistakes

"I consider myself a pretty good mamma over all. I'm with my kids all the time since we homeschool and I really enjoy it. I have loved their constant company for the 16+ years that I've been a mom. But I've truly blown in on a lot of occasions. The most glaring "I blew it" that comes back to bite me almost daily though is scarring my girls for life by trying to shove math down their throats too hard and too soon.

There was a lot of pressure in the early years of our homeschool adventure in large part because my husband's dad was very ... and I mean VERY ... pro public education. So the fact that we were homeschooling at all did not sit well with him. I felt incredible pressure to make sure I proved to him that our girls could hold their own academically so I'd really push for those things that proved that.

Unfortunately all it did was make them hate the idea of math at all - and it didn't help them learn it any better in the long run. Even today when I sit down with them to do our math curriculum you can feel the tension in the room, and it's been that way for the last 14-15 years.

I've done a lot to try to make up for the mistake I made early on but it's one of those things that, unfortunately, will have long standing consequences for not just me, but them too.

On the flip side, however, the lesson I learned early on helped us take a more relaxed view of

homeschooling in general as the girls grew up. Because of that, they're academically pretty up to par with their peers and beyond in almost every subject. And even in math they're holding their own - it's just a struggle for us because I blew it those early years."

-Annette Yen, <http://www.relaxedhomeschooling.com>

Share the reading with your elementary aged child – she read a page, then you read a page – and repeat.

Grab your favorite magazine or book and just sit near your teen. Your fourteen year old may not verbalize appreciation, but believe me; it'll be realized later in life.

If you want your children to be responsible with their finances, be responsible with yours. I grew up with memories of my parents sitting at the dining room table; checks and bank statements everywhere as they attempted to reconcile the checkbook each month.

Start teaching your youngsters about Debit Cards and how you actually have to have money in your bank account before you can actually use it. Use real life examples of how interest works on credit cards. I used M&Ms to show my child what 18% interest looked. *He didn't think it was fair that he had to give me MORE than he borrowed.*

Open a checking account for your child and start teaching these principles. By the way, if you need a little help with this, check out the [Moms Talk Guide to Creating a Family Budget](#).

You can be a role model by telling your children about your experiences that they may not have seen firsthand.

Be honest, don't be afraid to admit your mistakes, how you learned from and let them learn from your sharing. Have you noticed that hardly anyone ever says, "I blew it! I can't believe how stupid I was to believe that nonsense"? We all have a hard time admitting that we're wrong.

Children need to see that it is okay to make mistakes. If you are one who doesn't often (or ever) admit that you're wrong, you'd do your children a wonderful service by giving up the need to always be right – especially when you are!

## Mommy Mistakes

"With one child, cleaning the house simply wasn't a big deal.

Sure, we'd sing the Barney cleanup song when we were putting toys away in the living room, but every night after she went to bed I'd go through the house and straighten up. It was invisible. She never realized that I did that. She never realized that I was wiping the dining room table after we ate, she never noticed me sweeping or dusting. She would play and I'd clean when she was playing. How much of a mess can one little person possibly make?

When baby #2 came along, I did the same thing. There wasn't much difficulty in turning on the TV at 4:30 and cleaning up really fast so that Dad comes home to a clean house.

After the third child, though there wasn't much left of me to be cleaning up everyone's messes. The older girls were... well... older, and capable of creating much bigger messes. The new baby was still a baby, not making any messes, but not cleaning up, either.

It took me a few more years and a few more kids to realize that they needed regular official chores. I hated the word "chores." When I was a kid, my mother would spend hours at work devising complicated spreadsheet chore charts for us. I always thought the chore charts were ridiculous. "Just leave us a list." I'd say. When you need to make color coded instructions for reading the chore chart, you've gone too far.

As a mother now, I can see that making a list each day would be a pain in the rump. Her spreadsheets were really an attempt at creating an automated system that helped her nag less. Much appreciated, mother.

With six kids, though, I fear my girls would have to master the IRS tax charts in order to prepare to read a spreadsheet with different daily responsibilities and rotating color coded schedules and incentives. I'm not even smart enough to write that document.

While I haven't resorted to automated chore charts in my house, I have found a simple solution for taming the chore monster. Quite simply; "You must clean in order to eat." Don't get me wrong, I'm not locking them in their rooms without food, but before everyone sits down at the breakfast, lunch or dinner table, certain checkpoints must be reached. Their bedrooms must be cleaned and their "other job" must be done.

For my 14 yr old, it's dishes. For my 11 yr old, it's folding laundry, for my 7 yr old, it's the living room and for my 5 yr old it's the bathroom floors. The two year old thinks her job is to bring the dog under the dining room table and push all the chairs in.

Since we eat regularly, things really don't have a chance to get very dirty. Occasionally, they trade chores. I don't care, really and they know it. As long as it all gets done.

It works for us. I still go through the house after everyone's in bed but mostly I am admiring things, taking mental notes and kissing them goodnight.

## Love Them Unconditionally:

Unconditional love means we accept our children completely as they are.

We accept their physical characteristics, their talents and skills and even what we might, in some circumstances, consider shortcomings. This is an easy one when your children are young. They're adorable; they're cute; and in your eyes, can do no wrong.

Try a bit of that unconditional love when your teenager is always argumentative and never wrong (in her mind), or when your high school student announces that he's gay or pregnant or that she's quitting school or comes home with a tongue piercing; or he refuses to talk to you; locks himself in his room for hours at time and may even drop an f-bomb in your lap Not so easy for that unconditional love now, is it?

It doesn't matter whether you like the behavior at that moment or not, you have an obligation to provide your child with unconditional love. So what exactly does that mean?

*Is it okay to say "I don't like you very much right now?"* I'd caution you to use the words "don't like your behavior, or don't like how you've been acting lately." Separate the behavior from the person.

If you're going to say something like that, it's best to put it in a love sandwich: Start by reaffirming that nothing he can do will ever make you stop loving him. However yada, yada, yada, when you behave like blank, it makes me feel blank. I do love you; however blank is not acceptable behavior.

Remember to accept does not necessarily mean that you condone. You can accept that your child is testing boundaries, or accept that she is expressing herself. That doesn't mean you need to allow everything that junior to trying to pull.



Try to understand your children and provide them with the care and love they need. Not all children are exactly the same and they may have different needs. But whatever their needs are, show them you love them in all situations.

If you have more than one child you should not treat them the same. Do your best to treat them fairly and equally (or he'll be on Oprah some day claiming that your sister was always Mom's favorite), but since your children are individuals, your treatment also needs to be individualized.

Most importantly, unconditional love gives your children confidence and shows them that it's okay to make mistakes or just be different from everyone else. Start to instill this message early. Let them know that nothing they do can separate them from your love. If you have older children, and you did not start to impart this message early, it's not too late to start today.

## Mommy Mistakes

"One of the most important mothering lessons that I learned came not from my own boys, but from my great niece. Recently, my mother passed away very suddenly and our family worked together to explain my mother's death to my niece's three year old daughter. She seemed to accept the fact that Grammy had gone to Heaven quite well and didn't have too many questions.

We thought that we had done a great job explaining everything to her through our own grief, but didn't think about the viewing the next day. The funeral director encouraged us to bring along even the little ones, as learning about death and dying is an important part of growing up.

Long story short, my great-niece now believes that the funeral home is Heaven and we can go visit Grammy there. Always remember to think very literally when explaining things to the smallest children, as they take everything at face value."

Submitted by Shannon Powell, <http://fromcribstocarkeys.com/>

## Be Consistent:

Your behavior with your children should be consistent and predictable.

Set limits and expectations your children can understand and are aware of. Children learn at a very, very early age how to push the limits.

Have you ever been in a store with a screaming, bratty child – correction, child who was *behaving* bratily? (Yes I made up that word). Then to make matters worse, Mama says "Stop that Johnny." Johnny continues. "Sit down in the cart, Johnny, I mean it." Johnny continues. "Stop that Johnny or I will \_\_\_\_\_)



Little Johnny knows full well his mama isn't going to enforce any limits – so why should he stop?

You can give warnings – but one should be enough..

If you tell your teen to be home by 11:00pm and she didn't get home until 11:18pm, are you going to let it slide? If you do, expect next time will it be 11:30pm because you've just conveyed that you've just let her know that you're not 'set in stone' about the time.

If your child breaks the family rules, consequences should always be related to the behavior. For example, if your child is coloring and proceeds to draw on the walls, coloring time is over and crayons are put up on a shelf for a few days.

Taking away another privilege, unrelated to coloring just doesn't make sense. The consequence should be employed each and every time they behave that way. Sometimes it's easier as a parent not to go through with the consequences, but with consistency it's easier to get the behavior to cease.

Sometimes parents hesitate to "ground" their children because either: A – "She was really looking forward to going to that slumber party, and she'll be furious with me." Or B – parents know often that if the child is grounded, so is the parent (yippee, now I get to stay home with a grumbling, hormonal and strongly, irritated teen. Yay me!)

## Mommy Mistakes

"When you have children you know that discipline is a hard thing to do. It's even harder when your child calls you on it, as was the case for me a few weeks ago.

I have two boys, one is twelve and one is nine. A few months ago I grounded my oldest son for taking a walk around the block without asking first. I grounded him for one week. This meant he couldn't go outside to play. After a few days I forgot he was grounded and he asked if he could go outside and play and I said yes.

Now last month my youngest son did the same thing. So I grounded him for one week. So he did the same thing as his older brother. This time I said no because I remembered he was grounded. He was very upset and said it wasn't fair because Chris got to go outside after only three days. So I had to let him go outside because it was my fault.

So lesson learned; when you ground a child you must stick to the grounding. No matter what happens. So if you have a problem remembering, write it down."

Submitted by Corrie Peterson, <http://www.ghostwritertotherescue.com/>

What's better – not dealing with the situation or dealing with it few times to get it to stop? You'll probably agree it's the latter.

Being consistent does not mean we don't allow room for change.

Sometimes, we as parents make decisions that we might discover are too strict or are no longer age-appropriate. It's okay to re-adjust and then reinstate consistency.

They'll respect you much more if you're able to admit that perhaps your punishment doesn't fit their crime. It's okay to let your children know that while they may be experiencing a new phase in life (say puberty) you're also experiencing a new phase in parenting.

# Protect Your Children:

Your children are a precious gift and need to be treated as such. Be involved with your children and ensure they are always in a safe physical and emotional environment. Comfort them when they need comforting so they feel secure.

When they are younger they need protection from the perceived monster under the bed, understanding about not crossing the street unattended or and quick intervention from touching a hot stove.

Suddenly you blink and they need protection from sexual predators, illegal drugs, drunk drivers and of course we all want to protect them from broken hearts (if only we could spare them that pain!)

## *Mommy Mistakes*

"I strapped Ethan, who had just turned one, into the front seat of the shopping cart. I told Cody to walk with me (he was 5) and Breanna who was a little over two was put in the back of the cart.

I turned my head for 30 seconds to read something to Cody. I felt the cart shift and turned my head to see Breanna reach for a card and flip head first from the cart, she landed first on her head, then finally her back. In seconds a golf ball size lump formed on her head. EMS arrived and strapped her to a table, while she screamed for her blanket and we were headed for the hospital. I left my two boys behind with store personnel until my sister arrived.

We endured hours of x-rays and tests until we were released with no more than two black eyes, a swollen nose and a black lump on her head. I will never stop seeing her tiny body flip from the cart. I got lucky but I can never forget my decision, no matter how good of an idea it seems at the time, children have no business in the back of a cart."

Submitted by Nichole Smith, <http://www.theguiltyparent.com>

If your younger child sees something that frightens him, talk to him about it and help him work through that fear. Never ridicule or discount his feeling, but show him how things that can seem scary really don't have to be. If you had the same fear previously, share it.

On the other hand, if your child is afraid of something like a roller coaster, it's not necessary to force your child to get over that fear. Riding roller coasters are not a necessity in life. Certainly there is no need to traumatize a child over it, but you

might go to an amusement park and watch the people on the roller coaster if your child is comfortable or find roller coaster videos on YouTube.com.

Then there are some things that might be necessary. If you require childcare and your child is uncomfortable with staying with a new caregiver, spend some time with your child and the caregiver together. This will give your child more confidence when it's time to be on their own with the caregiver.

Empower your children with knowledge to deal with unsafe situations. Whether it is a stranger approaching them, an earthquake or simply crossing a busy street, make sure they know what to do in each situation. And never think your children are too young to learn this. All kids should be prepared and if you're looking for extra help in talking with your kids on these tough subjects, be sure to check out [AlwaysKeepKidsSafe.com](http://AlwaysKeepKidsSafe.com).

## Mommy Mistakes

"As a first time parent and a single parent I can say I've made more mistakes than I care to admit. I suppose it comes with the territory. My biggest boo boo of my parenting career happened just last year when my son was 8.

My son rode the bus to and from school. My car was broke down preventing me from driving him. One rainy dreary afternoon a friend asked if I wanted to go to Wal-Mart. I did need to pick up a few groceries and my son wasn't due off the bus for another hour and twenty minutes. Plenty of time...or so I thought.

I thought we did pretty good on time but as we stepped into line I panicked. Would 20 minutes be enough time to check out and get home? Did I mention the line was really long? Not just our line but EVERY line.

By the time I got home my son had been there for about 15 minutes. Long enough for him to freak out because I was gone and the doors were locked. He ended up breaking the screen to get in through a window. I did have to give him credit for being smart enough to think of doing that.

I learned a couple valuable lessons that day. Making mistakes is something that as a mom is bound and determined to happen. No matter how horrible I feel it probably wasn't really all that bad. I also learned that my son needed to start carrying around an apartment key. We made a key necklace for him that he wears to school for those 'just in case' moments. "

Tishia Lee, <http://www.tishialee.com>

Encourage your children to surround themselves with positive and safe people. This is especially important as they grow older and you have less direct influence on the people with whom they associate.

Let's talk a bit more about protecting older children. It's a balance between allowing them to spread their wings, grow and learn and your role as parent to continue to rear them in a way that will allow them to become happy, healthy adults.



If you're not savvy to internet websites such as My Space, Facebook and instant messengers now is the time for a crash course. If you choose to allow your children to participate in social networking do so with the understanding that you will have the passwords and you will be monitoring the activity. Don't turn a blind eye to what could be happening on these websites.

Even younger children are jumping on board with sites such as Club Penguin, Webkinz, Imbee, Whyville. Many of these have been touted as safe and parent approved. Fantastic! However, that does not give you a license to naively send your youngsters on the internet without fully understanding where she is clicking and to whom she may be talking. Be nosy where the internet is concerned.

## Give Your Children Choices:

Allowing your children to make choices fosters independence and confidence. It also helps children make good decisions when they're on their own.

When they're young, allowing your children to choose what they wear can be very empowering. Of course, very little ones can be overwhelmed by too many choices, so pick out two t-shirts and let them choose from the two.



Sometimes they may not like either of the choices you offer. For example for the child who likes to sleep in mama's bed, you may offer a choice of sleeping in her own bed, or sleeping in a sleeping bag on the floor of your room.

As your children get older, they can have more decisions. Even if you have your heart set on your daughter being a piano player, if she wants to explore the violin or even hockey instead, encourage that.

Again, not all choices will be welcomed by your older child. "You may go to the party after I talk with the host's parents or ... you may stay home." You're sending the message that we have choices but we also have boundaries.

You can also help your children make good choices by helping them consider all the factors involved. If they want to play hockey, they'll have to consider the early morning practices and loss of free time. They'll also want to think about the skills they will learn, the teamwork they'll benefit from and so on.

One of the hardest aspects of this whole making choices deal is allowing your children to make mistakes and to possibly be hurt by their decisions. We so naturally want to protect our children from all possible harm. Yet we have to recognize that we must allow them to learn from their mistakes. We don't always make the right choice, but it's vital that we allow our children to have those "character building opportunities."

## Play & Interact with Your Children:

Instinctively one of the first games we play with our growing babies is Peek-a-boo! They love it when you pop out from behind your hands; and you just cherish their precious smile and amazement at the interaction. No matter what age, be involved with your children. They'd rather have your presence than your presents.

Play games together, go on outings together and have fun. Even if your children are older and more independent, find things that you can do together. Interacting with your children deepens family connection and allows you to demonstrate yourself as a role model.



Have tea parties with your little girl. Attend your older children's sporting events and get together to talk about it afterward. Do art projects together. Get involved with school projects (but don't take over)!

There are many opportunities every day to be involved with your children. Make sure you take as many of them as you can. Sometimes we get involved in household chores or other things that need to be done. Try to set a schedule for these activities, so you have plenty of time afterward. Or better yet, get your kids involved. Prepare meals together, reorganize closets or clean out the garage. Even if the tasks aren't fun, keep the conversation light and enjoy your time together.

It's one thing to be around or near your children. It's entirely differently to truly be in the moment with your children. My favorite quote to illustrate this is by an unknown author:

*“The work will wait while you show the child the rainbow, but the rainbow won't wait while you do the work.”*

Do not put off until tomorrow what you can do today. In fact, if your child is home right now, stop reading this guide and go *be with* your precious blessing. I'm serious – go on... I'll wait.

# Praise Your Children:

Catch your children doing something right! Many kids only get feedback from their parents when they mess up. That's a horrible truth isn't it?

Reverse the cycle and make sure that your praises far outnumber the corrective discussions. Praise them for the things they do well, improvements and efforts they make and encourage them to pursue their interests.

Do what you can to make sure your children are surrounded by people who praise including older siblings, relatives, educators and friends.

Tell your kids:

“Good job”

“You are a great...”

“You are so kind.”

“I trust you.”

“I love you.”

“I like you”

“I'm proud of you”

“You make me happy”

“You are so good at...”

Consider how many adults constantly gripe because their employer or spouse doesn't seem to appreciate them. That need to be praised starts very, very young. Children of all ages long to have positive reinforcement.

The only real mistake you can make when it comes to praising your children is not being sincere.

Don't say things just to meet a daily or weekly quota. You need to be genuine and sincere when you praise your children. It helps if you look your child directly in the eye when telling her how wonderful she is.

I'm sure there are some days that you really have to look long and hard to find something that you feel is worthy to praise. We've all had those days.



Consider this: perhaps your child may be acting up because she longs for attention. Children learn at a very early age that any attention, good or bad, is better than none at all. Children will intentionally misbehave just so Mama will pay attention.

I'm sure you would much rather have a well behaved child with so many areas to compliment you can't decide which one to acknowledge first. Sometimes it is a case of which came first – the chicken or the egg? If you dish out the praises the good behavior will follow.

Verbal affirmations are fantastic; yet don't forget hugs and kisses too! Remember, there doesn't even have to be a specific reason to share praise. Share it liberally just because.

# Avoid Bribery:

We've all done it, especially with younger and unruly children. The problem with offering bribes for good behavior is that kids become focused on the rewards and not the good behavior.

Children who are accustomed to bribes may also demand more bribes and refuse to behave, unless there's something in it for them! They only listen to WII-FM (What's In It For Me!)

That doesn't mean you can't reward your children, but just as we've talked about being consistent and having consequences related to the behavior, rewards should be related as well.

For example, if you are planning to go out for some errands and you're concerned that your children might misbehave, don't offer to buy them a toy or treat for their good behavior. Instead you can say something like:

"If you can stay close to me while we're shopping that means we can get done much more quickly. If we can get done quickly, we'll have enough time to stop at the play area before we go."

This way they can better understand that good behavior has immediate and logical consequences - i.e. when they behave well, the shopping gets done faster and there is more time for fun stuff.



I often hear how well behaved my child is. What mama doesn't like to hear that? But what is sad about that is that my child is merely behaving how one should behave. It should not necessarily be noteworthy.

I so often see children who appear to wear the pants in the family. They have mama so tired, stressed, weary and feeling hopeless, that in some cases, mama just gives in to the child because it's easier than the alternative.

If you've been using bribery to get tasks accomplished and to produce better behavior, it is not too late to turn that ship around. You won't be able to turn the ship on a dime but start today. You may experience some rough waters as you take this new journey, but you will see the fruits of your labors.

## *Mommy Mistakes*

"My youngest son (one) was having a lot of issues with sleeping in his crib, after becoming used to falling asleep in his bouncy chair, and we finally decided that the best way to go was to simply let him cry it out. It worked after just two nights and I was so proud of myself for having stuck it out, despite feeling horrible. But nothing else had worked.

A couple nights after he'd started to settle, my son decided he didn't want his crib after all. After trying to soothe him a couple of times, I confidently shut the door and let him cry. I even put on my headphones, figuring that it was just a relapse and he just needed to cry it out again, since he'd been so good the past couple of nights.

About 30 min. later, he was still screaming, so I decided to go in and lay him down again. As I walked into the room, the smell of vomit hit me. My poor baby had vomited all over himself, his crib, the floor and was standing there, sobbing and waiting for his mama to come for him. I felt so horrible. Even though he seemed to forgive me after I cleaned him up and gave him a big cuddle, I bawled my eyes out and now I always make sure to check on my boys frequently, and give them a reprieve if they seem to be out of sorts for any reason other than simply not going to bed.

Genesis Davis, <http://AtHomeMomBlog.com>

# Control Your Anger:

When our children do something dangerous or against your rules it's easy to lose our cool, especially when they've expressed the same behavior repeatedly.

Anger is a natural emotion, but it needs to be controlled and expressing anger by yelling and hurtful words is not always the best solution.



Mismanaged anger is unhealthy for both parent and child. It raises your blood pressure and causes stress. If you don't control your anger you are teaching our children that anger is an appropriate response to a mistake or error in judgment.

Take a moment to breathe (as long as they are not in immediate danger) and regain your composure. Again, be consistent in the way you react and impose discipline, as long as you are able to do it without anger or yelling.

Of course you're going to get upset. Of course you're going to get weary and have a short fuse on some days. And you'll even raise your voice to your children. We all do. But the vital difference is that it's tempered. .

Remember to keep things in perspective. If something else is bothering you, don't take it out on your children. Is that toy on the floor really such a horrible thing? Yes, it could be dangerous if somebody trips over it, but it's a mistake that can be corrected without anger.

## *Mommy Mistakes*

"I have a story to tell about the worst mistake I have ever made as a Mom. I was a stay at home mom. I had wonderful kids, but one of them was very stubborn. One day when he was in his teens he was about to drive me crazy. Wouldn't listen to a thing I said.

He finally told me that he wished he hadn't been born into our family, I said before I thought, That we only had him for someone for our first son to play with. The minute I said that I wished I had lost my ability to talk, before I said it. I told him how sorry I was right away. That I loved him. But to this day I still feel very badly about it. I know that I hurt him badly.

He is a great son and I wouldn't have changed anything about him. So for a Mother, that was the worst mistake I ever made, but I don't think I could have done anything that would have hurt a child more. Please think twice before saying something that would hurt your child.

- Meg McNeal, <http://troysmiracle.com/blog>

# Listen to Your Children:

"Mom! Mom! Mom! Mom! Mom!"

Sound familiar? If not, just wait!

Most children do it at least once - offer up that lovely sentence of repeated name calling. It's at that moment when you wish to change your name and decide that perhaps being called Mom isn't such a beautiful thing!

Your children just want you to listen to them.

If you listen to the little things your children want to tell you then you are also sending a message that they should feel free to talk to you about anything that is troubling them and makes you a trusted confidant.

How does that go – If you can't be trusted with little, then you can't be trusted with much.

There will be days when you are working on a deadline or in the middle of something requiring your undivided attention and your child picks that time to become chatty Cathy. If at all possible, just stop what you are doing and give your undivided attention to the children.

If it's not a good time, then stop long enough to let junior know that you're anxious to hear what he has to say and then tell him when you will be all ears. Then keep that commitment to him.

If your children have something to say, listen to them. Make eye contact with them and listen to them at eye-level. Don't interrupt them and let them get their thoughts and feelings out.



Listen to their dreams and aspirations. They need to feel confident in sharing their innermost desires.

If you have more than one child, try to take time out with each child individually and listen one on one. Have someone watch the other kids while you go out for a special lunch, play date at the park or stroll around the mall.

As your children get older it will be vitally important to listen to what they are not saying. Don't interrogate your child but ask open ended questions to encourage dialog. When it seems your younger child is in over drive and can't stop talking, you'll find that the older they get the less they'll want to talk to dear old Mama.

Be available. Be a great listener. Don't over react. Be sure to thank you child for talking with you; it's not always an easy thing to do – to talk to your parents.

## *Mommy Mistakes*

"When Ryan was two and a half and Nathan was a newborn, we used to go to the Mall at least once a week just to get out of the house. I would pack the diaper bag and tuck Nathan in the stroller, and into the Mall we would go. We would walk around, pop into KB toys, sit in the food court and eat, it was a pleasant way to spend time together.

I just got back from what should have been a simple trip to the Mall so Ryan could buy some paperbacks. Instead, I feel like I just finished walking 10 miles carrying a buffalo. Kaitlyn didn't WANT to sit in the food court and eat, and she didn't WANT to walk over to the play area, and then she didn't WANT to walk back, and oh yeah, she asked me to carry her but then while she was in my arms, she tried to squirm out of them by leaning over to the right until my ankle twisted and I FELL DOWN, holding her, and I ended up sort of laying her down with my arms under her to cushion the fall, except she bent back away from me and banged her head on the floor.

MOTHER OF THE YEAR, RIGHT HERE, THAT'S ME.

So then there we are right in the middle of the floor, me sitting down holding her while she cried, and all these people were just walking around us. Like, hello? Be a good citizen and ask us if we are okay, GEEZ. Finally a Mall security guy came over to see if she needed ice for her head or anything. Thank goodness I didn't like snap my ankle or something. That's what I get for trying to break in a new pair of wedge heel sandals at the Mall, you know?

What lessons did I learn today? Number one, be flexible when you take toddlers to the mall. You might have to get your food to go and eat it while you walk, because sometimes toddlers just do not want to sit still. Number two, always keep a stroller in the car. Umbrella strollers are inexpensive and are just fine for indoor use, and will hold a toddler who weighs up to 35 pounds. If you have a bigger child, you'll have to upgrade, but it pays for itself when you don't have to carry a flailing child through the mall. Number three, don't wear NEW SHOES to the mall, especially not strappy wedge sandals.

I'm thinking I will stay out of Malls until Kaitlyn is old enough to behave herself while we are

there. Like when she's 35.

-Elizabeth Edwards, <http://www.Table4Five.net>

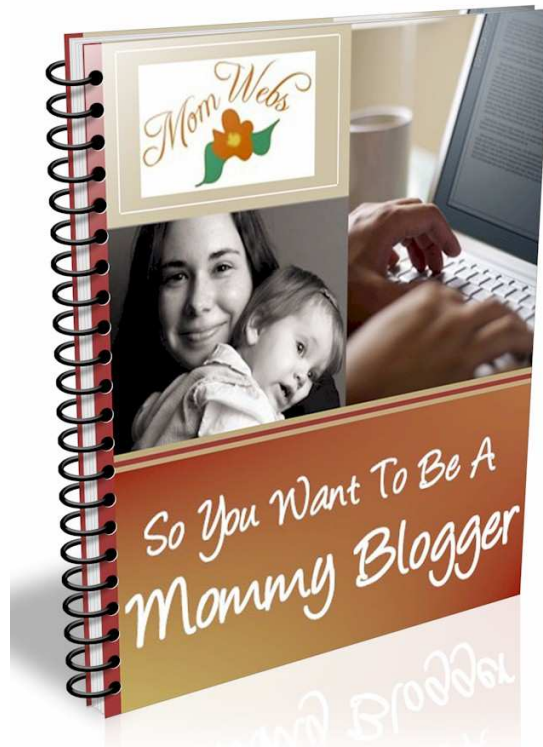
## In Closing ...

Remember motherhood a journey. You don't have all the answers and you don't have to have them all.

Still... if you're looking for more help – check out these great resources:



When you need support and encouragement, come join us on the [Mom's Talk Network Forum](#) anytime. We'll be happy to welcome you and get to know you.



Grab your FREE Mommy Blogger Report:  
<http://www.momwebs.com/mommy-blogging.pdf>



**Hot Mama Makeover** is a completely FREE step-by-step and easy-to-follow guide for moms who need to feel just a little bit sexier & a whole lot more confident.

Whatever we moms do, it always seems like there isn't enough time in the day. Despite your role as mother, wife, cook, cleaner, chauffeur, career woman, etc. etc....you are still a WOMAN and that woman needs to be taken care of.

The Hot Mama Makeover reveals simple steps that can be incorporated into any schedule or budget. It's 5-simple steps that you can start incorporating into your life with minimal time investment and expense. [Click here](#) if you are ready to be a Hot Mama?



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Now's the time to get your Find the Time Mama guide and start making changes. In this free guide, you'll discover the why it's important; how to find the time; dealing with an unsupportive partner, how to get rid of guilt, and fun ideas for you. [Click here](#) if you're ready to Find the Time.