

# A Simple Guide to Successful Parenting

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Parenting, at its core, is about making wise choices in order to prepare young men and women to be released into the world as responsible adults.

And that's why later today, I'll be traveling to the city of San Salvador, El Salvador. I have been asked to speak on the topic of "Successful Parenting" as a means to help encourage the growth of healthy families, healthy neighborhoods, and healthy communities. And despite being smack dab in the middle of a cross-country move, it was an opportunity that I could not pass up (and considering it was planned before our decision to move, I felt a need to fulfill my commitment).

As a result, over the next 7 days, I will be speaking 5 times in various locations around the city to roughly 500 parents... and I couldn't be more excited. I love meeting new people. I love parenting. And I love the opportunity to encourage healthy families and influence healthy communities.

Because I have a limited opportunity at each venue, I have tried to condense the wisdom of successful parenting into one short presentation. It is not exhaustive and each point of the outline could easily become a book in itself. But I believe it is enough to encourage parents, challenge parents, and send them down a road to develop successful (and flexible) parenting habits in their lives.

And rather than asking you to come visit me this week in San Salvador, I thought I'd just put my abbreviated outline here on Becoming Minimalist:

## A Simple Guide to Successful Parenting.

**1. Successful parents love their spouse.** Healthy marriages form the foundation on which children base their lives. They provide the stability necessary for young children to grow, thrive, and experiment. Home becomes a safe place that models and encourages selfless love. Successful parents are faithful to their spouse. They do not take for granted the life-commitment they have made to one another. They work hard each day to love their spouse. And they pride themselves on what they can give to the relationship... not in what they can take from it.

**2. Successful parents correct harmful behaviors, attitudes, and worldviews.** The old proverb holds true, “Spare the rod, spoil the child.” While discipline can take various forms (I would never recommend a literal rod) and should be adapted for each particular child, it must be present for parenting success. Children need to learn everything from the ground-up including appropriate behaviors, how to get along with others, how to get results, and how to achieve their dreams. Discipline should not be avoided or withheld. It should never be motivated by anger, pride, or selfish reasons... because then it causes harm rather than resulting in benefit. Instead, it should be motivated by love and a desperate desire to see your children become the best that they can be.

**3. Successful parents encourage healthy behaviors, attitudes, and worldviews.** Parenting is a thinking man’s game. It takes energy, strategy, and intentionality. Yet, many parents are unwilling to give it the attention that it deserves. As a result, their children become shaped by the world around them rather than by the parents who love them. Successful parents do not just discourage unhealthy habits, they also intentionally encourage positive habits. They envision the type of person they would like their children to become. They consistently model that behavior for them. They speak lofty expectations into their childrens’ lives. They think the best of their children. They provide opportunities for their children to learn valuable life lessons. And they praise positive habits both privately and publicly.

**4. Successful parents encourage spirituality.** I’ll probably steer away from the beaten path here for a moment, but there is a deep sense in my heart that wise parents encourage spirituality in the lives of their children. They instill within their kids a deep sense that there is more to this world than meets the eye. Some of the greatest things in this world are not things. Instead, they are invisible, life-giving, and eternal. There is a moral compass that guides life on this planet. Wise parents encourage (and provide opportunities) for their children to find it. Some of the most fruitful conversations I have with my children center on this topic of spirituality. And I always encourage parents to consider them.

**5. Successful parents know when to let go.** Parenting is 100% parents trying to shape lives and 100% children choosing their own life. While parenting requires time, energy, love, sweat, and tears, it also requires freedom to allow our children to make their own decisions and choose their own paths. It is a difficult balance that varies from child to child... but parents who neglect to let go cause harm. And they never accomplish the very goal of parenting itself: Making wise choices in order to prepare young men and women to be released into the world as responsible adults.