



Vicki Hoefle is a professional parent educator with over 20 years experience teaching parents, educators and caregivers how to raise respectful, responsible and resilient children. Hoefle combines her expertise in Adlerian Psychology and as an International Coaching Federation certified coach to bring parents Duct Tape Parenting, a sustainable and proactive parenting strategy that provides time-tested tools for harvesting a happy and peaceful family life.

Hoefle knew that when she became a parent, she was going to need some skills. So, newly pregnant with her first child, she *went* to the bookstore and then *left* the bookstore, feeling overwhelmed by the massive number of parenting books. She now believes that the more information available, the less we tap into our own insights and wisdom. Parents need to trust themselves and get to know their children to parent well. Parents who listen to their children and take into account their family values, preferences and perspective can create a parenting plan that feels authentic for them and their family.

Hoefle shares the five ideas of her proactive parenting strategy:

### **FIRST IDEA: Model Healthy Relationships**

What are the characteristics that make up a healthy relationship? If you're nagging, bribing and controlling someone, the chances are that relationship is going to get fractured. Parents need to maintain a learner's mindset – stay open to learning about your children and exploring a relationship with them. This learning mindset is a balance of firm and kind. Firm is the respect for the adult in the home with wisdom and experience, and kind takes into consideration that children have little experience, history or knowledge about what it means to be a part of the world. You need to feed your child the types of experiences that you want them to take out into the world. When children are picking their friends and building their relationships, you hope they have some criteria: friends who listen and support me; who share my common values; who speak to me respectfully; who will take into consideration my flaws and strengths. Model those criteria in your home.

### **SECOND IDEA: Develop Discipline For All Ages**

You want discipline strategies that work no matter your child's age. You need to teach your children about self-control, self-discipline and self-regulation starting at age two. Children can make difficult decisions out in the world if they have been practicing restraint at home. Create an environment in which they can slowly march their way toward being in-control human beings. Self-regulation



develops by being OUT of regulation. Teaching self-regulation involves a lot of messy years in which they are making mistakes. Allow those mistakes to happen.

### **THIRD IDEA: Children Should Work**

We need to teach our children that the world does not revolve around them. Parents who wait on their children become resentful, and the children themselves become entitled, bored and unsatisfied. Hoefle's parenting motto is: 'If they can walk, they can work.' Work is worth. Young children's self-esteem comes from two things – their ability to take care of themselves in totality, and their ability to contribute to the group to which they belong. Children are now living in a world in which they are only supposed to do well in school, do well at the piano and speak six languages. Children are not contributing to their families anymore because it is faster and easier if we do things for them. If we are preparing our children to leave the house at age 18, there is a long list of things you need to teach them before they go. You need those entire 18 years to get through that list. When we always wait on our children, we teach children that the world is about them and that others are responsible for their happiness. We will teach them to be dependent upon other people. Dependency is an unhealthy dynamic. Kids are becoming more demanding, and that's on US. It's time to get our children involved in our families so they can be involved in their communities.

### **FOURTH IDEA: Let Your Children Fail**

Parents feel that it's their job to remove everything unpleasant from their children's lives. They have been calling parents and teachers – asking for birthday invitations and extensions on assignments. Children develop resiliency when they fall, and someone says, 'I'll wait until you get up because I believe in you.' You need to get back up on your own because others think you can. You learn to take healthy risks; you learn to solve problems, you learn to address the liabilities in your life. The human experience is 50% joy and 50% awful. When the awful things happen to children – because they will – the parent needs to empathize and ask them what they want to do. Remind them that life is going to go on with or without them. They need to learn to get up by themselves and decide what to do next.

**FIFTH IDEA: Raise a Future 24-Year-Old**

When your child is 24 years old and is asked to describe their mother or father, what is the one word you hope they choose? You need to behave like that word. Pay attention to the words you use when talking to your children. When you call them 'lazy,' 'stubborn,' 'disorganized,' they will look in the mirror and see those words. You have to feed your children the words that you want them to use. If you want compassionate children, create an environment in which your child can demonstrate compassion. Focus on their strengths that they are trying to build. Help them discover who they are and then create an environment in which they can blossom into that person. They need the space to try on new roles, discard those that do not fit and then embrace who they authentically are.

**PARENTING PARTNERS:** When we invited fathers into the parenting process, we inadvertently made room for 50% more for them to do. Not just getting up with a fussy infant, but with their ideas about what it takes to raise a child. Suddenly, you have two parents with different ideas about how to raise a healthy human being. You have to work through these decisions as a team because you are representing to your children three positions at all times: what it means to be a man or woman; a mother or a father; and a wife or a husband. Your children are watching. The ways you interact are directly influencing their ideas of parenthood and coupleship. So when you find yourself at an impasse with your partner, you need to have ongoing, robust discussions about your childhood. Ask where you got the idea for a specific family tradition or rule. Ask yourself if those ideas are even still valid today? If so, then articulate to your partner why they are important for the kids. Make room for your partner.

**MOVING FORWARD:** We have a chance now to redefine what parenting means. We all can say to ourselves that some of the ideas that I brought to my parenting are counterproductive for my child. If you find the courage to change, you send a message to your kids that you are a learner and that you are willing to take responsibility for your choices.

Hoefle suggests the first thing to do is to apologize to your children: 'I have been treating you as a 2-year-old when you're 9. I am taking responsibility for that.' Ask them what you can do to be a more effective parent? How can you better support them more genuinely and compellingly? Start that conversation and see what happens. Kids are desperately in need of a discussion. Instead of assuming, ask your children what they need from you. Owning that you have been doing too much for your kids and saving them from frustration or overlooking the fact that they can do things for themselves opens the door for a new relationship.

We are the change-agents in our children's lives. It is time we changed ourselves.