

# Building an Environment for Making Good Decisions

by Porkchop Falkner

Building an Environment for Making Good Decisions.

A few months ago, one of my coffee-drinking buddies asked me to talk to his wife about their teenage granddaughter. The granddaughter had taken a pill that was given to her by one of her friends. My buddy and his wife believed that she would not to take any more pills because the hospital had to pump her stomach. They said that it scared her, greatly. When I got to talk to my buddy's wife, I was led by the Holy Spirit. (That is a praise in itself, that God gives the words we need.) The Holy Spirit led me to talk about building an environment of making good decisions, not just the singular event of the pill-taking.

I know that I am not a father, but I am a son. I love how my Great Father in Heaven knows what's best for me. I am amazed how He knows how to teach me His truth in a way that I will learn. The following is what I received from the Good, Good Father.

Scripture tells us; Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Psalm 127:3 (NIV) As parents, you are called to care and prepare them for life and ministry. I hope these points help in raising your children in the Lord. The Bible is the best parenting book. I hope to bring the knowledge of the Bible to a practical, livable level. So, let's look at ways to build an environment of making good decisions.

Building an environment is totally different than woking with a single situation. Building an environment takes years versus taking minutes but, the many minutes add up. When we build an environment, we are taking

care of many issues, challenges, and problems that can span many years. It will not always be fun building an environment. The environment, however, can make a huge difference in your lives and the lives of your children. It will last through childhood, the dreaded teenage years, and even adulthood. It will even help them raise their children.

These steps of building an environment of good decision making are not exhaustible. They are a start. They are something to think over with your spouse. These steps are not a guarantee of perfect kids but they will, hopefully, help.

### Building Boundaries.

The first step is building boundaries. Boundaries are good. I know this will, probably, be the hardest step to employ, but it is a very important one. Boundaries keep us safe. There was a study done a few years ago known as "The Playground Study". I cannot find the source of this study. The study contrasted two groups of young children, 3 to 4 years of age. One group was led to a playground that was bordered with a fence. The children played freely on all the equipment that was in the playground area. The other group was led to a playground without a fence. The young children never got away from the adult leader. Some versions of the study say the children did not even play on the available equipment. Many thought that the second group would "feel free" to explore and discover new things. The opposite was true. Without boundaries, the second group was too fearful to get out of reach of the leader.

Kids want boundaries!!! They may argue and fight for the contrary, but deep down boundaries are necessary. Boundaries offer security by telling us what we can and cannot do. Guard rails on bridges have saved many lives. Without those guard rails, we could run off the bridge. There is a hard bump coming off the guard rail, but not nearly as hard as the

deadly bump of hitting the water under the bridge. Kids will bump off the “guard rails ” of the boundaries that you set. They will hang from the fences that you put up, so they can test you and the boundaries. The boundaries are there because you love your child. This truth takes a long time to be realized by your child.

With small children, you put up “kid gates” to keep them in a room, out of a room or away from stairs. You put child safety locks on the cabinets and drawers to keep them away from the caustic cleaners and knives. You do this because you love your child and do not want to see them hurt. The gates and locks are physical boundaries. For older children and teens, the “kid gates” and “safety locks” turn into curfews and rules. Curfews and rules are, obviously, not physical. Even though they are not physical boundaries, they should serve the same purpose, to keep your child safe and secure. Just like kids hanging on the “kid gates” and pulling on the child safety latches, older kids and teens will push hard on the non-physical boundaries you have set.

Setting boundaries is just one side of the coin. The other side is punishing the breaking of these boundaries. This will come in many different forms. Hopefully, by now, you will know how to discipline, not crush your child. This is no fun setting these boundaries and showing the consequences of going past these boundaries, but is very important to develop an environment of making good choices.

God gave His first children, Adam and Eve, a “boundary ” in Genesis 2. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” God gave this boundary because He did not want His kids to suffer. It was not until after the bite of the fruit did they understand why the boundary was there.

Love your kids enough to set curfews and rules. Love your kids enough to chastise them when they need it. Love them enough to start with boundaries to build an environment of making good decisions.

The Safe Word.

A "Safe Word" enhances the feeling of security in a child, which also helps build an environment of making good decisions. Safe words are "code words" that can be used in different situations to keep children safe. My mother and I had a code word so if anyone had to pick me up, other than my family, they had to produce that code word. Remember to teach your child that the safe word should only be known to the family. It should never be used inappropriately; that way both you and your child will know that there is a dire situation when the safe word is used. Safe words may also be used to help preteens and teens get out of sticky situations. Built into these safe words is the idea that there will not be any immediate judgement on the situation.

Example: Your teenager is at a party where they are pressured to consume drugs and alcohol. They can text or call the safe word, and in minutes you are there to rescue them.

After your teen knows he/she is secure and is calm, which may take minutes, or hours, or even the next day, then you can talk about any boundaries that need to be built or any punishment needs to be dealt.

There may be a safe phrase that can be used to talk about a difficult subject. The subject may be something they want to talk about, but they don't know how to start the conversation. This safe word or phrase, when used, will alert everyone to listen intently to the child.

Which ever safe word is being used, be ready to drop everything immediately and listen to, search for, or rescue your child. Your child is worth time to teach a safe word to them. Show your love to your child by keeping them secure with a safe word.

Time = Love

I had a couple in a church who had previously worked with youth. They were raising two boys. The dad asked me, "Do you know how to spell love to a child?" I told him I did not. He responded "T-I-M-E." There is no truer statement. Kids need attention, more than the feeding and their diapers changed. In all stages of childhood, love is shown by spending time with them. Playing with them, caring for them, showing them attention builds a relationship that will always be present. It may be masked, at times, but it exists.

"Jeremy" is a song by the American rock band Pearl Jam, with lyrics written by vocalist Eddie Vedder and music written by bassist Jeff Ament. The song was inspired by a newspaper article Vedder read about a high school student who shot himself in front of his English class on January 8, 1991. <sup>1</sup> Look at the lyrics as they speak volumes.

At home

Drawing pictures

Of mountain tops

With him on top

Lemon yellow sun

Arms raised in a V

And the dead lay in pools of maroon below

Daddy didn't give attention

To the fact that mommy didn't care

King Jeremy the wicked

Ruled his world

Jeremy spoke in class today

Jeremy spoke in class today

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Bobbi; Nevins, Annette (1991-01-09). "[Richardson teen-ager kills himself in front of classmates](#)". [The Dallas Morning News](#).

Clearly I remember  
Pickin' on the boy  
Seemed a harmless little \*\*\*\*

But we unleashed a lion  
Gnashed his teeth  
And bit the recessed lady's breast  
How could I forget  
He hit me with a surprise left  
My jaw left hurting  
Dropped wide open  
Just like the day  
Like the day I heard

Daddy didn't give affection  
And the boy was something mommy wouldn't wear  
King Jeremy the wicked  
Ruled his world  
Jeremy spoke in class today  
Jeremy spoke in class today

Try to forget this,  
Try to erase this,  
From the blackboard.

Jeremy spoke in class today  
Jeremy spoke in class today  
Jeremy spoke in class today  
Jeremy spoke in class today

Written by Eddie Vedder, Jeff Ament • Copyright © Universal Music  
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The lyrics paint a horrific picture of how depriving your child of time and attention can nurture a terrible outcome. You do not have to spend every waking moment with your kids. That would smother them. Purposefully, spending time with your kids will greatly deter the action that was sung about in the song "Jeremy". It will build an environment of good decision-making.

Kitchen Table.

We know that communication is the life-blood of any relationship. The "Kitchen Table" is a place where the boundaries, the safe words, and time become the foundation for the environment of making good decisions. This is where we bring everything together. This is the climax, the crescendo, the peak.

I am using the word "Kitchen Table", to describe a place where all the family is present and talks about their day. The family can share any accomplishments or struggles. Even a safe word may be used here to get the family's attention. If there is a topic that needs more time and attention, mom and daughter or dad and son can meet later to discuss it.

You can use some other time or place to meet other than the Kitchen Table. Some families have "Game Night". The time and place is not as important as the consistency of meeting. The point is to meet and communicate. Without this particular part of the environment, we will just waste time and effort. You need this, and your kids need the time.

Conclusion.

An environment of making good decisions will nurture a place where children can flourish. This environment will help your kids make good decisions, even when the deck is stacked against them. The environment will not lessen the pressure to take pills, cheat on tests, skip school, or

have premarital sex; but it will give them a place to go when the pressure begins.

You may think that it is too late to build this environment. It is never too late. It may be harder to build, but your kids are worth it. Remember that God can redeem you and your family.

Do not try to build this environment alone. Psalm 127:1-2 says :1 Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. 2 In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves.(NIV) God wants your kids to make good decisions. He instituted the family to love and care for one another. We cannot do this without God's help and guidance. Build this environment with God's help and watch your kids grow into leaders of tomorrow.

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