

Playbook: Parent & Caregiver

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Parents and caregivers are often the most consistent, invested, influential, and trusted adults in the lives of youth. They provide youth a foundation for overall development including basic needs, emotional support and security, guidance, protection, education, socialization, independence, and role modeling of moral values and life skills.

Create the environment.

1. Ground your home in a shared mission, values and clear expectations.

- Establish, live out, and discuss family values (e.g., kindness, service, respect, faith, integrity) as a guide for daily choices.
- Co-create house rules that reflect shared values and promote well-being.
- Maintain consistent routines for meals, homework, and check-ins to provide stability.
- Help youth link daily decisions to their longer-term goals and beliefs.
- Create a family "I see you." message board to highlight and celebrate positive actions and words. Bring the messages into family discussions, such as at mealtimes.
- Engage in creative interests like art or music to express appreciation and strengthen bonds.

2. Create rhythms of connection and belonging.

- Develop routines (shared meals, nightly check-ins, weekly rituals) that reinforce both love and meaning. Try a mix of broad questions (e.g., "How was your day?") and more specific ones (e.g., "What made you laugh today?").
- Build in spiritual or reflective practices: expressing gratitude, family prayer, sharing what you've noticed about your child's strengths or growth, or brainstorming long-term hopes or callings and revisiting how everyday actions can help them reach their goals.
- Schedule service opportunities you can do together as a family that bring your family's mission and goals to life, such as volunteering at a homeless shelter once a month.
- While getting ready in the mornings play music everyone enjoys to set the tone for a positive day.
- Leverage music or spiritual practices during times of stress as an opportunity to re-center on what is important to the family.

3. Model shared responsibility, coping strategies, facilitators of connection with youth and others, and how to navigate conflict individually and as a family with empathy and clarity.

- Role model facilitators of connection that may be particularly important for parents & caregivers, including self-awareness, respect, patience, love, nurturance, and vulnerability.
- Make it a priority to highlight the unique strengths of youth and how those strengths benefit the family unit.
- Be mindful of the emotional environment you create and the beliefs you are cultivating when working through conflict as a family unit. Ground discussions in family strengths, such as perseverance, honesty, and commitment to resolve the concern. Practice being politely assertive with youth and offer reassurances when appropriate.

Examples of Family Values

Character

- Integrity
- Honesty
- Courage
- Kindness
- Faith
- Health

Home

- Quality family time
- Sharing meals
- Service/Giving
- Punctuality
- Doing one's best
- Unconditional love

Social

- Respect
- Connection
- Trust
- Compassion
- Gratitude
- Listen to understand

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Have conversations.

1. Practice honest and caring communication.

- Share your perspective on what is healthy, even when it challenges youth.
- Balance honesty with compassion and show that your guidance comes from a place of care and not control.
- Reinforce that your love is unwavering even when you disagree.
- Connect decisions to what is meaningful and builds on their purpose.

"I believe in your ability to make good choices. I'll always be honest with you about what is healthy and what could harm you, because I want you to have every chance to thrive."

2. Show support and love in meaningful ways.

- Express love through words, gestures, and acknowledgement of achievements.
- Offer tangible reminders of care through notes, messages, or small acts of kindness.
- Be fully present and responsive during stressful times (at school, with friends, or other challenges).
- Advocate for youth in different ways such as when a sibling has wronged them or a school situation could benefit from parental involvement. When appropriate, ask them in what ways you can best advocate for them.

"I notice how much thought and effort you put into that. It means a lot to me to watch you grow into your own person."

3. Build connection, voice, and belonging.

- Share daily conversations about highs, lows, and something you are looking forward to.
- Reflect with youth on when they feel most connected or supported.
- Give youth meaningful choices and responsibilities in family decisions.
- Listen actively and respectfully to youth perspective.
- Create tech-free moments for uninterrupted connection (meals/walks).
- Give space for doubts, questions, and exploration of purpose and spirituality without judgment. Affirm that their voice matters in making family decisions.
- Ask about and share with each other what excites you about life.

"You've got this, and even when things are overwhelming, I will be here with you, not just for the easy parts."

"Your perspective matters to me, even if it's different from mine. It is important to me that you feel like this is your space to share honestly. You first and then we'll decide together."

"When you share your ideas, it helps us grow as a family."

4. Model and celebrate strengths, growth, resilience, & values.

- Notice and praise effort, persistence, and positive behavior.
- Honor youth interests, talents, and values.
- Model vulnerability by sharing your own challenges and growth when managing setbacks.
- Encourage supportive relationships with mentors, spiritual leaders, or peers who affirm their worth and growth.
- Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Highlight each youth's unique contributions to the family.
- Support problem-solving and coping skills during tough times.

"I notice how you didn't give up, even when it felt impossible. That determination will carry you far."

"The way you care for and serve others reflects a deep part of who you are. That gift is something the world really needs and is part of your purpose."

Grow together.

1. Participate fully in your youth's life.

- Respond promptly and attentively when youth seek your attention – make eye contact, minimize distractions, and show genuine interest.
- Engage in their hobbies and creative interests.
- Attend their events to show support.
- Plan shared experiences one-on-one or as a family to build connection.

2. Foster talents, abilities, and responsibilities.

- Support youth in exploring their strengths and spirituality, reflecting on what matters to them and applying it in real life. Invite mutual feedback to foster growth.
- Assign meaningful responsibilities to grow abilities and confidence. Provide youth space to work through challenges and make mistakes. Support them in identifying lessons learned and solutions.
- Promote creativity, leadership, and service as ways to discover personal and family purpose.

3. Set shared goals and reflection practices as a family.

- Make connection, growth, and mutual support explicit family goals.
- Building habits of reflecting together on progress, challenges, and growth.