
CONNECTED · TALK 3

Raising Secure Children in an Anxious World

A Wholistic Path to Resilience, Faith and Hope

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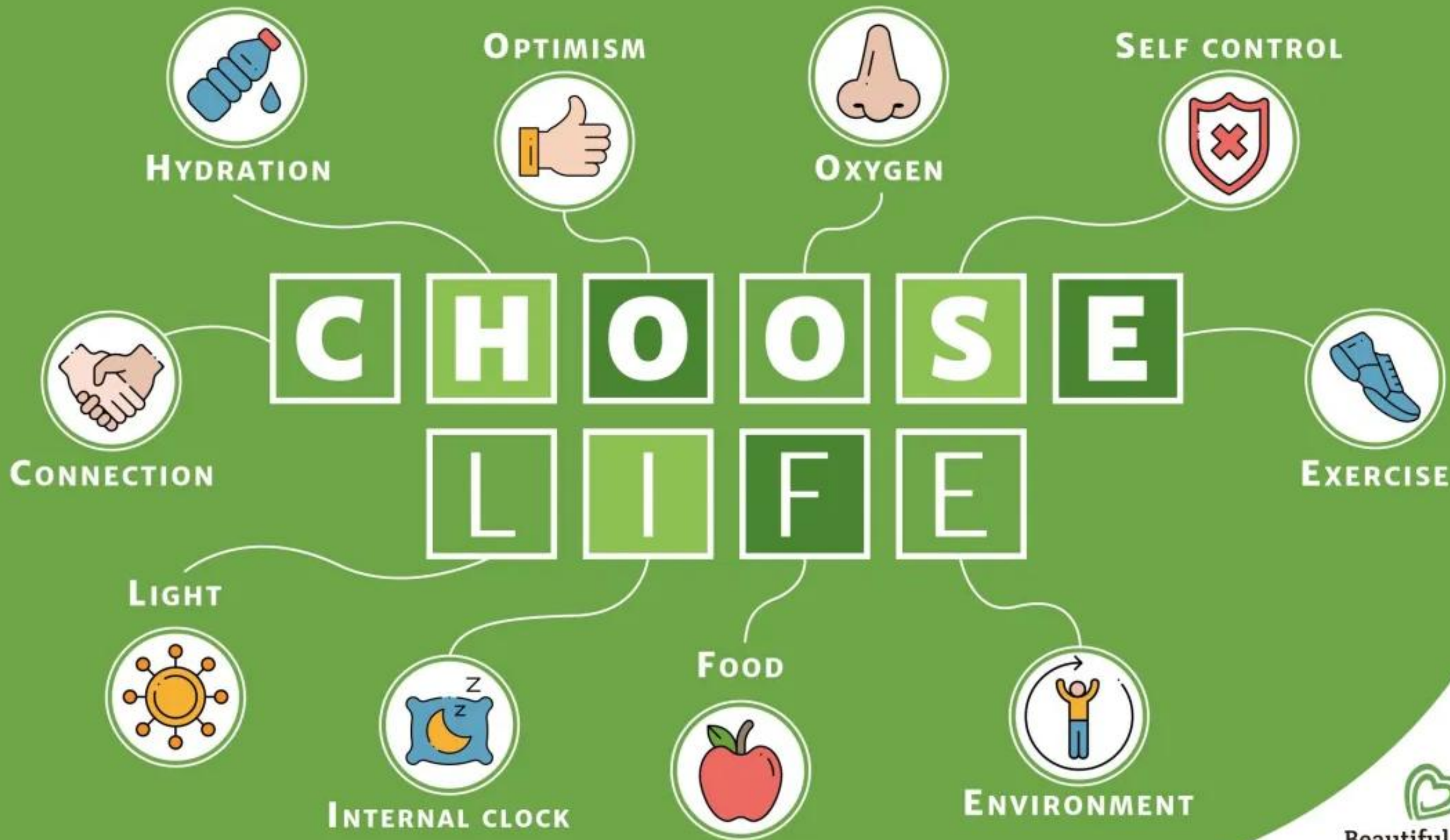


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YOUR MIND IS
Beautiful



“Children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.”

Psalm 127:3 (KJV)

Today is about the gift God has put in our hands — and how to hold it well.

Why this talk matters

Something has changed for our children.

In the last decade, anxiety and depression among American teens have nearly doubled. Loneliness is up. Suicide is up. Time with friends is down. **This is not an exaggeration — it is what the CDC, the U.S. Surgeon General, and our own pediatricians are now telling us.**

Today: what is happening, why it is happening, and — most importantly — what God has placed in your hands as parents, grandparents and church family to raise children who are secure, faithful and resilient in the world they are growing up in.

Today's Roadmap



The World Our Kids Live In

The data on anxiety, loneliness, screens — and why it matters.



How God Designed Children

Brains, bodies, attachment, faith — the building blocks.



Eight Practices for Resilient, Faithful Kids

Concrete things every parent and grandparent can do.

PART I

The World Our Kids Live In

Our teens are not okay

40%

of U.S. high-schoolers felt persistently sad or hopeless last year

20%

seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year

53%

of high-school girls felt persistently sad — nearly double the boys

These are not far-away children. These are our nieces, our nephews, our grandparents, kids in church — and yes, sometimes our own.

The crisis showed up in the ER

Between 2010 and 2019, mental-health emergency-room visits by U.S. children rose

25.8%

— *and that was before the pandemic.*

During COVID, depression and anxiety in young people doubled worldwide — 25% depression, 20% anxiety in a meta-analysis of 80,879 youth.

The loneliest generation in history

“Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling — it harms both individual and societal health.”

Vivek Murthy, MD

U.S. Surgeon General, 2023 Advisory on Loneliness

~50%

of Americans report loneliness

61%

of young adults (18–25) feel “seriously lonely”

67min → 20min

in-person time with friends per day (2003 → 2020)

Loneliness is a health hazard

Lacking strong social connections is comparable to

smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.

Meta-analysis of 148 studies covering 308,849 people: strong social ties = 50% greater likelihood of survival.

We spend billions teaching kids not to smoke. We have spent almost nothing teaching them to connect.

A phone in every pocket



More than half of teens say it would be hard to give up social media. "Almost constantly online" has doubled since 2015.

8h 39m

Average daily screen time for teens (Common Sense Media, 2021).

4.8 hours

of that is on social media (Gallup, 2023).

2× the odds

of feeling socially isolated for teens using social media more than 2 hours a day.

It is not just correlation

ABCD Study (NIH): 11,876 kids followed from age 9–10 for four years.

Social media use → later depression ✓

Heavier use predicted later depressive symptoms.

Depression → later social media use ✗

Depressed kids did NOT use more later.

The arrow runs one way. Social media is not just a mirror of unhappy kids — it is a cause.

Worldwide: school loneliness among 15-year-olds rose in 36 of 37 countries between 2012 and 2018 — right when smartphones became universal.

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

2 Corinthians 10:12 (KJV)

Two thousand years ago, the Holy Spirit warned us about what Instagram does to a teenage girl.

The connected disconnection

“The more connected a kid is, especially through addiction-based, algorithm-driven platforms, the lonelier they’re going to be. It gives them very low-quality connections.”

Jonathan Haidt, NYU social psychologist

Author, The Anxious Generation (2024)

The smartphone has not made our children more connected. It has rewired what childhood is.

PART II

How God Designed Children

Sleep is mental health



Tired children are anxious children.

8–10 hours

Recommended for **teens** (American Academy of Sleep Medicine).
10-13 hours recommended for 6-12 years

1 in 3

U.S. teens does not get enough sleep.

9 minutes less

of sleep for every 10 minutes of bedtime screen use.

Feed the growing brain



“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.” — Daniel 1:8

What the research keeps showing:

Omega-3s

from flax, walnuts — building material for the brain itself.

Whole foods

fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes — the diet of the Garden.

Less ultra-processed

every step away from the box and the wrapper helps.

Iron, B-vitamins, vitamin D

deficiencies show up as anxiety and low mood.

Move — it changes everything



Daily outdoor play is one of the best antidepressants we have.

Physical activity in kids and teens:

- Reduces anxiety and depression
- Improves sleep
- Sharpens attention and learning
- Lifts self-esteem and mood
- Builds the brain's own “growth fertilizer”

The single most important thing



One safe, caring adult.

Across decades of resilience research — from Werner’s Kauai study to Masten’s “ordinary magic” — the single most consistent factor that protects a child against almost any kind of adversity is a stable, loving relationship with at least one engaged adult.

Parents — you are not replaceable. Grandparents, teachers, church members — you are not optional.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”

Isaiah 49:15 (KJV)

Attachment is not a modern theory — it is the language God used to describe Himself.

Two systems every child has

T H E A L A R M

(amygdala)

Fast, automatic, looking for danger. Switches on within milliseconds. Says: “run, freeze, fight.”

In an anxious child the alarm is stuck on — firing when there is no real danger.

T H E B R A K E S

(prefrontal cortex)

Slow, deliberate, reflective. Does the thinking, planning, calming. Says: “Wait — is this real?”

The brakes finish developing around age 25 — so kids genuinely cannot calm themselves the way adults can.

Children borrow our brakes



Co-regulation.

Before a child can soothe herself, she has to be soothed — again and again, by a calmer adult. That calm voice, that steady hand, that unhurried gaze are not just nice. They are literally building the wiring she will one day use to calm herself.

If you cannot calm yourself, you cannot calm your child. Your own walk with God is parenting work.

Ellen White saw it first

“Uniform firmness and unimpassioned control are necessary to the discipline of every family. Say what you mean calmly, move with consideration, and carry out what you say without deviation.”

— *The Adventist Home*, p. 308

A century before researchers named it “authoritative parenting,” Ellen White described it exactly:

H I G H W A R M T H

“gentle discipline, in loving words and acts”

H I G H S T R U C T U R E

“carry out what you say without deviation”

Four ways to parent — one that works

AUTHORITATIVE

High warmth + high structure

best outcomes

AUTHORITARIAN

Low warmth + high structure

anxiety, rebellion

PERMISSIVE

High warmth + low structure

self-control problems

UNINVOLVED

Low warmth + low structure

worst outcomes

Authoritative parenting — warm AND firm — is associated with the best outcomes across every domain studied.

Your genes are not your destiny

In a now-famous experiment, baby rats raised by attentive, nurturing mothers grew into calm, resilient adults. Their less-nurtured siblings grew up anxious — even though their DNA was identical.

The difference? Nurturing care literally switched genes on and off in the developing brain.

The science

How you love your child affects which genes get used.

Trauma can travel

Stress effects can be inherited from parents — even grandparents.

So can healing

Nurturing care can reverse the patterns of past generations.

“It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3:22–23 (KJV)

If you feel you have failed so far — mercies are new every morning. The story is not finished.

PART III

Eight Practices for Resilient, Faithful Kids

1. Show up — again and again

Children do not need perfect parents. They need present ones.

The most powerful intervention in a child's emotional life is not a technique. It is sustained, unhurried attention from someone who loves them. Eye contact at breakfast. The bedtime conversation. The walk after dinner. These are not breaks from parenting — they are the parenting.

“And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Deuteronomy 6:7

2. Build sacred routines

Predictable rituals tell a child's nervous system: you are safe here.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

A review of 50 years of research found that consistent family routines — mealtimes, bedtime, worship — are linked to better self-regulation, stronger mental health and higher self-esteem in children.

"The Sabbath can be a powerful stress reliever. From sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, Adventists create a 'sanctuary in time'..." — Blue Zones, p. 248

"Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God's altar." — Child Guidance, p. 520



3. Protect sleep — and the bedroom

If you change one thing this year, change this:

1 No screens in the bedroom — ever.

Phones, tablets, and TVs charge in the kitchen overnight, not on the nightstand.

2 A real bedtime — even on weekends.

Variable sleep is almost as bad as too little sleep.

3 A wind-down hour before lights out.

Reading, prayer, conversation, music — not scrolling.

4 Sunlight in the morning.

Ten minutes outside resets the body clock better than any pill.

4. Delay the smartphone

Four norms to improve American families:

No smartphone before college

A basic phone for calls and texts — yes. A connected-to-the-world device — no.

No social media before 16, or maybe even 18

Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat are built for adult attention spans, not for forming brains.

Phone-free schools

Bell to bell, in a pouch or locker. Kids cannot learn or socialize alongside a slot machine.

More independence in the real world

Walk to the store. Bike to the park. Play unsupervised. Free play is not optional.

These are easier together than alone. Find another family. Then another.

5. Grow the brakes — self-control

In a study that followed 1,037 children from birth to age 32, childhood self-control predicted adult health, wealth and well-being — more than IQ, more than family income.

3×

less likely to be in poor health

3×

less likely to be addicted

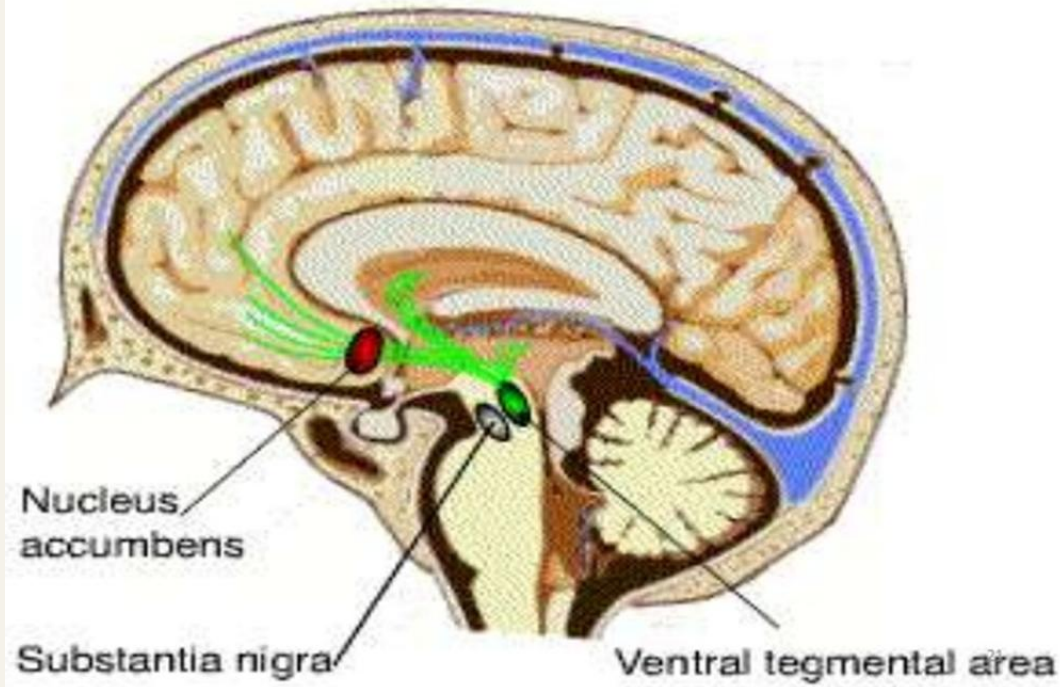
2×

as likely to graduate college

Self-control can be taught — 49 trials show training programs work. Chores, waiting, saving, finishing what you start: all of it grows the brakes.

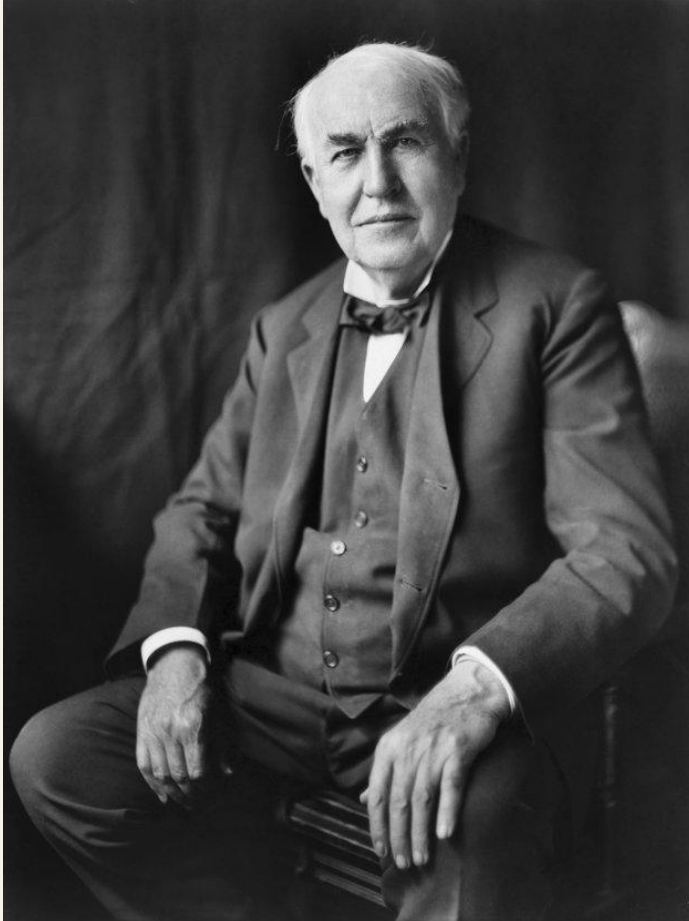
The Adolescent Brain: Accelerator Without Brakes

Pleasure Reward Pathway



- Puberty activates the "accelerator" — nucleus accumbens hypertrophies
- Maturation of "the brakes" (prefrontal cortex) is NOT driven by puberty — it lags behind
- Result: Hypersensitive to rewards, hyposensitive to consequences, hypersensitive to peer influence
- "Even the best programs are successful at changing adolescents' knowledge BUT not in altering their behavior" (Steinberg, 2014)
- This is why adolescents need firm but loving limit-setting by caring adults

6. Let them struggle (a little)



- In the 1850s, a young boy attended school for only three months before his teacher declared him "too dull to learn anything" and expelled him
- His mother Nancy took him out and taught him herself.
- That boy was Thomas Edison, who grew up to file 1,093 U.S. patents and changed the modern world.

“My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me, that I felt I had something to live for.”

*Children grow in the soil of believed-in struggle. Protect them from harm —
not from difficulty.*

Adversity often makes the leader

In one study of about 400 eminent men and women — scientists, writers, statesmen — roughly three-quarters had overcome serious early adversity:

Poverty

Death of a parent

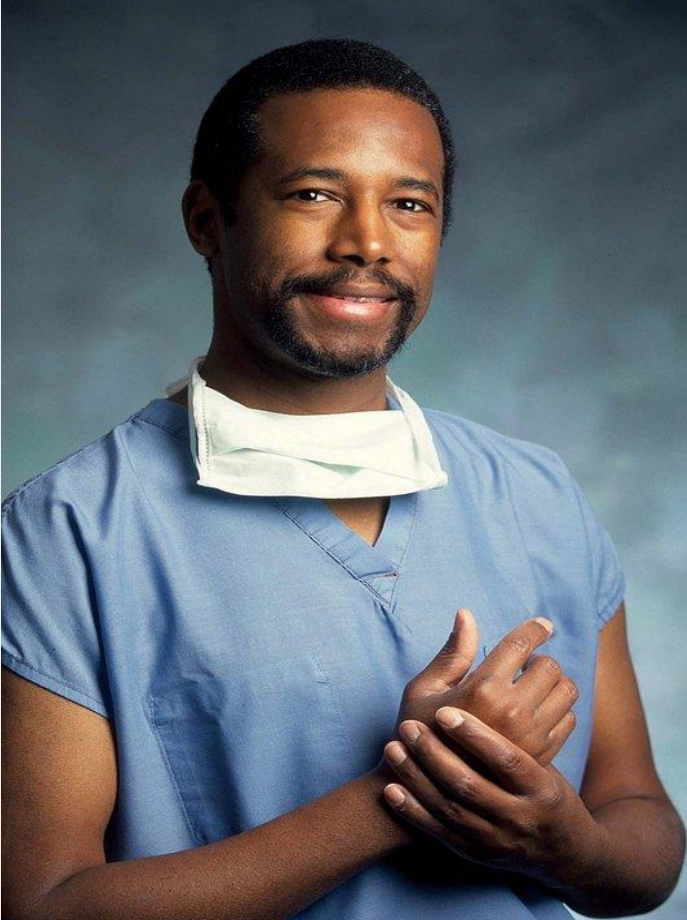
Serious illness or disability

Family conflict or rejection

Learning difficulties

“Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.” — Romans 5:3–4

7. Build hope — the Ben Carson story



From bottom of the class to chief of pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins by age 33.

- Father left when he was eight.
- Mother Sonya: third-grade education, working three jobs.
- She limited TV — and required two book reports a week.
- She prayed over them. She made them believe they could.
- He became one of the most decorated surgeons in America.

Faith, books and a believing mother changed everything.

For the parent who is afraid right now

“Let nothing cause you to lose hope, nothing to cut off your love and tenderness for the erring one. Just because he is erring he needs you... Do not talk discouragement and hopelessness. Talk courage.”

Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases vol. 21, p. 429–430

8. Pass on a living faith

This is not just spiritual counsel — it is one of the most robust findings in modern epidemiology.

Harvard study of 5,000+ children followed into young adulthood: those raised with regular religious practice grew up with:

Less

depression, anxiety, suicidal thinking

Less

alcohol, drug and tobacco use

More

life satisfaction, volunteering, purpose

Faith works — not just for eternity, but for today.

The God they hear about matters

A L O V I N G G O D

- Less aggression
- More kindness toward others
- Stronger sense of purpose
- Better mental health

A P U N I T I V E G O D

- More aggression
- More anxiety
- More legalism and rebellion
- Higher rates of leaving the faith

3-wave study of 760 adolescents: how a child pictures God predicts how that child behaves.

The doorway is love

“The love of Jesus will win you an entrance into the hearts of the young; and when you have obtained the confidence of the youth, they will listen to your words and take your counsel.”

Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, March 24, 1891

Family worship that actually works

Short. Joyful. Predictable. Honest. Together.

1 10 minutes is enough.

Kids do not need a sermon. They need rhythm.

2 Open the Bible together.

Even one verse. Let them see you take it seriously.

3 Sing — even badly.

Music regulates the nervous system better than words alone.

4 Pray out loud about real things.

Their fears. Their friends. Their tomorrow.

5 Listen as much as you talk.

What do you think Jesus meant? — the most powerful question in family worship.

A quiet emergency in our own church

Around 40–50% of Adventist young people leave the church by their mid-twenties.

And yet — 80% of them said they love the church and would never leave.

"One of the most striking findings of both Church Member Surveys was the very low incidence of family worship"

The biggest predictors of those who stay:

● Warm home, not just strict home

● Real family worship

● At least one believing adult who knew them by name

● A faith of their own — not borrowed

What Keeps Youth in the Church?

- Youth who can develop original positions by asking questions and challenging leaders → more likely to remain (vs. conformity emphasis)
- Long-term faith decisions more influenced by family, pastor, and adult church members than by youth pastors or peers
- **The Father's Role: Survey respondents who discussed faith with their father were 70% more likely to foresee remaining in the church**
- *"While mothers are usually the 'bedrock' of faith in the home, it's fathers who might actually determine a positive decision for church"*
- Danger of generational segregation: When youth only lead youth → "graduating from church"





CLOSING

Hope, Honestly

It is never too early — or too late

“The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his character than all that it learns in future years.”

— *Child Guidance*, p. 193

AND — in the same paragraph — she says this:

“First impressions may be buried — but they will seldom be obliterated.” — and Christ’s mercy is new every morning, for every child, at every age.

“All thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

Isaiah 54:13 (KJV)

The promise is not for perfect parents. It is for praying ones.

Eight practices — in one slide

1. Show up — again and again

2. Build sacred routines

3. Protect sleep — and the bedroom

4. Delay the smartphone

5. Grow the brakes — self-control

6. Let them struggle (a little)

7. Build hope through stories

8. Pass on a living faith

A holistic prescription

B O D Y

Sleep, sunlight, real food, movement, less screen.

M I N D

Less comparison, more attention. Calm voices over loud advice.

H E A R T

Steady warmth and firm structure. Eye contact. Touch. Time.

S P I R I T

Family worship, an open Bible, an honest God of love.

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God... And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

Mark 10:14, 16 (KJV)

In an anxious world, this is still the safest place for a child to be — in His arms, and in ours.

If you do one thing this week

This week,

sit down with one child.

Open the Bible. Ask one question. Listen until they're done.

Then pray for them by name.

That is where every secure child begins.

Thank you

Daniel Binus, MD · Beautiful Minds Medical

“And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

Isaiah 54:13