



3 Effective Strategies for Raising Kids Who Become Thriving Adults

Simple Parenting Steps to
Counteract Cultural Crazyiness

By Audrey Monke

Thank you for caring about your kids' well-being!

Close connections and positive relationships are the key to a happy, healthy, successful life, which is what most of us desire for our children. Yet many parents spend our time and energy micromanaging and overscheduling our kids, focusing primarily on their academic and athletic achievements. These activities are not leading to the positive outcomes we dream of for our children. Many of our kids feel anxious, stressed, and unhappy.

After three decades working with kids, young adult counselors and parents at summer camp, I have developed powerful, effective strategies to help parents learn to pay LESS attention to academic and athletic achievements and MORE attention to their children and teen's social and emotional development. In this guidebook, I'll take you through three strategies with specific action steps that can help you re-prioritize how you connect and communicate with your kids.

It's a complicated, anxious world our kids are growing up in, but these parenting strategies can help us guide kids through childhood and adolescence and into a thriving adulthood. We can move the needle for our kids towards better well-being by taking some simple steps at home.

Let's get started!

Audrey "☀️shine" Monke



Sunshine Parenting

Strategy #1

A photograph of a man and a young boy walking together outdoors. The man is on the right, wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt, with his arm around the boy's shoulder. The boy is on the left, wearing a dark jacket over a blue shirt, and is smiling broadly. They are both laughing and looking at each other. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

Focus on Your Relationship with Your Child First

“Connection is why we’re here.”

– Brené Brown

You are your child's parent, and the most important thing they need from you is to feel loved, cherished, and accepted regardless of what they accomplish, what they look like, what they are interested in, and how they are different. They need you to:

- Be their greatest supporter and the person with whom they want to share victories and defeats.
- See their strengths and point out all the things they do well.
- Be a champion of their strengths, not just a remediator of their weaknesses.
- Provide a loving, supportive shoulder to cry on when they face the inevitable mistakes, failures, and setbacks that are part of life.

Your child will have many adults in their life who are not their parent – teachers, coaches, advisors. Those people will – for the most part – not put their relationship with your child as their top priority. They will focus on drills, achievements and measurable stats.

Give your child one safe place where they know they are loved, regardless of whether they scored a goal or got an "A."

Let that safe place be you.

Connection Action Steps:

- Be together, doing fun things, as much as possible. Find at least one hobby you enjoy doing together and make it a regular activity. It can be anything: reading, crafts, playing cards, backgammon, chess (or another game), hikes, bike rides, surfing, playing Frisbee, or fishing. The most important thing is that you both enjoy doing the activity and will continue to do it together regularly – even (especially!) during the adolescent years.
- Make “hygge”— the Danish concept of cozy, relaxed togetherness – part of your family’s habits. Set aside a weekly time where you just cozy up together, unplugged. You can do this by the fire, around an outdoor campfire, or with a few yummy smelling candles. Your hygge time can include a family game you play, a book you’re reading together, or just a family chat to catch up on what’s going on with everyone. Warm drinks and treats are optional but recommended.



- One-on-Ones: Make sure that every day, without fail, you take just a few minutes to give your child your undivided attention and listen to them talk about their day, tell you a long-winded story, or just talk about what’s on their mind.
- Unplug: Turn your phone off and listen intently to your toddler or child’s elaborate story. They will learn that you are available and interested and will share the big stuff later. If your kids are older and are already addicted and immersed in their screens, have designated family unplugged times every day (dinner time/one hour before bed) and for at least one longer period every week, maybe on the weekend in conjunction with your family fun.

Strategy #2

Promote Social & Emotional Growth

“The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice.”

– Peggy O’Mara

Unlike academics and athletics, which can be easily assessed with grades or stats, social and emotional growth needs to be viewed instead as a group of skills our children need to develop over their childhood and adolescence. Many adults still need to work on a lot of these skills, so we can't expect our kids to develop them quickly and easily! We see glimpses of the skills our kids already have or still need to develop through their behavior.

What are some of the social and emotional skills kids need to develop?

- Emotional self-regulation skills (able to identify feelings, calm down, not “flip their lid”) – *The Yes Brain* has some great info on this!
- Understanding other people's feelings and needs.
- How to interact positively with others.
- Learn to solve their own problems.
- Ability to delay gratification.
- Be able to deal with setbacks, disappointments, failures (develop “grit” or resilience).
- How to create real, lasting connections.

Social & Emotional Growth

Action Steps:

- Practice getting comfortable with their (and your own) discomfort. Let them handle their own mistakes, failures, and social snafus.
- Learn a good, empathetic response, "Oh, that sounds really hard..."
- Ask a lot of questions instead of giving advice – "What are you going to do?" Express confidence in their ability to handle the situation.
- Think of yourself as a "friendship coach," encouraging them where they have social strengths, providing gentle coaching in areas where they have deficits.
- Model sharing different emotions. Let your kids know that having a range of emotions is part of being human. Let them know if you were disappointed or frustrated about something at work.

Strategy #3

Model Thriving:
Focus on Your
OWN Well-Being

“Be the adult you want your child to become.”

– Brené Brown

Our kids are watching us to see what adulthood looks like. If we make it look miserable, what motivation do they have to become an adult? None!

One of the greatest gifts we can give our kids is modeling for them what a thriving adult says and does. Many parents are so busy and caught up with work and taking care of our kids, pets, cars, houses, and lives that we lose touch with some of the fundamental things that make life fun and joyful for us.

If you've found that in this busy season of work and parenting, you've stopped doing some of the things you love to do, reconnect with those hobbies and activities. Perhaps you'll need to give up something else (like mindless scrolling on Facebook) to make time for reading, being with friends, or doing other hobbies you used to love to do.

If your kids see you prioritizing the things that make you happy, they will learn to do the same!

It's not selfish to take the time to take care of yourself and do the things you need to do to be happy and healthy. In fact, it's necessary for your kids' future well-being. They will not become something you are not, so be the adult you want them to become. (That's some rough paraphrasing from Brené Brown.)

So, go! Be well! Show your kids what thriving adulthood actually looks like!

Modeling Thriving Action Steps:

- Focus on people and face-to-face connections – People are a great use of time. Take time on your own friendships outside of work and family. Plan weekly times to get together for a walk or coffee or even a phone call.
- Say “no” to over-scheduled, crazy family life and yes to connection with your family, friends, neighbors. Match your own and your family’s schedule to your values. Make sure you have congruence. If you LOVE sports, then spending 15 hours of your family time a week on sports might be okay. But what if you value reading or hiking or volunteering and haven't set aside any time for those activities?
- Find your own FLOW – Show your child what a thriving adult human does – spend time on your activities/hobbies/interests (even if that means hiring a babysitter, trading babysitting with a friend, or taking a weekly craft or reading night and letting your spouse be with the kids).
- Take care of yourself– If kids see moms and dads as frazzled, overworked, and unhappy, what motivation is there to grow up and get a job? Might they just consider it depressing and anxiety-inducing to go to college/get a job/ become an adult? Why not just stay in the basement playing Xbox? List out the little things you enjoy and prioritize doing those things more often.



Let's Raise Thriving Kids!

If you received any value from the advice in this guide, please email me and let me know: audrey@audreymonke.com. I love hearing from readers, and many of the topics I cover in my posts and podcast episodes come from questions and comments from readers.

If you want to dig in more to the topic of raising thriving kids, please consider taking the following actions:

- Preorder my book: *Happy Campers: 9 Summer Camp Secrets for Raising Kids Who Become Thriving Adults*
- Subscribe to my podcast.
- Invite me to come speak to your group!

I hope we can connect IRL (in real life) soon!

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