



By Skip Forsyth

Happy New Year – welcome 2016, and with it abundant changes. As Heraclitus said, “There is nothing permanent except change.” Children transition from elementary school to middle school to high school and eventually fly the nest to college and career leaving behind a collage of joys and sorrows. Employment opportunities arise that require a move to another community or to another state. Our parents and grandparents experience failing health and demand much more care. In November we will elect a new President. Are you ready for a year full of changes and challenges?

The biggest obstacle I encounter to change is me. As Maya Angelou said, “If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.” A person’s attitude more than their aptitude increases their altitude. We must pay taxes. Students will take major tests. Some families will care for parents and grandparents affected by cancer and dementia. Students will feel fragmented between school, extracurricular activities, and family expectations. Change invades our lives, often unexpectedly. How then, do I change and improve my attitude in 2016? How do I help my child develop a positive attitude?

Choose the outcome: Teach your children that attitude, like many things, is a choice. A child can choose to be angry at a sibling or forgive and forget about it. A child can be excited about going to a movie or complain about not getting popcorn. Help your child see the exciting opportunities change provides rather than focus on the pitfalls. Attitude is a choice.

Positive environment: As much as possible expose your children to uplifting and humorous family movies and programs. Limit their exposure to violent media including video games. As a family share stories, play games, and listen to the wisdom of grandma and grandpa. Be sure to know your child’s friends and meet their family, and begin to teach your child about healthy and safe relationships.

Blessed not stressed: Children, like parents, feel stressed, and stress saps positive energy. But, when a person chooses to assist others, stress decreases, thankfulness increases, and a positive attitude (or blessing) permeates your thought-life. Therefore, practice the habit of random acts of kindness. Give blankets and hygiene supplies to a homeless shelter. Wash and vacuum the car of an elderly neighbor. Provide a meal to a family dealing with illness. Baby-sit for a young couple with little children who need a “date night.” Also, ask your child daily to name three specific things for which they are thankful. Compassion and gratitude help develop a positive attitude.

With a positive attitude change is manageable not intimidating.



I LOVED YOU ENOUGH

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to ask where you were going, with whom, and what time you would be home.

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to insist that you save your money and buy a bike for yourself even though we could afford to buy one for you.

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to be silent and let you discover that your new best friend was a creep.

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to make you take a Milky Way back to the drugstore (with a bite out of it) and tell the clerk, “I stole this yesterday and want to pay for it.”

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to stand over you for two hours while you cleaned your room, a job that should have taken 15 minutes.

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to let you see anger, disappointment and tears in my eyes. Children must learn that their parents aren’t perfect.

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to let you assume the responsibility for your actions even when the penalties were so harsh they almost broke my heart.

But most of all,

I LOVED YOU ENOUGH...

to say **NO** when I knew you would hate me for it. Those were the most difficult battles of all. I’m glad I won them, because in the end, you won, too.

...Author Unknown



Your food choices each day affect your health—how you feel today, tomorrow, and in the future. Good nutrition is an important part of leading a healthy lifestyle. Combined with physical activity, your diet can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight, reduce your risk of chronic diseases (like heart disease and cancer), and promote your overall health.

THE IMPACT OF NUTRITION ON YOUR HEALTH

Unhealthy eating habits have contributed to the obesity epidemic in the United States: about one-third of U.S. adults (33.8%) are obese and approximately 17% (or 12.5 million) of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years are obese. Even for people at a healthy weight, a poor diet is associated with major health risks that can cause illness and even death. These include heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain types of cancer. By making smart food choices, you can help protect yourself from these health problems.

The risk factors for adult chronic diseases, like hypertension and Type 2 Diabetes, are increasingly seen in younger ages, often a result of unhealthy eating habits and increased weight gain. Dietary habits established in childhood often carry into adulthood, so teaching children how to eat healthy at a young age will help them stay healthy throughout their life.

The link between good nutrition and healthy weight, reduced chronic disease risk, and overall health is too important to ignore. By taking steps to eat healthy, you'll be on your way to getting the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy, active, and strong. As with physical activity, making small changes in your diet can go a long way, and it's easier than you think!

<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/trends.HTML>

TRY THIS!

Emphasis on Fruits & Veggies



- Mix vegetables into your go-to dishes. Try spinach with pasta or peppers in tacos.
- Use fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables. They all offer the same great nutrients. Just be sure to watch the sodium on canned vegetables and look for fruits packed in water or 100% juice (not syrup).
- Pack your child's lunch bag with fruits and veggies: sliced apples, a banana, or carrot sticks are all healthy options.

Healthy snacks

- For a handy snack, keep cut-up fruits and vegetables like carrots, peppers, or orange slices in the refrigerator.
- Teach children the difference between everyday snacks, such as fruits and veggies, and occasional snacks, such as cookies or other sweets.
- Make water a staple of snack time. Try adding a slice of lemon, lime, or a splash of 100% juice to your water for a little flavor.
- Swap out your cookie jar for a basket filled with fresh fruit.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- ✓ **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**
<https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/default.aspx>
- ✓ **Dietary Guidelines For Americans**
<http://preview.tinyurl.com/hw5xkut>
- ✓ **Food And Nutrition Information Center**
<http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/>
- ✓ **Fruits & Veggies - More Matters**
<http://preview.tinyurl.com/jlwwtam>

Useful Links

- ◇ [FACTS - Warning Signs of Suicide](#)
- ◇ [Ask an Expert](#)
- ◇ [Frequently Asked Questions About Referral to Mental Health Services](#)
- ◇ [I am Worried About My Child. Where do I start?](#)
- ◇ [Not My Kid](#)
- ◇ [Talking to Your Kids About Suicide](#)
- ◇ [What if My Child Needs Medication?](#)
- ◇ [After an Attempt](#)
- ◇ [When a Child's Friend Attempts Suicide](#)
- ◇ [When a Child's Friend Dies by Suicide](#)
- ◇ [Preparing Your Child to Attend the Funeral of a Friend](#)
- ◇ [A First-Person Message for Parents](#)
- ◇ [Memorials After a Suicide](#)
- ◇ [The Truth About Bullying](#)
- ◇ [Coping with Cyberbullying - The Use of Technology to Terrify](#)
- ◇ [College with Confidence](#)
- ◇ [Mental Health Resources for College Students](#)
- ◇ [The Immediate Crisis is Over - Where Do We Go From Here?](#)
- ◇ [Top 5 Mental Health Problems Facing College Students](#)

<http://www.sptsusa.org/parents/>



One of the more difficult challenges of parenting is realizing that you don't always know what your children are thinking and feeling. You may be aware that suicide is the third leading cause of death in adolescence but you can't imagine your child might become one of those statistics. When do the normal ups and downs of adolescence become something to worry about? How can you know if suicide is a risk for your family? And if you are worried about it, what can you do?

If you find yourself asking some of these questions, you're not alone. Although youth suicide is a relatively rare phenomenon, thoughts of suicide are not. One national study, for example, found that almost 20% of high school students admitted to thinking about suicide.

Many parents may feel at a loss. Feelings can be difficult subjects to discuss under the best of circumstances, so how in the world do you ask about feelings related to suicide?

The first step is to learn about the factors that can put a teen at risk for suicide. There are lots of sites that list risk factors; spend some time reading them – the more you know, the better you'll be prepared for understanding what can put your child at risk.



<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>



President Signs Every Student Succeeds Act into Law (ESSA)

President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replacing the long-expired No Child Left Behind law on December 10th. While ESSA continues to require annual testing and for states to improve low-performing schools, it allows for more local control to set goals and make plans for remediation. Section 1118, Parental Involvement, is now Section 1116, Parent and Family Engagement. The law also authorizes funding for a Statewide Family Engagement Centers program. Find out more from Cecilia Muñoz, Director of the Domestic Policy Council, who lays out what you need to know about the "fix to No Child Left Behind."

How ESSA can help American families, students, and schools:

Does this bill ensure high standards?

Yes. The bill affirms the path taken by 48 states and the District of Columbia to hold all students to challenging academic content standards that will prepare them to graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workforce.

Does this bill move towards a smarter, more balanced approach to testing?

Yes. As President Obama has called for, the bill encourages a smarter approach to testing by moving away from a sole focus on standardized tests to drive decisions around the quality of schools. It also does so by allowing for the use of multiple measures of student learning and progress, along with other indicators of student success to make school accountability decisions. It also includes provisions consistent with the Administration's principles around reducing the amount of classroom time spent on standardized testing, including support for state efforts to audit and streamline their current assessment systems. At the same time, the bill maintains important statewide assessments to ensure that teachers and parents can mark the progress and performance of their children every year, from third to eighth grade and once in high school.

Does the bill create rigorous accountability for all students?

Yes. Consistent with the Administration's proposals and policies, the bill builds on the federal-state partnerships in place in over 40 states to require meaningful goals for the progress of all students,

and to ensure that every student subgroup makes gains toward college and career-readiness. States must set ambitious targets to close student achievement and graduation rate gaps among subgroups of students in order to meet their goals. In schools where too many students consistently fail to reach the goals and other indicators set by the state, school districts will ensure they receive tailored interventions and supports proportionate to the needs of those schools and the students they serve.

Does the bill have competitive programs to spur innovative, replicate high quality charter schools and encourage support systems for vulnerable communities?

Yes. The bill contains competitive programs modeled after many the Administration has created and supported for years. These include a program to develop, refine, and replicate innovative and ambitious reforms to close the achievement gap in America's schools, similar to the Administration's existing Investing in Innovation (i3) program; to leverage resources to address the significant challenges faced by students and families living in high-poverty communities through the Promise Neighborhoods effort, supporting a full continuum of services from early learning through college; and to expand support for high-performing public charter schools for high-need students.

Does the bill include harmful portability provisions?

No. The bill rejects so-called "portability" provisions in the original House-passed bill that would have allowed states to shift federal funds away from the schools that need them most.

Does the bill contain additional preschool slots?

Yes. The bill expands access to high-quality, state-funded preschool for children from low- and moderate-income families, building from the Administration's Preschool Development Grants program. This is a major win for our youngest children and for American families.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/12/07/qa-what-you-need-know-about-fix-no-child-left-behind>

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Test-Taking Tips

Do you sweat, chew your pencil, and feel butterflies in your stomach as your teacher hands out a test? A lot of people (adults included) get freaked out when it's time to take a test.

It's natural to feel some stress about taking tests. In fact, sometime a little adrenaline (a hormone made by your body during times of stress) is a good thing to jump-start you.

Here are some tips for taking tests:

- **First, be sure you've studied properly.** It sounds like a no-brainer, but if you're sure of the information, you'll have less reason to be worried.
- **Get enough sleep the night before the test.** Your memory recall will be much better if you've had enough rest. In a scientific study, people who get enough sleep before taking a math test did better than those who stayed up all night studying.
- **Listen closely to any instructions.** As the teacher hands out the test, be sure you know what's expected of you.
- **Read the test through first.** Once you have the test paper in front of you, read over the entire test, checking out how long it is and all the parts that you are expected to complete. This will allow you to estimate how much time you have for each section and ask the teacher any questions. If something seems unclear before you start, don't panic: ask.
- **Focus on addressing each question individually.** As you take the test, if you don't know the answer, don't obsess over it. Instead, answer the best way you can or skip over the question and come back to it after you've answered other questions.
- **Relax.** If you're so nervous that you blank out, you might need a mini-break. Of course you can't get up and move around in the middle of a test, but you can wiggle your fingers and toes, take four or five deep breaths, or picture yourself on a beach or some other calm place. As we all know, it can be easy to forget things we know well-like a locker combination.
- **Finished already?** Although most teachers will let you hand a test in early, it's usually a good idea to spend any extra time checking over your work. You also can add details that you may not have thought you'd have time for. On the other hand, if you have 5 minutes until the bell rings and you're still writing, wind up whatever you're working on without panicking.

L	Leave the hard ones for last
E	Erase and fix your answers when checking your work
A	Add details to your paragraphs to make them more interesting
R	Read and reread to dig out answers you need
N	Never give up, and do your best!!

These tips should help most people, but some can get serious **test-taking terror**. If you're one of them, you may need to talk to a parent, teacher, or counselor for help.

Good luck!

http://kidshealth.org/teen/home/work/tips/testing_tips.html

An Untapped Secret Force to *Stop Bullying* Page 5

We all know that bullying, which has become a national epidemic, is being addressed by school districts, individual schools, parents' groups, religious organizations, the media, and even government policy makers. Most of the focus has been on the child who is the target of the bullying and on the bully himself—understanding the personalities and needs of each, providing assertiveness and social skills training for the victim, and helping the bully develop empathy, legitimate power, and true friendship.



However, there are other players who have been ignored in the bullying dramas that play out in schools and playgrounds; the vast majority of children who may be aware that a peer is being targeted and yet do nothing to stop it.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTS ABOUT BULLYING:

- It has been estimated that **75% - 90%** of students report having been a victim of a bully at some point during their childhood and **15%** of students are severely traumatized by peer abuse.
- Children report a higher incidence of bullying than is indicated by adults, suggesting that much of the bullying occurs under the radar of adult awareness.
- Experts in the field believe that the bully derives much pleasure and satisfaction from his cruel behavior through earning the admiration, and sometimes fear, of his peers.

Children can come up with many reasons to avoid owning any responsibility for hurtful things that might be happening to another child:

"The bully is my friend"

"It is not my problem."

"She (the target) is not my friend."

"He's a loser."

"He deserved to be bullied. He asked for it."

"Being bullied will toughen him up."

"Who wants to be called a snitch or rat?"

"It's too big a pain."

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BE DIFFICULT BY:

Modeling: Children do not magically learn morality, kindness, or decency. They mature into decent and responsible people by being treated respectfully and with empathy by the adults important to them.

Talking about the ethics of speaking up: It is helpful to discuss with your children the issues involved with speaking up. During these talks, parents need to show empathy by listening to their children's concerns and fears about taking a stand.

Give children chances to practice being a witness: Encourage your child to display acts of kindness and empathy toward family members, friends, and even pets.

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/o5snu6h>

CO-PARENTING TIPS FOR DIVORCED PARENTS: SETTING HURT AND ANGER ASIDE



The key to co-parenting is to focus on your children — and your children only. It means that your own emotions — any anger, resentment, or hurt must take a back seat to the needs of your children. Admittedly, setting aside such strong feelings may be the hardest part of learning to work cooperatively with your ex, but it's also perhaps the most vital. Co-parenting is not about your feelings, or those of your ex-spouse, but rather about your child's happiness, stability, and future well-being.

Separate feelings from behavior

It's okay to be hurt and angry, but your feelings don't have to dictate your behavior. Instead, let what's best for your kids — you working cooperatively with the other parent — motivate your actions.

Children in the middle

You may never completely lose all of your resentment or bitterness about your break up, but what you can do is compartmentalize those feelings and remind yourself that they are your issues, not your child's. Resolve to keep your issues with your ex away from your children.

Aim for consistency

It's healthy for children to be exposed to different perspectives and to learn to be flexible, but they also need to know they're living under the same basic set of expectations at each home. Aiming for consistency between your home and your ex's avoids confusion for your children.

For more co-parenting tips go to: <http://tinyurl.com/nn7vntu>

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<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

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