

LITTLE BY LITTLE, INCH BY INCH

Fun: Enjoy your kids and keep their brains going.

Food: Make positive changes, little by little.

Fitness: Increase your movement, and see progress inch by inch.

When wondering if your family measures up...

Don't compare yourself to someone else! Let others challenge you, but don't compare.

"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

Each one of us:

- is unique
- is in a different season of life
- has a different background
- has different needs and goals

Ellen Galinsky "Ask the Children Survey" - interviewed over 1,000 children in grades 3-12.

When asked, "What one thing would you change about the way your parents work affects you?" they responded that they wanted their parents to be "less tired and less stressed." In most of the questions, when they graded their parents, the parents did pretty well, averaging around a "B." Parents were especially great at making their children feel important.

Biggest weakness? Anger management. Parents received C, D, or F. It was the worst grade on the report card. Author concluded that children are suffering from second hand stress. Better if we were less frantic, took more breaks planned fewer outings, made parental sanity a higher priority, and, might I add, put God first and walked in His ways.

How would your children grade you? Let's not compare our activities with our neighbors; let's just imagine being our child for a day and having to deal with *us* as parents. Would we be relaxed, comfortable, confident, and would we experience parents who are seeking to please God first?

Most of our lives are consumed with the mundane tasks of life: laundry, cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, exercising...

My encouragement: Have FUN in the day-to-day tasks with your Children

FIVE WAYS TO MAKE YOUR SUMMER MORE ENJOYABLE!

1. Establish a Daily Routine.

- Start with a morning routine.
 - one for yourself
 - one for your kids: Print it out for your children so they know exactly what's expected of them.
- Consider a weekly routine.

Idea found online

- Make it **Monday** (crafts, creations, creativity)
- Time To Read **Tuesday** (library day, reading time, fun activities or projects related to books and learning)
- Wet and Wild **Wednesday** (anything water related; could be a water activity or game, or learning about how water works)
- Thoughtful **Thursday** (do something nice for someone else)
- Fun **Friday** (time to have some fun)

2. Have a system for rewarding and encouraging good behavior.

Do your young ones fight more in the summer? Do you find them needing extra chores or just see your house is messier because there's more happening in it? Find a system that helps maintain your sanity!

Popsicle Sticks/Pom Poms

- Have a jar labeled for each child (could just use a sticker coded jar)
- Add a popsicle stick for good actions. (clean the bathroom, sweep the floor, finish your assigned chores with a happy attitude, let them come up with ideas to earn some...). The children love putting the popsicle stick in.
- Have a simple award system. Earn 25 or 30 or ? and get rewarded: date night with Mom or Dad, earn an item they really want at the store (something you were going to buy anyway)
- Another approach: list character traits you are working on (respect, obedience, happy attitude, clean room, honesty, hard work, manners) and earn one stick each day for having that attitude.

3. Make time for learning.

I taught for 8 years before having children. Seemed to notice a trend in some parents. They weren't interested in working with their kids over the summer on any math facts or anything "school" related. What happened? Their kids came back to school and had to almost relearn many of the things they had already nearly mastered. A little extra effort on the parents' part would have greatly benefited their children. I'm thankful to have met many parents since then with a different outlook--challenging children to make the most of their summers!

a. Math

Up to the time when your children have math facts memorized (up through multiplication and division and then even fractions), make math facts a priority. *Always make Math and Reading a priority. You can't go wrong! Your children (and their teachers) will thank you later.*

Math: XtraMath.org (great for math facts)

Preschool through first grade: Starfall.com

b. Reading

Start the day with the Bible. Read before breakfast, during breakfast, or after breakfast. But read. It's powerful. Proverbs lends itself to great discussions.

Read aloud. Memory of mom reading to us every night, often nodding off while reading, crying at the sad parts, laughing at the fun parts.

Library. List of books in *Honey for a Child's Heart* by Gladys Hunt

- Help them include a variety in their choices. (biography, non-fiction, series books, personal choices). Guide them and peruse the books they are about to check out.

c. Memorize things with them. Great activity for the car/van.

- Bible verses (A, B, C plans)
- Days of the week
- Months of the year
- Books of the Bible
- Address and phone number
- Hymns
- States and Capitals
- Presidents
- Character Traits
- Poems (Isaac Watts)

- d. Use Technology wisely.
- Establish your purpose for using it.
 - Establish a limit.
 - Use it as a reward for good behavior.
 - What's your daily limit for your kids? 30 minutes? 60? Some days will be different. But in your mind, set a goal. Just like you limit your kids' diet of certain items, do the same with their mental diet.

4. Eat energizing food. Make positive changes little by little.

- Cut up veggies in the morning, and put them on an easy access tray for the fridge.
- Fruit bowl on the table.
- Skip the WHITES. flour, sugar, rice. Substitute for whole grains, brown rice, honey or agave, maple syrup.
- Eat a salad every day.
- Make smoothies together. Kids love drinking them when they've added the greens and the frozen fruit.
- Drink water.

5. Move.

- a. Increase your movement, and see progress **inch by inch**.
Seeing Mom exercise is very powerful!
- b. Take walks with your kids. "Change it up"
- Bring a snack
 - Stop at a fun spot (pond, gazebo)
 - Walk (or drive) to a different park
 - Look for things along the way.
 - Teach them about different kinds of trees, leaves
 - Observe!
- c. Minute to win it. (A quick google/pinterest search will give you lots of ideas!)
- d. Increase your activity.
Get enough steps in. Do you know how many steps you take every day? The recommendation is 10,000 per day. Average is 5-6,000. I found that I need to take a few walks every day in order to get to the goal. I also find myself walking while talking on the phone, parking further away, and climbing the stairs more often.