

Ten Resolutions for Becoming a More Grateful Parent

• BY MADELINE LEVINE

Editor's Note: The following list of resolutions appeared in Madeline Levine's blog and was published in Overloaded and Unprepared: Strategies for Stronger Schools and Healthy Successful Kids, by Denise Pope, Maureen Brown, and Sarah Miles (Jossey-Bass, 2015). It is reprinted here with permission of the author.

I will not do for my child what he can do for himself. This kills motivation and the ability to innovate. Both are missing from too many young people in today's workforce.

I will not do for my child what she can almost do for herself. At one time your child could almost walk. Now she can walk. Enough said.

I will love the child in front of me. Appreciate and be thankful for your child's unique gifts. Children are talented in a multitude of different ways. See your child's particular talents clearly.

I will not push my child to be perfect. Beside genetics, perfectionism is the strongest predictor of clinical depression. Life is full of mistakes, imperfect days, and human failings. Kids need to learn how to cope with these inevitabilities. They (and you) need to be able to feel happiness and gratitude in the face of imperfection.

I will honor the importance of PDF (Playtime, Downtime, and Family Time). Don't overschedule. Kids need time to play, daydream, and just hang out. It's in these precious "between" times that crucial development tasks are accomplished.

I will make sure my child gets a full night's sleep. Kids need between nine and 11 hours a night. Sleep deprivation impairs concentration, memory, and the ability to accurately read emotional cues. It makes kids crabby and compromises their ability to learn.

I will remember that I am a parent, not a CEO. Results are down the line, not at the end of the quarter. This means the occasional "B" or "C" will not break your child's future prospects. Stop catastrophizing. You won't see the final fruits of your parenting until your child is grown and gone.

I will value my own (adult) life. Being a happy, fulfilled, and yes, grateful adult makes you a better parent. It's one of the best gifts you can give your child. It makes adulthood look like something worth striving for.

I will not confuse my needs with my child's needs. This is the most toxic manifestation of overparenting. Get a hobby or a therapist instead.

I will remember the success trajectory is a squiggle... not a straight line. Few of us become successful by simply putting one foot in front of the other. Most of us encounter a multitude of twists, turns, direction changes, and stops on the way to our goals.

Madeline Levine is a practicing psychologist in California and author of four books, including The New York Times bestsellers The Price of Privilege and Teach Your Children Well. She is the cofounder of Challenge Success, a project of the Stanford Graduate School of Education.

