

Sure Fire Ways to Drive Your Family Crazy

A Dad's Perspective

By Dr. Dale Simpson

Too often, I read self-help articles that try to help us act in healthy ways. If you are burned out on the self-help world, you might want to work some of these "tips" to dysfunctional living into your life. Who knows, you could end up on a talk show.

1. Blame your children or the weather or someone for your personal shortcomings. Ignore complaints about you with an explanation or set of "reasons" you had to do what you did. Then, wonder aloud why your children don't seem to take responsibility.

2. Try not to look at unpleasant feelings. Drive them deep within yourself. Practice denial at every turn. Convince yourself that you are being selfish, weak, or having self-pity to focus upon unpleasant feelings. If you are a Christian, tell yourself unpleasant feelings like hurt, anger, and sadness are sin, or at least not very mature or "victorious". Develop shamefulness when thinking of your feelings. Then, when your children or spouse express hurt or anger, ignore it, chastise them, or give them the "how on earth could you feel that?" response. For the Olympic gold medal, say "God doesn't want you to feel that way".

3. Get so busy you don't maintain your marriage and personal care. Remind yourself of the importance of your busy-ness. Get involved in things no one can criticize, like ministry or helping others. Keep telling yourself that it will change "after this next project is finished". Pride yourself on being a hard worker, even when your family must suffer the consequences. Keep thinking that the products of life are more important than the journey or process of life. Hold onto the fact that you have always loved your family and that they should always feel this no matter how you behave.

4. Argue within ear shot of the children. Better yet, when you don't feel close to your mate, indulge one of your children. Make them your emotional contact to replace the closeness you should maintain with your spouse. Follow the marriage example of Abraham and Isaac in the Bible, avoiding marital issues and having unhealthy emotional alliances with a child against the other parent.

5. Point out mostly negative things about others and maintain an identity as a critical person. Ignore how your anger impacts others. Decide after your outbursts that since you are "over it" and you feel better, everything is okay. Act surprised and a bit offended when others still show hurt and express their mistrust of you. Maintain a "victim" role by saying "I just can't ever do anything right. I guess I'm the worst person in the world" in a sarcastic way. When others see your mistakes, quickly criticize them for their mistakes.

6. In your role as parent, feel uncomfortable with your authority. Either feel insecure so you must dominate and act authoritarian, or be afraid of your power to be firm, perhaps because one of your parents was too dominant. Try to scare your kids. Try to reason with them in such a way

they will agree with you all the time. Fail to back up what you say. Get talked out of things frequently. Teach your kids that their will power is stronger than yours.

7. Be inactive with younger children. Give verbal instructions and assume they understand what you are saying. If you're young child is pulling leaves off your potted plant, don't get up and move him; just keep saying "stop doing that". If you do move him and he complains or tries to wiggle out of your grasp, get upset that he is upset and put him down so he can go back to the plant. A variation of this method is the "don't take into account normal child curiosity and exploration" technique. This involves not child proofing your house and instead, deciding that an obedient three-year-old will learn not to touch certain things about which we have instilled fear.

8. Let your spiritual life slide. Enough said.

By developing these character traits and habits, you will surely succeed in making you and your family miserable. As the misery grows, the symptoms will appear in family members. Then be sure to call the psychologist of your choice.

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