



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

Establishing a Foundation for Authentic Self-Esteem, Part 4 FOCUS ON INITIATIVE

A Parent's Guide to Identify • Establish • Develop • Maintain • Remediate a Child's Sense of Initiative

Dear Parent,

Review the CHARACTERISTICS CHART below. Decide which characteristics, if any, describe your child under **usual**, **repeated** circumstances. The results will serve as a guide to determine how to best meet the Self-Esteem and Identity Formation needs of your child.

<p>Characteristics of people who have a <u>basic</u> sense of INITIATIVE:</p> <p>A PERSON WHO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually is a self-starter usually has his/her own ideas of what kinds of things to do and how he/she wants to do them has the inner power or ability to originate something (e.g. plans, tasks, projects, activities, games, etc.) without needing much help from parents, adults, or others assumes responsibility for self follows through to get what is needed in order to complete a project, task, activity, etc. takes pleasure in attacking tasks and conquering assignments aims high does not feel overly guilty when he/she makes a mistake; instead, learns from the mistake and moves on 	<p>Characteristics of people who have a <u>basic</u> sense of GUILT:</p> <p>A PERSON WHO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> repeatedly feels at fault or guilty for offenses -- both real and imagined quick to apologize for happenings or circumstances that he/she is not really responsible for often demonstrates a sense of resignation -- settling for less than what he/she wants or deserves requires repeated suggestions and monitoring from others to start a project, task, etc. needs clearly specified, detailed and directed, repeated instructions experiences anxiety that he/she will not achieve a "favored position" with the significant person involved in the situation (parent/teacher/coach, etc.)
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The positive outcome of the ratio of **INITIATIVE vs. GUILT** produces
DIRECTION as a basic life strength
and
PURPOSE as a basic life virtue.

PARENT PRACTICES that support the growth of INITIATIVE incorporate the following characteristics:

Expose to varied experiences. Model recovery after a mistake. Provide materials / tools /resources related to varied interests.
Encourage "risk taking." Value freedom tempered with responsibility and consequences.
Establish basic standards and deadlines for chores around the home

VALUE PROCESS MORE THAN PRODUCT.

Parent Practices That Support the Growth of INITIATIVE during Elementary School Years (K-8)

A sampling of suggestions by 93 Parents of “Successful” Children include but are not limited to the following parenting practices:

- Limit TV viewing and store-bought toys. Expect your child to make up games and activities and to determine how to use free time to include reading, biking, board games, environmental projects, making greeting cards for relatives, etc.
- Expose the child to a variety of opportunities (dance, music, art, sports, etc.) from which interests may develop. Limit the number of long-term involvements so that your child can experience success and accomplishment in a few areas rather than mediocrity and disappointment in multiple areas.
- Set a time and place to do homework. Help if needed, conscious that it is your child’s responsibility to do age-appropriate work. Do not do school projects for your child. This undermines your child’s sense of initiative and self worth. Do not deliver homework or lunches to school. Let the natural consequences of action and inaction teach your child.
- Let your child overhear you telling another adult how proud you are that your child starts things without needing to be told, i.e., cleaning the bedroom, doing a puzzle, cooking, sorting or folding laundry, art projects, washing dishes, vacuuming, homework, etc.
- Set an example by creating “to do” lists and checking off completed tasks. Help your child to imitate the process by planning out and organizing a time schedule for school projects and personal responsibilities. Initially “walk through” the steps together and work side-by-side. As the year progresses, decrease active presence and help your child to assume leadership for completion of projects. When you assume responsibility for your child’s tasks, you communicate to your child that you believe your child is lacking in some way.
- By Grade 4**, expect your child to demonstrate household initiative in ways that include use of an alarm clock, care of his/her personal bedroom space, hanging clothes, putting soiled clothing in the hamper, hanging bathroom towels on the racks, setting or clearing the dining table, stacking or emptying the dish washer, folding laundry, decorating the house for holidays, etc. Remark on new arrangements or extra care evidenced in an activity.
- By Grade 5**, if your child expresses interest in learning a new skill, i.e., piano, guitar, dance, team sports, etc. set expectations, agree upon conditions, and encourage him/her to begin. Stress the importance of completion or closure with projects. If your child feels the need to reduce the activity load and chooses to quit a team, discuss the most productive way of communicating the decision to the coach and teammates. Your child needs to be the one to communicate the decision.
- By Grade 6** equate weekly allowance with completion of chores and permit your child to spend the money as he/she desires. Pre-determine what kinds of expenditures are the responsibility of your child. Verbally and emotionally support your child’s efforts to earn extra money, i.e., contribute to a garage sale, recycle aluminum cans or bottles for financial redemption, etc. Expect that a portion goes into savings, a portion for charity, and a portion for spending money.
- By Grade 7**, expect your child to negotiate with coaches to confirm games or practices, to settle concerns, or to arrange rides to events if you, the parent, are unable to drive. Explain the need to balance his or her needs with consideration of family needs.
- By Grade 8**, permit more freedom with personal free time. Do not interfere unless your child’s choices de-contribute to the family or cause harm to any person. Within limits that you can accept, allow your child to dress as he or she desires.

Dr. Patricia McCormack, IHM, a former Catholic schoolteacher and catechist, is a formation education consultant, an author of several books as well as the PARENT PARTNERSHIP HANDBOOK feature of *Today’s Catholic Teacher*, and director of **IHM Formative Support for Parents and Teachers**, Arlington, VA. She speaks and writes frequently on topics of child formation. *Reach her at DrPatMcCormack@aol.com.*

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