

Intentional Parenting: Start with the Mega-Picture

Schedule a date night with your husband, pour your wine or coffee and dig in!

- 1. Set life-long character development goals** (this will probably be similar/identical for all your kids).

When your children are adults, what kind of men/women do you want them to be?

- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Faithful
- Passionate about learning
- Loyal
- Etc.

As a parent, these are your most important goals. We often get fixated on the here and now of childhood, but in reality, we are raising adults who will live, play, and work in the adult world. We should be keeping that end-goal in mind, while also protecting their childhood and ensuring that they get the support along the way that they need.

2. Set education goals: What kind of an education do you want them to have had?

What do you consider to be “educated”?

- Fluent in Latin/Spanish
- Familiar with Shakespeare
- Able to problem solve
- Creative
- Work with other members of a team
- Etc.

This is a critical question whether you are homeschooling or not. Your children’s education is ultimately your responsibility, as their parent. If you choose traditional school, recognize that the 25 hours they spend in school each week will not have the same impact as the 143 hours a week they spend out of school. If you choose to homeschool, recognize that education goes beyond the curriculum you purchased, no matter how bright and shiny it is. No matter what official “schooling” your child does, it is only one component of their larger education. A real education incorporates much more than math problems, reading comprehension, and science experiments.

3. Set goals for your relationship with them.

When they talk about their Mom to their friends as adults, what do you want them to say? (Dads would answer this about themselves as a Dad.)

- She is fun and loves going on outdoor adventures.
- She cooks the most amazing food and loved teaching me how to cook.
- She loves reading and read her favorite books to me.
- She loves visiting museums and we went to every single museum in the town we lived in.

This one is critical to us mothers because our schedules should reflect how we want our children to see us, and often they don't. Don't believe me? How much time do you spend doing laundry and cleaning the house every day? If your goal is NOT for your child to say, "she kept our house really clean and spent hours every day cleaning," then maybe you should look at how you are spending your time, if you are spending it cleaning. (I am not advocating for living in a pigsty, just recognizing that your children will probably not remember that fondly.) As it pertains to Dads, does your schedule reflect your priorities? Would your children say that they are a priority? Or would they say sports, lawn work, poker night, etc.?

4. Set family goals: What kind of family culture do you want?

We are a family that loves to:

- Travel
- National Parks
- Sports
- Scouting
- Music
- Art
- Etc.

Before we have children, we often have beautiful, grandiose ideas of what our family will be like and what traditions we will have- Saturday pancake breakfast, hiking every weekend, reading the classics aloud before bedtime, etc. But then we start having children, and it feels like a major accomplishment to get dinner on the table. Those big ideas get lost in the mountain of laundry. At some point, we look at our families and realize that this is not what we had wanted for our families. But..... dinner needs to be cooked, socks need to be washed, and those great ideas seem unattainable. What's the solution? We have to be intentional with our time. You have 936 Saturdays between when your child is born and their 18th birthday. Make each one count.