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Raising "Advantaged" Kids – (An everyday, ordinary mother and her guide to teaching)

By Beverly Jean Ballard

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by: **Beverly Jean Ballard**

As a mother of 2 – a 4-year old and an 18-year old, it was important to me that I give my my children all that I have to offer as far as education (I don't have much...a high school diploma and 1 year of college). So, for me, I had to become creative in my efforts to give my children "the edge" in school and eventually in life. I've always had a mind set that I would not leave "schooling" totally up to the teachers. It started with my first born. Before he could talk, I would recite the alphabets and count to 10, constantly. I knew that somewhere, in the back of that tiny little mind, that the information was being stored for later use. Before reached the age of 2, like my second born, he too could say his A-B-C(s). My second born also learned to recognize as well as say them and later, I will explain why. My 18-year old could also count to 50. By the time he began preschool, he could recognize small words (I would read to him often and as I read, I would point to each word and say them aloud). When he spoke "broken" English, I would always correct him. As a child in school, I loved English and it was fun teaching hi the correct noun/verb usage. Even now, his favorite subject is English and he's always made excellent marks in this area. He is an excellent and very creative writer. He, of course, already knew colors and shapes as well. After discovering all that my child knew, his preschool teacher said to me, and I quote "I'm just dumbfound". She assured me that he would be placed with the best teacher when he started kindergarten. And so it was the entire time he went through primary school, his teachers always made sure that he was placed with teachers that would keep him motivated and from being bored. The times he did get into trouble was when the other children asked for his help and he'd stop to help them and/or give them answers and the teachers would tell him that it's their jobs to do that. The year he began kindergarten, his teacher later asked if she could meet with me. She told me that she gave the children an assignment o get magazines (stacked on her shelf) and to cut pictures out of them and paste them on construction paper to make a collage. Well, my son did something differently. He brought the magazine to the teacher and began reading an article out of it! Mind you, these were adult reading magazines such as USA Today, People, Ebony, etc. She had him tested and we found out that he could read on a 3rd grade level. When he was 4, we had a small family gathering. My son sat on the floor with pencil and paper writing his name...in cursive! My sister-in-law could not believe he eyes. She wanted to know how he learned to do that and I said just a little time

spent with him and he "caught on". I remember once going to my sister-in-law's house and waiting in the car until she arrived home from work. I took that opportunity to teach him the alphabets of the American Sign Language (ASL) for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. In about 20 minutes, that kid had it "down pat". You may ask yourself how can they learn and retain knowledge at such a young age? Well, I have always believed the experts about children gaining the bulk of knowledge between ages 1 – 5. The more you allow them to use those brain cells, the more active they become in gaining and retaining knowledge and it continues even into later years. It really didn't take much of an effort at all. Whenever I see street signs, I make my child spell the sign and then I tell him to say the word. Then later, I ask him does he remember how to spell a certain word and usually he does. It's become like second nature to me. For my 4-year old, even with grocery items, I ask him to point to the letter and say the sound of each letter and try to think what the word says. He has gotten really good with that. My 18-year old never made anything except straight "A"(s) in school (between 1st and 6th grades), honest!

Now, my 4-year old, I have to admit, may be a tad bit smarter than my 18-year old at his age. He enunciates every word and talks quite proper. I overheard one of his neighborhood children tell my son "Dang man, you talk like a nerd"! In teaching him, this time, I took a slightly different approach by using visuals, which is why he learned to say AND recognize his A-B-C(s). I went to Wal-Mart and purchased some laminated mats. One mat has the A-B-C(s) with corresponding animals/objects that began with those letters; another one has the planets, the map of the US, the presidents and money. He can now count well past 100. He learned the planets, Pledge of Allegiance, all the months, all the days of the week, his name, address (city, state & zip), his phone number, his birthdate (month, day & year) all before he turned 2 years old. He has now become familiar with the location of many of the states on the map and he recognizes about 27 presidents and their names. He has some cards that I also purchased that are about 2 1/2 by 3 1/2 that have pictures of animals and objects on them. Each card has a letter at the bottom of it. In order to spell the word of the animal or object correctly, he has to "piece" the 3 cards together (like a puzzle). I then make him say what the picture is, point to each letter and say the sound of that letter and then pronounce the word again for emphasis. It works! He now can spell several 3-letter words and some 4 & 5-letter words (learned from road signs) because he remembers the pictures in his head and in what order the letters on those pictures appear.

They become like elephants...they don't forget. Mind you, I'm just an ordinary, every-day mother but trying to do extra-ordinary things for my kids! Any mother or father can do the same. It really boosts the child's morale and makes them want to learn more. It's a "feel good" for the parent as well. My next step is to teach my 4-year old simple phrases in different languages (French & Spanish). My 4-year old loves to hear me read to him. I make reading exciting and although he doesn't quite know how to read every book he has (some are for 2nd, 3rd & 4th grade readers), I find him reading them the way I read them to him...with strong expressions and emphasis and he can just about quote those books verbatim.

By the way, my 18-year old received a full academic scholarship to attend a junior high, college preparatory school. He now attends the U of M to get a bachelor's degree in Business Management. He's interested in taking courses also in the music industry. I have even bigger plans for my 4-year old! My mom always chuckles when she hears me say "That's going to be my Ivy-League baby"!

My name is Beverly Ballard and I am a single, black, mother of 2 – a 4–year old preschooler and an 18–year old college student. I live in Memphis, TN. I only have a high school diploma and one year of college.

Raising Happy Diabetic Kids Part III Help Your Child Develop Self–Control

By Russell Turner

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This is the third and final article in a series I wrote about raising happy diabetic kids. While Juvenile Diabetes makes this job tougher the information in these articles applies to raising any child. Diabetic children aren't any different from other children. Their pancreas just doesn't work. However, the emotional toll that diabetes takes on a child, even when blood glucose levels are under fairly good control, must be taken into account whenever we consider what is best for them. We can be very helpful in raising children who are emotionally strong and better able to avoid and overcome these stresses brought on by diabetes by making sure they are raised with a strong foundation of these three basic life skills. Self–Confidence, Self–Reliance, and Self–Control.

It All Starts With Discipline:

In order for our children to develop self–control it is our responsibility to teach them discipline. Discipline is the part of raising our children that causes us the most sleeplessness. It's probably also the part that a lot of parents don't think they get quite right. The thoughts of the "experts" have changed so much that the "old fashioned" discipline we were taught and what has become the so–called "permissive" new tradition are so far apart several things generally happen. We ignore what we were taught, or we ignore the new conventional wisdom, or we become confused and don't carry out our responsibilities properly. I'm as guilty of this confusion from time to time as anybody else is. When you think about it discipline should have three goals.

It must pave the way for our children to acquire Self-Control or self-discipline.

It must be applied in such a way as to allow our children to also develop self–confidence and self–reliance.

Parents must be comfortable with implementing it and feel it works.

The old fashioned "thou shalt not" style discipline and the new permissive style lead to two completely different outcomes in children. With the old fashioned style we end up with children who don't learn to make choices or decisions well for themselves. They find acceptance only if they "do as they are told" and it teaches them in turn to exert power and control over others. On the other hand with a permissive style of discipline our children have too many choices and never know where they really stand. This can lead to insecurity. (and low self–esteem) Our children get used to having their own way and they learn to negotiate and manipulate. We only step in when the behavior goes too far. It always goes too far, they're kids.

How To Develop Self–Control:

By raising our children within a framework of proper discipline we encourage self–control in them. We aren't going to be the boss forever. We are teaching our children to be responsible for themselves. There are three main components to Self–Control. They are habit (hanging up their coat when they come in or doing homework before watching TV), seeing the greater good (doing without something right now in order to get something better later), and the ability to make moral judgments (doing things

just because it's the right thing to do). We need to teach our children to think ahead about the consequences of their actions. They should also be taught to accept responsibility for what they do. They need to be taught to make proper rules and to stick to them.

Our kids need to learn to accept disappointment. And also to trust their own judgment. When children learn to see what needs to be done, stick with it until it is done, and not do it just because someone told them to or because they know it will make us happy, then we can pat ourselves on the back.

This is our goal in teaching our children good diabetes control. It will help them realize not only that they have to do it but that they should do it. We as parents of diabetic children have been entrusted with a very difficult and special task. By holding up our end of the responsibility for helping our children develop self–confidence, self–reliance, and self–control, we are preparing them to grow into adults that number one can and will take proper care of their health. And will in turn raise the next generation of happy kids, our grandchildren.

Russell Turner is the father of a 10 year old Type 1 diabetic daughter. After diagnosis he found all kinds of medical information about diabetes on the internet. What he couldn't find was information about how to prepare his child and family to live with this disease. He started a website for parents of newly diagnosed diabetic children <http://mychildhasdiabetes.com>

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