



Becoming Productive Parents

“Love is at the root of everything. All learning, all parenting, all relationships. Love or the lack of it.”-Fred Rogers

For the first two years of your child’s life, your primary role as a parent is to nurture your child. Around age two, your role expands to more formally include the element of authority in your parenting. At this point, with love as your foundation, you begin to teach personal responsibility—helping your child learn that you are the loving leader of your home, that there are family rules set in place to help guide her and keep her safe, and that her choices have consequences.

You now have a three-year-old child. The next two years are key to your becoming a “Productive Parent.” As part of the authority stage, you must amp up your teaching of personal responsibility by continually modeling, explaining, and enforcing family rules, by continually teaching that choices have consequences, and by introducing your child to the concept of a work ethic.

Mr. Rogers taught that it is important “to give [children] everything that we possibly can to help them grow in healthy ways.”¹ Kindly teaching your children personal responsibility as you give them reasonable boundaries and opportunities to learn from their choices is one important way to help your child grow in healthy ways.

When your child enters school, you invite outside influences, by necessity, into your family and your child’s life. There is a lot of adjusting that your child has to cope with during the next two years. Productive Parents establish home as their child’s “safe harbor” and prepare him for coping with the outside world. During months 36 through 59, KinderKronicle will share ideas and principles to help you become Productive Parents. 

1. <https://interviews.televisionacademy.com/interviews/fred-rogers>

Family Hour®

*A special message from Vibert Kesler,
Executive Director, Begin with the Children*



Family Hour is, in my opinion, the most important family leadership gift productive parents can give to themselves and their children. Why? Because Family Hour becomes a key family leadership forum as your child grows up. Whether you call it Family Hour, Family Night, Family Time, or something else, just doing it is what counts. Family Hour says to all—our family is important. Here is why I so believe:

The year was 1963. In the fall of that year, my wife, Marilyn, and I made a momentous decision that impacted our lives and that of our children and grandchildren. At the time, I was working full time and attending graduate school in the evening. My wife retired from teaching school to stay home with our two little girls, ages three and 18 months. The girls had lots and lots of Mom time, but very little time with Dad.

After much thought and discussion, we decided that once a week we would have a Family Hour with, and for, our children. We chose a consistent night for this hour together. Nothing was to interfere with this planned and structured hour. With the tender ages of the girls, and Dad with two more years of graduate school, those first two years of Family Hours served as a time of refuge from the outside world. Our two young girls looked forward to that weekly Family Hour with huge anticipation. They would get so excited it was hard for them to contain their enthusiasm.

Over the years, we were blessed with four more girls and then two boys. For 35 years, we held weekly Family Hours. I estimate we met for 1,800 to 2,000 Family Hours. While we missed a few of those weekly Family Hours through the years, the practice had become an institution in the Kesler household. Once each week, every member of the family “put family first” at the same time for one hour. Here are a few things we did during our Family Hours.

- We taught our children noble values and virtues.
- We had activities and played games—often games or activities where we expressed love for each other.
- Occasionally, and I emphasize occasionally, as the children got older, we’d go to a movie, to a restaurant, or on an outing. However, we never let these non-lesson, outside-the-home Family Hours

become dominant! In any event, the hour was preplanned, usually a week or two in advance, so that our time together would be organized, fun, and productive.

- Always, every family member participated. For example, someone would lead us in a song—usually a children’s song or, if it was near a holiday, a special song, such as singing Christmas carols in December—someone prepared a treat, someone offered a prayer, someone gave the lesson, and someone was in charge of the game or activity.
- We found that when the whole family was involved, the lessons learned stuck with our children, and we have stayed close to each other over the years.
- Before holidays, our Family Hour would give special recognition of that particular holiday. For example, if a Family Hour took place near Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and/or President’s Day, we might have a lesson about the lives of those men. A Family Hour held on Memorial Day might take place in the cemetery, or involve a celebration of the life of a deceased relative. July 4th might have a patriotic theme—you get the idea.



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MY PROMISE TO YOU

As Family Hour becomes a tradition in your family, you'll think of ways to incorporate themes, holidays, activities, and values that are important to you into your weekly time together in a fun and connection-building way.

Lest the reader conclude that raising eight children to be honorable, upright contributors to society was a leisurely walk in the park because we held our weekly Family Hour, be not misled! We had our challenges. However, since Family Hour had become an institution in their lives, it was a very beneficial parenting forum for communicating a common morality of core family values. Oh, how helpful it was during those tumultuous teenage years when other influences, such as TV, peers, drugs, sex, and social media, threatened to pull them away from our family's core values.

Family Hour is no panacea guaranteeing positive results. However, for us, it was an important "family institution" that had a very beneficial impact in the lives of our children. As I reflect back from the vantage point of 40+ years, our Family Hour decision was momentous. For that reason, I hope that I and KinderKronicle can convince you to hold a weekly Family Hour. As parents, we started when our oldest child was age 3. If you haven't started holding Family Hour already—please do it now! It's worth the effort—I guarantee it.

In Month 24, we recommended that you start holding Family Hour—and in our Parent Resource Store Family Hour helps became available.

During the upcoming year, KinderKronicle will have articles focusing on involving your three-year-old in the lessons. Remember, your

lessons can be on a wide range of topics—they can be spiritual lessons, helping you to teach your child what your family believes. They can be ethical or moral lessons—learning about friendship, practicing sharing, talking about good choices and bad choices, or doing service for other people. They can even be practical—you might practice eating neatly with utensils or demonstrate proper bathroom behaviors.

If your three-year-old has older siblings, you'll need to adapt Family Hour to their ages. When our youngest son was born, our oldest daughter was almost 18, so sometimes it could be challenging to engage everyone at once. But we did it, and so can you! Part of the fun for parents is watching the older siblings grow closer to the younger ones as they help teach them.

The point is to spend time together and to learn as you do so. Family Hour lessons need not be a lecture—in fact, that will probably take all the fun out of it. Instead, get your whole family involved and engaged in the lesson and activity. Use the time to cuddle with each other, talk to each other, listen to each member of the family's ideas. Your little one probably won't have deep and profound ideas on every subject yet, but she still has something to contribute. When you take the time to fully engage with each other, you draw closer to each other and are better able to learn from each other. If you have more than one child, over the years you'll be amazed as the different personalities of your children surface during their Family Hour participation. 

Vibert



The Kesler Family

Child Chatter:

Why do I want you to know about developmental milestones?



Child: Hi Mom and Dad! Can you believe that I'm already three years old? The time went by pretty fast!

Parent: It sure did—I'm pretty sure you were only born yesterday!

Child: It sure feels like it! But really, I've been growing by leaps and bounds, and I know it's sometimes hard to keep up with what I'm learning and what you can expect from me.

Parent: Does it really matter if I know much about child development? I mean, I can certainly tell you are growing and changing, after all.

Child: That's true, but actually, knowing about child development can help a lot! When you know what I'm capable of, what I am learning right now, and what you can expect from the developmental stage I'm in, it helps me to grow properly and it helps you to know when I'm struggling.

Parent: Okay, I can see that. I guess if I know what milestones you should be hitting around your

age, then it might be easier to tell if you are on track, or if you need extra help.

Child: Exactly! After all, you spend so much time with me, and the pediatrician spends very little. The doctor won't know if I need help with something if you can't tell her!

Parent: Are there any other reasons that learning about child development is helpful?

Child: Oh yes, there are lots of other reasons why knowing about child development is a good thing. For example, it helps you to set realistic expectations for me and it helps you be patient with me. After all, if you know that impulse control doesn't fully kick in until I'm a bit older, then you're less likely to be frustrated with me when I do something I know I'm not supposed to do. Instead, you're more likely to help me make better choices until I'm capable of making those choices on my own. You'll still teach me, of course, but you won't be so frustrated because your expectations will be more realistic.

Parent: That makes sense. And I suppose knowing what types of things you are probably capable of can help me know what skills to work with you on, too, right?

Child: Exactly! So, when you know that I need to be talked to and read to, right from the beginning, you are more likely to set aside time to do that, so my brain can build the neural pathways it needs to help me learn better when I get older. Or, if you know I have good manual dexterity now, then you are more likely to help me figure out how to dress myself, so I can take another step toward being independent.

Parent: So, am I failing you if I don't know everything about normal child development?

Child: Of course not! No parent knows everything about children. I'm just saying that knowing more about child development can help us work together, so you can help me learn and grow in a healthy, happy, safe environment. I really appreciate the time you take to learn more about how to help me. It definitely helps make this "growing up" thing a little less scary! 

Editor's Note: If you are unsure of what makes up typical development or what milestones your child should be hitting for her age, you can ask your pediatrician. For references online, here are some reputable sites to visit dealing with normal child development and milestones:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

The American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/Pages/default.aspx>
Zero to Three: <https://www.zerotothree.org/early-learning/ages-and-stages>

NEXT ISSUE- MONTH 37 LOOK FOR THESE EXCITING FEATURES AND ARTICLES

- **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices**
- **Parenting Affects the Whole Family**
- **Serving others Contributes to Happiness**

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