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Health Matters

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Therapist of the Month: Sharon Semrad MCP, LPC

Sharon Semrad is a Licensed Professional Counselor candidate. She graduated in 2007 from Northwestern Oklahoma State University with a Master of Counseling Psychology. She has extensive experience in grief therapy as well as crisis intervention, and a strong knowledge of domestic violence and the cycle of abuse.

When not assisting her various clients, Sharon enjoys spending time with her husband, Lee, and daughter, Mary Christine.



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How to Have Fun and Be a Parent

Parenting is supposed to be fun. Note I said, “supposed to be fun.” I am fully aware, that it is not always fun, but sometimes it is us as parents that make it not fun. In other words, if you are finding yourself as a parent, not having fun, then you need to keep reading.

The first step in making parenting fun is to have a healthy dose of empathy. I said empathy, not sympathy. The difference is simple, sympathy is feeling sorry for someone, empathy is feeling sorry with someone. Hence, when we have empathy for our children, we honestly try to feel what they are feeling. Let’s say your child has breached a rule of the household and the logical consequence you set up was being grounded. Well, the school dance is coming up and they are going to miss it. That stinks! That is very sad. Can you put yourself in their shoes and realize that this is a tough situation. It does not mean that as a parent, we do not need to stay with the grounding, we just need to understand and give empathy that we know it stinks for them. However, it was their action that caused the consequence. Now, this does not need to be pointed out to the child, they are smart and will figure these things out. We just need to give them the empathy.

The second part of making parenting fun is to stop the arguing. The simplest way to stop the arguing is to not participate in the argument. Therefore, we need to have some handy one liners ready to use when they begin to argue. I like “I love you too much to argue” and “probably so.” There are others, but whatever you use, that becomes the only reply you will give. I have said many times, that the only thing worse than finding yourself arguing with your child, is to find yourself arguing with your child and losing. The fact is you lose the argument the moment you become angry. Many parents end the argument by yelling louder than their child. This is not a good thing and does not make parenting fun. Using the one liners and not participating in the argument, leaves you in control and does not set up a win/lose situation. Instead it sets up a win, win situation.

Now on occasion a child may choose to try to lure you into an argument by yelling at you. When they do this a simple one line consequence is all that is needed. In a calm voice, the parent needs to say, “You need to go to your room and when you can talk as calm as I am then you may come out.” If the child is feeling particularly belligerent, and refuses to go to their room, then say, “That’s okay, I have changed my mind, you stay here and I will go to my room.” Then remove yourself from the presence of your child.

Again, these are the first steps for making parenting fun. Your children will not really like these changes, but trust me you will. If you use them, then you will be closer to making parenting fun again. Look for more tips to make parenting fun again in future newsletters. I would love to say that these ideas originate with me, but they do not. They come from Love and Logic Parenting, a parenting method that has transformed my own household.



Goal Setting: How to Turn it From a Wish to a Reality

Everyone says they have goals; but do they really? Maybe your goal is to be rich and or famous. Maybe it is to get down to your high school weight. Maybe it is to become a V.P. of your company. These are well and good but attaining something along these lines is the same as driving from your house to Los Angeles: there are many ways you can go but not all are the best or will get you there in the time or shape you want to be in. Studies show only about 40% of New Year’s resolutions are fulfilled and of those, 17% took 6 or more tries to reach their goal.

A genuine goal has a few components that are necessary for it to be legitimate. First, the desired outcome has to be important to you or the person with the goal. If it is not something they personally want, it most likely will not happen. That person does not have buy in and will not put in the effort or may even sabotage the process. Going to college is a common goal but may be only avoid going to work, its what the parents want or not having any real personal goal at the time. Some confuse going to college as being the same as graduating from college.

Secondly it has to be realistic and attainable. Wishing to be taller is not a goal. That is unless buying lifts and bringing back platform shoes is on your agenda. Do you really want to climb Mt. Everest or just have some adventure and feel the rush? There are probably several more local ways to achieve that and not have to hire a sherpa or get a passport to Nepal.

A third aspect is goals have to be measurable. Break them down into smaller manageable actions and then evaluate and adjust as you go along. One of my favorite queries is “How do you eat an elephant? One spoonful at a time.” To stay involved and motivated, especially on something that may take an extended period of time to do, You need to have guidepost and markers that show you are accomplishing things. Think semester grades, weekly weigh ins and yearly job evaluations. Take these discreet portions of your goal and see how you are measuring up to your overall goal. In this process you are re-evaluating your effort, modifying your objectives and deciding if the initial goal still has meaning and is worth continuing.

So you have decided to develop a goal, its important to you and you are ready to start. How do you go about it?

1. Break up your goal into chunks. Figure out what tools, equipment, supplies, supports you will need. Cut up that elephant into bite size chunks. This also includes objectives. These are the smaller steps that you will take and accomplish towards the larger goal. A goal is the destination and the objectives are how you will get there.
2. Write down your goals. There is something almost magical about putting things down on paper. Post it where you can see it often. It is a concrete example of your plan, a reminder of it and a contract with yourself that you have committed to your goal.
3. Track your progress. Keep a log, make a chart, have people that you check in with often. You keep motivated by getting and seeing feedback that you are progressing.
4. Stay committed. Good things come to those who wait. Actually good things come to those that work hard, stay focused and keep their eye on the prize.

Good luck with your goals. Be honest with and supportive of your self.

-Matt Nelson, MCP, LPC