

## ***Are My Kids on Track?***

### ***The 12 Emotional Social and Spiritual Milestones Your Child Needs to Reach***

by Sissy Goff, MED, LPC-MHSP; David Thomas, LMSW; and Melissa Trevathan, MRE

It is easy to track physical milestones and academic milestones in your child's development. Our culture has given us resources to track these developmental milestones easily—at the doctor, with teachers, even with other parents. However, what about emotional, social and spiritual milestones? We have little information on how to help our children develop these skills. This book breaks down four emotional milestones, four social milestones, and four spiritual milestones that our children should be working toward. Each chapter includes stumbling blocks and building blocks of reaching the milestone that are unique for boys and girls. It also includes practical ways to help build these characteristics in your child.

#### **Chapter 1: Emotional Vocabulary**

Emotional Vocabulary is the ability to read and articulate our own emotions as well as the emotions of others.

Practical ideas for building emotional vocabulary:

- Feelings chart placed in places throughout your home
- Books and movies that are rich in emotional content
- Conversation  
Allow emotional vocabulary to become more a part of conversation. Reflect emotions by using statements like, “It seems like you’re feeling...”. Have a person name a feeling that they had throughout the day during dinner conversations. Name one positive emotion and one negative emotion.
- Role-play  
When playing with children, pretend to be sick, hurt, or scared and observe how they react. Validate use of feelings words or respond with empathy.
- Art  
Allow your child to draw what they are feeling when they are unable to express his or her emotion.
- Resources for girls:
  - *Raising Girls* by Sissy Goff and Melissa Trevathan
  - *The Curse of the Good Girl* by Rachel Simmons
- Resources for boys:
  - *Wild Things* by David Thomas and Stephen James
  - *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* by Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson
- Play Games:
  - “How would you feel if...”
  - The Ungame
  - Table Topics

## **Chapter 2: Perspective**

Perspective allows us to understand what is going on inside and around us. Self-regulation is what allows us to have perspective. When we can regulate our emotions, we can have perspective of what is going on inside and around us.

Practical ideas for building perspective:

- **Pain scale**  
Print off a pain chart. Talk about how doctors use this to help understand a patient's level of pain. Train them how to use this scale to measure their feelings and figure out the difference between a level 2 sad and a level 9 sad.
- **List**  
Have your child make a list of practices or coping skills that he or she can use when needing to work through a feeling. Practice these when emotions are not elevated.
- **Create a space**  
After your child makes a list, work together to make these more natural in elevated moments.
- **Update the list** if your child is not using one of the options on the list and add new ideas for regulating emotions.

## **Chapter 3: Empathy**

Responding with empathy comes more naturally for some than for others. We can teach our children to strengthen empathy muscles to allow them to think more of others than themselves.

Practical ideas for building empathy:

- **Gratitude**  
Have your children write thank-you letters to those who invest in their lives.
- **Family meetings**  
Hold family meetings to discuss important decisions, evaluate daily life together, and share ideas on stewardship and giving.
- **Energy drain**  
When your child is arguing with a sibling or with you over an issue, you can simply look them in the eyes and say, "This argument is draining the energy right out of me. You'll need to give that energy back to me..." Then have them "give back" by taking on a task you needed to do (folding laundry, taking out the garbage, etc.).
- **Compassion**  
Consider sponsoring a child through an organization like Compassion International or Justice and Mercy International. Your child will have an opportunity to write letters, send and receive photos, and explore another culture.

## **Chapter 4: Resourcefulness**

We all encounter roadblocks in life. Some kids see a roadblock and think, “I’m going to figure out how to get over, under, around, or through that wall.” Other kids think, “I’ll never get around that wall. I might as well lie down in the road and surrender.” Whatever the roadblock, the goal is to help kids creatively cope with the difficulties they face and the emotions that accompany them.

Practical ideas for building resourcefulness:

- Ask Questions:
  - What do you want to see happen?
  - What do you think would help?
  - What would you like to do about that?
  - What do you think God would want you to do?
  - What does your heart tell you?
- Encourage  
Find one way that your child has been resourceful and encourage him or her in it.
- Goal chart  
Help your child create a goal and identify steps to reach that goal.
- Talk  
At dinner, have everyone identify one way that they are proud of themselves.
- Ownership  
Allow your child to take over one thing that you do (make lunch, wake up on his or her own, etc.).

## **Chapter 5: Awareness**

Awareness is foundational to relationships. Awareness comes first. It is what helps us to relate to others. We want our kids to become aware so that they can take turns. We want them to become aware so they can reach out in relationships and connect in ways that will help them not only become good students, but better co-workers, friends, spouses, and parents.

Practical ideas for building awareness:

- Role-play  
Have them choose a scenario from school and swap roles. Create a scene that raises awareness of their own words and actions.
- Play  
Teach your child about personal space by using a hula-hoop or blowing bubbles.
- Hint  
If your child is struggling with a certain social skill such as loud talking, come up with a secret password or cue. If you are with him or her when it happens with friends, you can use the cue without drawing extra attention to the hurdle.
- Use narratives  
When sitting in an airport, restaurant, or mall, point out an individual and invite your child to create a narrative based solely on what they are seeing or hearing.

## **Chapter 6: Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is understanding the give and take of relationships. Asking questions is the foundation of reciprocity. Asking questions is a way to battle entitlement. It helps a person to stop thinking about him/herself and express interest in someone else.

Practical ideas for building reciprocity:

- Play games like Simon says, freeze tag, and red light/green light that require your child to listen and follow directions.
- Share reading  
Read to your child and then have her tell you her version of what you've read.
- Questions  
Sit down with your child/adolescent and come up with a back-pocket list of question topics.
- Role-play talking with a friend about divorce, death, or a family member who is sick. This practice teaches empathy and reciprocity simultaneously.
- Throw a football, baseball or tennis ball with kids, using it as a question/answer time.

## **Chapter 7: Ownership**

Apologizing is a learned form of communication. Forgiveness means so much more when we have taken ownership of our actions.

Practical ideas for building ownership:

- Redo  
Have your kids rephrase questions or statements that assign blame rather than taking ownership. Use the phrase, "Try again."
- Assess  
As your kids get stuck blaming a person or institution, challenge them to say, "I don't like this situation." Sometimes no one is at fault, but rather situations are complex or difficult.
- Ask, "What do you think would help the situation?"  
In real-life situations, what do they want to do? Even watching stories and movies, what would they do if they were that particular character?
- Stay neutral  
At times you won't know who is to blame, especially with siblings. They can still both apologize to each other, saying, "I'm sorry that happened." And they can take over a sibling's chore(s) to make reparations.
- Lead  
If your child is young and having trouble apologizing, you can apologize for him. This models what an apology looks like and helps the other child's hurt feelings. You can process what he could have done differently later.

## Chapter 8: Boundaries

True boundaries begin with a sense of assurance, even when the things hoped for are not yet seen. We want our kids to have strong, kind boundaries. We want them to have confidence enough to value themselves and to value others. Boundaries do both. In essence they say, “Here is the line between you and me, and I respect both of us enough to keep it.” “I want to be your friend, but not when you treat me like that.” “I’m sorry. Here’s what I can do to make things right. Can you do something too?”

Practical ideas for building boundaries:

- Remember  
Have your child talk about a conflict he’s had and write out the four steps of healthy conflict.
- Practice  
Role-play a scenario where she could practice constructive boundaries with a friend.
- Play  
Use dolls or stuffed animals to act out an argument with a friend.
- Reflect  
Ask him what he thinks would help a situation.
- Study  
Read *God Made All of Me* as a resource on body boundaries for younger children.
- Research  
Read or watch the movie *Anne of Green Gables* and talk about how Anne was both strong and kind. Watch the movie *Radio* and discuss what it means to set boundaries when a boy witnesses an injustice.
- Use your own boundaries  
Make a list of Enforceable Consequences for when kids violate boundaries. This will allow you to parent with wisdom rather than out of emotion.

## Chapter 9: Foundation

Your child's faith development matters. A child's faith is an inherent part of who he is and a profoundly influential part of who he will become. Through relationship and enjoyment, as you are going along, you are helping your child build a relationship with God.

Practical ideas for building foundation:

- Read together  
Get a family Bible and read out loud to your kids.
- Pray together  
Not only just at night, but also pray in the bathtub, in the car, and on walks. Let prayer be a part of the everyday-ness of your lives.
- Play together  
Use imaginative play to act out Bible stories together.
- Memorize scripture together  
Let each family member choose a favorite and take a period of time to memorize each verse as a family.
- Sing together  
Sing worship songs together.
- Read for yourself
  - *How Children Raise Parents* by Dan Allender
  - *Parenting is Your Highest Calling: And Eight Other Myths That Trap Us in Worry and Guilt* by Leslie Leyland Fields
  - *Intentional Parenting* by Sissy Goff, David Thomas, and Melissa Trevathan
  - *Parenting the Wholehearted Child* by Jeannie Cunnion
  - *In This House We Will Giggle* by Courtney DeFeo

## Chapter 10: Identity

Ages seven to twelve years are some of the most important ages in development. Brains are changing as quickly as bodies. Muscles are, too. What is learned in this phase of development has more potential to stay with a child than in any other season of life. This might involve muscle memory, such as in sports or music lessons, as well as cognitive abilities and spiritual truths, such as developing identity.

Practical ideas for building identity:

- Create a collage that illustrates who he or she is
- Talk to them about God and pray with them throughout the day
- Introduce them to different heroes (from the Bible, books, and movies) and help them discover more about the true identities of those heroes
- Play games that help them connect emotions and moral choices  
Emphasize respect, kindness, honest, and trust. Deepfun.com is a great resource for games, illustrations, and art.
- Reinforce  
Use other voices to echo the same truths you're teaching, such as teachers, grandparents, neighbors, coaches, and friends.

## **Chapter 11: Mercy**

Mercy is the milestone for teenagers in the early stretch of their adolescent development. We want them to know and experience God's mercy and then offer that mercy to others.

Practical ideas for building mercy:

- **Wake up**  
Help your teenagers wake up to the world around them. Take them to a soup kitchen or to volunteer with underprivileged kids. Go on a mission trip so they can see the pervasive need for mercy.
- **Find**  
Help them find safe places to talk about their feelings in this season of life. Whether it's a youth group, a small group at school, or some type of counseling group, help them find a place where they can share the confusion they feel inside of them, and hear the truth of the Gospel in the midst of the shared darkness.
- **Learn**  
Take a personality test that addresses the strengths and weaknesses in each of us. Take it together and talk about it.
- **Stretch**  
Talk about mercy around the dinner table. What could you each do to show someone in your life mercy who needs it?
- **Participate**  
Walk out the seasons with your child in the church calendar, particularly the seasons of Lent and Easter.

## Chapter 12: Meaning

Teenagers are not only trying to find their identity; they are trying to define themselves. They want to make their mark. They want adventure. They may be pushing for adventure, but what they're longing for is a quest. They want meaning. They want to move out of their comfort and complacency and use their innate drive for adventure to be more.

Practical ideas for building meaning:

- Talk
  - Read the following verses with your teenager as you ask him about purpose:
    - Isaiah 43:7
    - 1 Corinthians 10:31
    - Ephesians 1:11
    - Philippians 2:3-4
    - Matthew 6:25-33
    - Romans 15:13
    - Luke 6:38
    - Psalm 100:3
    - Revelation 4:11
- Experience
  - Help your teenager experience meaning in her daily life. Ask these questions:
    - “How do you think you could help your little brother?”
    - “What do you think we could do to give back to your dad?”
    - “How could we show your grandmother that we’re thinking about her?”
- Give *To Be Told* by Dan Allender
- Go on a quest
  - Create a family quest. Explain the difference between an adventure and a quest. Talk about a mission you could have that you all feel passionately about, and how you could carry out that mission together – whether it’s a mission trip, making a meal for a friend who’s sick, or volunteering for an organization.

The hope is that your children will demonstrate each skill with consistency, not perfection. The skills will develop more through time. We’re all still on track. The work is God’s. The love is His, too. We just get the glad job of being their messy, fallible, hopeful, redeemed guardrails on this quest of growing up.

## ***8 GREAT SMARTS: Discover and Nurture Your Child's Intelligences***

by Kathy Koch, PhD

In the book *8 Great Smarts*, Dr. Koch discusses the theory of multiple intelligences, and how it impacts our learning and processing. Everyone is born with a distinct set of eight intelligences; however, they must be developed. As parents it is important to expose your young kids to many different activities so that their unique interests can be developed early. It is your job to awaken these smarts, and modeling is a great tool! Kids will learn that they have some smarts that are strengths, and others that are not. If kids strengths are not encouraged but disciplined they can become weaknesses. According to Dr. Koch children's smarts often first appear as interests. In order to understand which smarts are strengths for your child, you can look for what they do and how much they do it. There should be observable patterns of ability and interests, not an isolated incident. Often times when children get into trouble it is due to using a strength in the wrong way. On the next page is a table explaining the 8 smarts developed by Dr. Koch. It can be useful to understand the behaviors that accompany each of these intelligences.

The following links offer more resources such as articles and videos if you want to understand a particular smart further.

[www.celebratekids.com](http://www.celebratekids.com)

[www.8greatsmarts.com](http://www.8greatsmarts.com)

## 8 Great Smarts: An Overview of Multiple Intelligences

	<b>think with</b>	<b>when excited</b>	<b>enjoy/need/learning/studying/teaching</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>harm</b>
word	words	talk	reading, writing, telling stories, talking about their day, variety of books, variety of paper, many things to write with, read out loud, be expressive, listen to someone read, retype/recopy notes, read books related to topic that may be easier, meaningful discussions, journaling, choral reading, etc.	encourage, listen intently, teach, use positive self-talk	discourage, gossip, tease, impress with words
logic	questions	ask more questions	learning, researching, school, math, science, data, answering questions, experimenting, discovering, investigating, predicting, reasons, use numbers in all subjects, time to explore things, something worth thinking about, intellectual challenges, non-fiction, want things that make sense	invent, solve problems, curious, counseling	create problems, argue, test authority
picture	pictures	add to their pictures	drawing, art, designing, visualizing, doodling, imagining, creating, watching, demonstrations, displays, descriptive words, fiction, history, creative writing, photography, add color to charts, ask if something (e.g., spelling word) looks right, mind mapping, maps, dioramas, beauty, humor	create beauty, design, help decorate, make displays	judge a book by its cover, distracted by what is seen
music	rhythms and melodies	make music	playing a musical instrument, singing, enjoying music, going to concerts, rapping, rhyming poetry, listening, jingles, humming, whistling, dancing, use rhythms and melodies to learn things (e.g., Mississippi, the ABC song), tapping feet, clapping math facts, whisper silent h	enjoy music from cultures, use it to calm down, perform	idolize music/musicians, makes noise, wrong music
body	movement and touch	move/touch more	moving, touching, action, dancing, playing sports, doing crafts, hands are busy, coordinated, good dexterity and flexibility, acting, drama, charades, demonstrations, field trips, hands-on manipulatives, puppetry, cooking, construct and build, sky writing, clapping math facts, pacing w/clipboard	develop talent, chores and service	punching, wrestling, moving too much
nature	patterns	go outside	outside, plants, trees, animals, rocks, clouds, dirt, water, collecting things, based on patterns, comparing, categorizing, study outside, relate topics to nature (e.g., tracking of Native Americans), sciences that relate to nature (e.g., biology, earth science), pets, time outside	care about environment, take care of animals/plants	distracted by animals, animal cruelty
people	other people	talk to people	people, studying/learning with people, brainstorming, group work, friends, mentors, questions/answers, freedom to think and question, someone to interact with, leading, teaching, organizing, relating, mediating, partying, enthusiasm, reading people well and responding well, role plays, persuades	many friends, motivates, counsels, build consensus	gets into trouble if ignored, manipulates
self	reflection	spend time alone	time alone, choices, freedom, own opinions, privacy, space, peace, secrets, time to think deeply, time to explain their ideas, studying alone, self-paced projects, connect topics to personal lives, they know themselves well, produces original and unique work, diaries and journaling, goal setting	disciplined, happy alone, know what they know	opinionated, unteachable, doesn't share, self-centered

© 2016, 2009 Kathy Koch, Ph.D., ("cook") Celebrate Kids, Inc. (Based on her book, *8 Great Smarts: Discover and Nurture Your Child's Intelligences*. Chicago, IL: Moody.)  
 Smarts@CelebrateKids.com ~ [www.CelebrateKids.com](http://www.CelebrateKids.com) ~ www.DrKathyKoch.com ~ www.vimeo.com/kathykoch ~ www.facebook.com/celebratekidsinc