

Are You Measuring Up?

By Kathy Slattengren, M. Ed., [Priceless Parenting](#)

Are you striving to be an excellent parent? Of course you want to be an excellent parent! You love your kids and want to do the best for them. You read parenting articles, books and take classes. You're working hard to raise your children well.

How Are You Doing?

How do you measure how you are doing? If you were grading yourself as a parent, what grade would you give yourself? Do you score 100%? 110%? 60%?

What is the cut off for excellent parenting? Do you need to score at least 95%?

If these questions seem reasonable, you probably spent many years in schools that graded your work. You know what it's like to strive for the perfect score. You know how it feels to get the top score and also how it feels to fall short.



The problem is relationships defy measurement. Nobody is giving out extra credit for getting your kids into bed on time or making a meal together. No psychologist will be assessing how well you've prepared your kids to launch as young adults.

What Is The Right Answer?

When you take tests in school, there are right answers and wrong answers. If you want to get a top score, you must know the right answers.

Finding the right answers involves judging different choices. What are the right answers in parenting? The decisions you need to make start off right from the beginning.

- Breast feed or bottle feed?
- Circumcise or not?
- Sleep with you or sleep in the crib?
- Cloth diapers or paper diapers?

You may have strong feelings about your decisions and perhaps have been involved in heated discussions over the pros and cons of various choices. Wanting to believe that you've made the right decision leads to judging other parents' choices. However, there are very few clear cut right or wrong decisions and plenty of gray areas.

Trying to be a Perfect Parent

When striving for excellence it's easy to slip into desiring perfection. You may not even realize you've transitioned from healthy striving to wanting perfection. What does it look like if you are trying to be a perfect parent?

- You are hard on yourself. You can see many ways you could do better. The little voice in your head is often critical.
- You are hard on your kids. You believe their success in school, music and sports is a direct reflection on you as a parent. You need them to do well to validate your competence as a parent.
- Your kids need to look good. You certainly do not want your preschooler going to school in mismatched clothes she chose herself because it would reflect poorly on you.
- You find yourself critiquing your partner's parenting. Your partner complains about you micromanaging and second guessing.
- Sometimes you feel frozen in responding to your children's behavior. You don't want to do the wrong thing. What is the right thing to do in this situation? Is there an app you can check?
- You are afraid of messing your children up. You're worried that your parenting will send them into counseling later on.

That's a lot of pressure. It's hard to enjoy your family or have fun together with the stress of trying to get it right.

In her book [The Gifts of Imperfection](#) Brené Brown discusses healthy striving versus perfectionism. *"Understanding the difference between healthy striving and perfectionism is critical to laying down the shield and picking up your life. Research shows that perfectionism hampers success. In fact, it's often the path to depression, anxiety, addiction, and life paralysis."*

Certainly you do not want to be taking the path to depression, anxiety and addiction! Parenting is hard enough without trying to measure yourself against impossible goals.

Instead, take a deep breath and appreciate that you are trying your best. Remind yourself that what your kids need is good enough parenting, not perfect parenting.

Kathy Slattengren is an internationally recognized, inspirational parent educator and founder of Priceless Parenting, <http://www.PricelessParenting.com>. Priceless Parenting offers online [parenting classes](#), [parenting presentations](#) and [parent coaching](#). Parents learn to effectively handle misbehavior while building loving relationships.

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