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The Value-Able Child

Teaching Values at Home and School



 GOOD YEAR BOOKS



To Laura, my very able editor, my dearly valued friend



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Design: Nancy Rudd

Illustration: Paige Billin-Frye and Nancy Rudd

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN 978-1-59647-426-0

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
Values Defined	2
Why Teach Values?	3
How to Use This Book.....	3
Chapter Contents	5
“The Values Song”	7
 <i>Chapter 1</i> COOPERATION	8
<i>Chapter 2</i> COURAGE	23
<i>Chapter 3</i> FRIENDSHIP	39
<i>Chapter 4</i> HONESTY	55
<i>Chapter 5</i> KINDNESS	72
<i>Chapter 6</i> LOYALTY	86
<i>Chapter 7</i> RESPECT	103
<i>Chapter 8</i> SELF-CONTROL.....	120
<i>Chapter 9</i> SHARING	139
<i>Chapter 10</i> TOLERANCE	156
 <i>Appendix</i>	174
Group Projects	175
Student Journal.....	183
Miscellaneous Patterns.....	185
Award Certificate	186
About the Author	187

Introduction

They start arriving in November, filling my mailbox with paper and my heart with memories of friends near and distant. I look forward to them, although sitting down to write my own seems to take more effort than it should. I'm referring to the annual holiday letters that have become a staple over the last few years, replacing the signature-only cards of long ago.

The letters of my friends with children are chock-full of all of the many accomplishments of their offspring: the sports in which they are involved, the musical instruments they play, the academic awards they've earned, the clubs

they are in. These activities and ambitions define our children as they are growing up. Every year I am struck by these letters, and the amount of importance we all place on what our children "do" rather than "who" they actually are. Rarely does anyone ever write that "Sarah has a good, kind heart," or "Tom is an expert at being a true friend," or "Lily sets a great example of cooperation in our family."

In a society where economic success and academic achievements seem to be the only measures of a person's worth, it is ever more important to get back to stressing values. What are values? Values are the intrinsic principles that give life real meaning. Values are the intangible resources that give a person true worth. Values are what the word itself implies—that which brings value to our existence as human beings. The ability we have to define and activate values in our lives sets us apart from all other living species. Yet values do not just happen. They are taught, and they can be learned from the moment a child enters the world. If kindness is displayed in the home, children will learn kindness. If honesty is practiced, it will become a habit. If forgiveness is given, it will be returned. Children learn from what we do, what we say, and how we live.





“We grow morally as a consequence of learning how to be with others, how to behave in this world, a learning prompted by taking to heart what we have seen and heard,” wrote Robert Coles, a Pulitzer prize-winning author and recognized expert on the moral and spiritual development of children. (*Time*, Jan. 20, 1997, p. 48) Parents, teachers, athletes, celebrities—all adults are role models for younger generations. But there are other powerful forces in the lives of our children. Television, electronic video games, and movies also have an impact on the values our children learn. That is why it is essential for teachers and parents not just to teach but to live out the values we hold to be of greatest worth.

And what could be more valuable to our lives, to our society, to the world, than our children? How do we encourage them to become “value-able” people—people who are able to live by the values that are necessary for a healthy and happy life?

The Value-Able Child: Teaching Values at Home and School is designed to help teachers and parents work as a team both to teach values to children and to assist them in activating these values in their daily living, to teach them to be “value-able” people, a gift that will sus-

tain them their whole lives. In the words of author William J. Bennett, “We must not permit our disputes over thorny political questions to obscure the obligation we have to offer instruction to all our young people in the area in which we have, as a society, reached a consensus: namely, on the importance of good character, and on some of its pervasive particulars.” (*The Book of Virtues*, p. 13)

As we work together to teach our children the values that will enable them to be “value-able,” we may just find ourselves becoming more intentional about the values by which we choose to live. We could start with those annual holiday letters!

Values Defined

What are values? Let’s take a look at how *values* is defined by others:

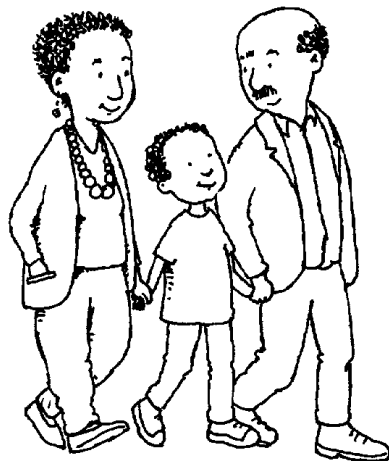
- “A true and universally accepted value is one that produces behavior that is beneficial both to the practitioner and to those on whom it is practiced.” (*Teaching Your Children Values*, by Linda and Richard Eyre, p. 27)
- “Your values are the guiding principles or ideals that govern your daily actions by prioritizing the competing interests in your life. Our values are



the freely chosen precepts that help guide our daily decisions and actions, thereby giving increased meaning and direction to our lives. Values are cherished worthwhile beliefs that enable us to affirm and respect ourselves and others.” (*Dr. Mom’s Parenting Guide*, by Marianne Neifert, M.D., p. 167)

- “. . . a set of fundamental beliefs that we hold.” (*Helping Children Choose*, by George M. Schuncke and Suzanne Lowell Krogh, p. 3)

Values are those basic, foundational beliefs that help us know right from wrong, that give balance and meaning to life, that enable us to live in community with one another. Values enhance our own lives and the lives of others. We are not born with a specific set of values imprinted upon our psyche: values are learned by observation and through interaction, and they are learned by living them.



Why Teach Values?

Think of values as being the roots of a tree. The roots anchor the tree to the ground, pulling nutrients and water from the soil. The roots are essential to the health of the tree. They allow the rest of the plant to grow and flourish. The roots are often hidden completely from view, but without them, the tree will die.

How to Use This Book

The Value-Able Child uses a team approach to teaching values. Teachers, parents, and children are all involved in the learning experience. To allow for this holistic approach, information and activities are provided for use in school, at home, and in the community.

Why Teach Values at School?

Robert Coles states that “In elementary school, maybe as never before or ever afterwards, the child becomes an intensely moral creature, quite interested in figuring out the reasons of this world—how and why things work, but also, how and why he or she should behave in various situations.” (*Time*, Jan. 20, 1997, p. 50)

According to recent statistics, there will be 54.6 million school-age children by the year 2006. (*Publisher’s Weekly*, Jan. 27, 1997, p. 32) This is an increase of 3 million children from the 1996 enrollment.



It only makes sense then that schools assist parents in teaching values to children. Many children spend a significant amount of their daytime hours in a school setting. School is a place where the values will come into play. And children learn best in settings where there is interaction with others—an inevitable occurrence in schools.

Teachers and all educators must be intentional about teaching values to students, including modeling the values in their everyday interactions with the students. Indeed, modeling may be the most effective mode of teaching; therefore, it must be consistent and sincere.

Use for Home-Schooling

For those parents who choose to home-school their children, the same principles apply. If you are both parent and teacher, it is essential that in both capacities, you model values for your children. *The Value-Able Child* can be used in home-schools, and in fact, is an important resource in reinforcing ways of teaching children values that they will need not only at home, but everywhere.

Why Teach Values at Home?

For better or for worse, parents and family are the greatest influence in a child's life. From the very first moments a parent holds a child in his or her arms, the child begins to learn. Can I trust? Am I lovable? What is important in life?

Too often, parents are not properly prepared for the job of raising children. But parents and teachers work together, promoting similar values and thus providing a consistent teaching of these values. Children can share what they've learned at school with their families, even as they bring to school the values they've learned at home. The more that parents and families are aware of what is being taught in the schools, the more they can reinforce the implementation of the values being taught.

Why Include the Community?

Values are not just for personal use. In order for values to truly be defined and implemented, they need to be shared with others. As children grow, they become more exposed to the outside world. They need to know from an early age that their behavior and assistance can help others beyond their immediate circles. Involvement in community outreach helps build a child's self-esteem and leads to the cultivation of a healthier society.



“The future is in the hands of those who can give tomorrow’s generations valid reasons to live and hope.” (Teilhard de Chardin, theologian and philosopher) This is our job—as parents, teachers, educators, adults.

So let’s join hands together!

Chapter Contents

The Value-Able Child consists of ten chapters, each chapter based on one of ten values: Cooperation, Courage, Friendship, Honesty, Kindness, Loyalty, Respect, Self-Control, Sharing, Tolerance. The chapters can be used in any order. Each chapter includes eight sections:

Before You Begin: an introduction for the parent/teacher/group leader that defines and explains the value and why it is important for children to learn.

To the Family: a list of suggestions for reinforcing the value at home, with all family members. Although designed for the teacher to send home to parents, parents who have purchased the book themselves will find it a great resource full of valuable tips.

Let’s Get Started!: a brief introduction written as a script to share with the children in preparation for the study of each value.

Fingerplay: a separate fingerplay for each value, sung to the tune of a popular nursery rhyme. The fingerplays give the children a fun and easy way to remember the different values.

Time for a Story!: an engaging read-aloud story based on each value. Following the story are discussion questions that encourages the children to think for themselves about the value and the consequences of their actions in relation to the value.

1-2-3 Activities!: three activities to reinforce the chapter’s value. An introduction to each activity explains how it is done and what supplies are needed. Reproducible Activity Sheets provide a way for children to participate in hands-on learning.

Community Connections: suggestions for promoting each value within the entire community. See what other ideas you can think of!

Reading List: a list of good books for young children that exemplify the various values. These lists are by no means exhaustive! Check your local library for other books that appeal to children. Reading with children is a wonderful way to open the door for discussions about values.

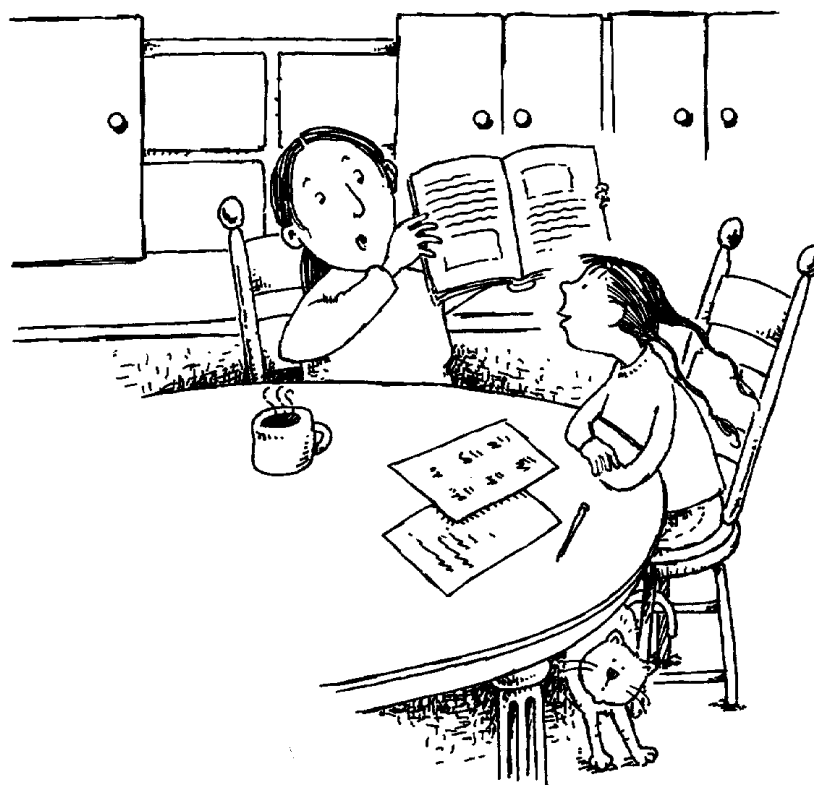


Home-School Tips

Many parents choose to teach their children at home, instead of sending them to a public or private school. *The Value-Able Child* can be used in a home-school setting. When particular activities or suggestions are geared for classroom use with a multiple number of children, you will find a small “Home-School” icon with helpful tips for adapting that portion of the book for home-school use.

Appendix

The Appendix includes suggestions for ongoing group projects that give an overall view of the ten values. The projects are titled “A Tree of Values,” “A Living Rainbow,” “Hand-in-Hand Around the World,” “Wall of Fame,” “WANTED Posters,” and “Student Journal.” Also in the Appendix is a reproducible journal page and an Award Certificate. The Award Certificate is given to all students who complete the program.





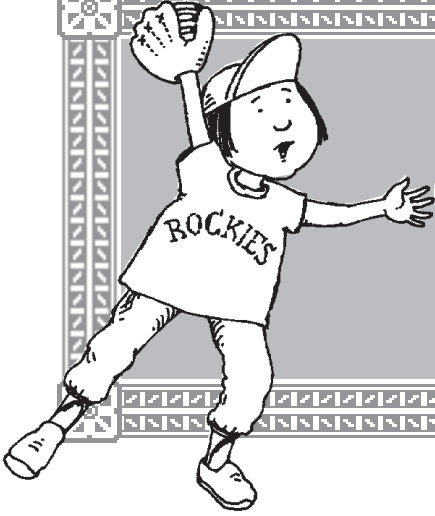
“The Values Song”

“The Values Song” helps us remember the names of the ten values we are learning. It can be sung at the beginning of each lesson on values.

“The Values Song”

Sung to the tune of “Ten Little Indians”

One and two and three good values,
Four and five and six good values,
Seven and eight and nine good values,
Ten good ways to live.
Kindness, Honesty, and Friendship,
Self-Control, Cooperation,
Courage, Loyalty, and Sharing,
Tolerance, Respect.
We can learn the ten good values,
Try to live the way they teach us;
As we do, we’ll all become
The best that we can be!



Cooperation

Before You Begin

1, 2, 3—Teamwork!

The Reeve family has a tradition. Whenever they have a problem that needs to be solved, a job to do, or an activity to plan, they join together in a circle. Together, they count off, “One, two, three—TEAMWORK!” As they say the word teamwork, they each put one hand in the middle of the circle, thumbs up. This is their way of reminding one another that they are a family where cooperation is cherished. Everyone works together whenever possible.

So much of life promotes competition: sports, grades, jobs, even the seeking of a parent’s undivided attention. Often the goal is to “win” more than it is to do one’s best or to have a good time. The belief that you have to be better than somebody else does little to encourage cooperation. Competition

is fine in some situations, but it’s not the best way to solve most problems. And competition is the source of a great deal of sibling rivalry, vocational dissatisfaction, stress, and depression.



Check your bookstore or library for books that teach games based on cooperation rather than competition, such as *The Cooperative Sports and Games Book: Challenge without Competition* by Terry Orlick and *Win-Win Games for All Ages: Cooperative Activities for Building Social Skills* by Josette Luvmour. Seek methods of



promoting cooperation in daily tasks, problem solving, and activities. If you can't find good resources, invite the children to come up with ideas of their own.

Cooperation doesn't just happen. It takes willingness on all sides. As children discover ways to cooperate with one another, they will find that working toward a solution can be as exciting and challenging as finding a good solution where everybody is a winner.

Why not borrow a good idea and adopt the tradition of the Reeve family? "1, 2, 3—Teamwork!" is a great motto for everyone to live by.

