

A PLAN FOR LIFE

by Sally Burgess, Forefront families LLC

Having a plan is the most productive way to approach any part of your life. Teaching kids how to make plans is imperative. Many of us make plans for particular events such as taking a vacation, getting married, preparing for exams, becoming fit, or sticking to a diet. But we don't often plan for everyday things.

To 'plan' means to map out a course of action to meet an end goal. You can't very well map out a course of action unless you know what you want the end result to be. You need to be clear about the end goal and the time frame by which you want to achieve it. Creating a plan is being proactive. Just letting things happen, and facing the consequences, is being reactive. It is allowing circumstances to rule your life. I am not saying that we should not be spontaneous at times. Spontaneity is fun. In our family, we love to decide at the last minute to go somewhere or do something – as long as it doesn't disrupt our overall plan. You can create plans that have a spontaneous element in them. When we go to Florida, we plan when to leave home and when to be back, but we decide on any given day where we will go and what we will do.

It really alarms me that so many families we know just exist from day to day with no goals. They take each day as it comes, and allow circumstances to dictate the direction their lives take. I appreciate that there are circumstances when we really do have to take each day as it comes, but for probably 75% of our lives we can and should plan. Who are we? What does our family want to be known for? What do we want to achieve as a family over the next 15 years? What do we want to achieve today? These are good questions that deserve an answer. Let's break our planning down into small, manageable chunks.

- a) Every day planning: Kids do not survive well in chaos. They like routines. There should be a family plan that creates routine for weekdays. This maps out when everyone should be out of bed, who uses the bathroom and in what order, a specific time for meals, and a chores' plan. Time is too valuable to lose and, with planning, a family can schedule time for fun.
- b) Weekend planning: Sports, visits, movies, and sleepovers can all be scheduled, making sure that all members of the family have quality time with each other.
- c) Long term planning: Deciding on the particular direction a family should take is probably the planning that is most lacking in our society today. To succeed you first have to create your own family values. (If you are unsure how to identify and create your own family values, contact us). When the whole family lives within this framework, a family identity can be formulated. The end goal of our long term planning needs to be clearly stated so that kids can see the reason why they need to follow the plan.

The end goal for you as parents might be that your children experience success. That they learn how to handle failure, become responsible, honest, caring, and valued members of adult society. Individual goals can be set for kids

as they identify their interests in sport, activities, and careers. You help them create plans to succeed in their goals through their years.

You can also set goals that when your children leave home, you still have a vibrant, meaningful relationship and life of your own. Goal number one may be to contribute and encourage your kids continue to meet their goals and reach their potential. Goal number two would be to retain enough sanity to be able to enjoy goal 3, which is to enjoy 'empty nest days' and your retirement together.

There is an enormous sense of satisfaction in looking back on your own life and that of your family and be able to say, "I/we tried many things. I/we failed a few. I/we succeeded often, but most importantly, I/we fulfilled my/our dreams because I/we didn't waste time in indecision. I/we set goals and made plans to achieve our dreams."

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.