



THE ULTIMATE PARENTING GUIDE & PARENTING TIPS

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*Real*LOVE.com®

The perfect resource for parents looking to learn new skills to raise happy, loving, responsible children.

Introduction

The Parenting Guide and Parenting Tips is full of insights for parents, teachers, grandparents, and anyone else looking to take the frustrations out of parenting.

You'll learn answers to the problems below and discover that parenting can be deeply rewarding, instead of tedious and frustrating.

So IF...

- ✓ Your children argue with you.
- ✓ Your children fight with each other.
- ✓ You find parenting stressful.
- ✓ Your children cry and throw tantrums.
- ✓ You must nag your children to do their homework, chores, and more.
- ✓ Your children fuss and complain when they don't get what they want.
- ✓ Your kids play video games way too much.
- ✓ Your kids make messes everywhere and don't clean them up.
- ✓ You hate the push and rush of getting kids out the door to school and other events on time.
- ✓ You and your partner argue about how to handle "kid problems."
- ✓ Your children are ungrateful and whiney.
- ✓ You hate the struggle of bedtime, night after night.
- ✓ Your children spend too much time on their phones or computers.
- ✓ Your adult children avoid calling you and spending time with you.
- ✓ You worry that your children might be self-harming, using drugs, or having unsafe sex.

THEN I have some good news...

I am a parenting expert and can teach you HOW to successfully accomplish the following:

- ✓ Arguing between children—GONE.
- ✓ Tantrums, begging, whining, and complaining—GONE.
- ✓ You'll have a truly peaceful home.
- ✓ Arguing between you and your partner over how to handle the kids—GONE.
- ✓ Drama at bedtime—GONE.
- ✓ Nagging to get the homework and chores done—GONE.
- ✓ You'll have more energy during the day and sleep better at night.
- ✓ You'll finally ENJOY being a parent.
- ✓ Children who WANT to spend time with you and share their lives with you.
- ✓ You'll feel confident that your children will have good relationships with their future friends and partners.
- ✓ You'll be laying the groundwork for genuinely happy grandchildren.



Parents everywhere struggle with these problems—they're doing their very best—and they have absolutely no clue how to handle these problems in a permanent way.

Let's fix that!

EVERYWHERE you go, you see parents in conflict with their children—arguing, manipulating, pushing—or talking about it.

It has come to be accepted that parenting has to be stressful.

WRONG. We just didn't know any better.

If you will follow the clear, simple principles in this guide, you will experience STRESS-FREE parenting.

Really.

What You'll Learn

Chapter 1: More than Anything Else, Your Child Needs to Feel Loved

Why we really don't understand this.

A large part of effective parenting is the interpretation of your children's behaviors which enables you to respond to them productively. You will learn more about your responses to your child's behavior.

Chapter 2: Real Love®—The Essential Vitamin for the Soul

What is Real Love®?

The secret to powerful, effective parenting is Real Love. This chapter teaches you what Real Love—unconditional love—*really* is and how it affects your children.

Chapter 3: The Effect of Disappointment and Anger

"But I HAVE loved my children!"

This chapter teaches you the real effect of disappointment and anger, and why you so easily respond negatively to your children, even though you don't mean to.

Chapter 4: The Central Role of Real Love

How much love we have = how we feel.

In this chapter you will learn a valuable metaphor that helps you understand where your anger comes from (and it's not from your children).

Chapter 5: Are We Entirely Responsible for Our Children's Behavior?

But is it really all our fault? Is every child's problem a result of our mistakes?

Taking responsibility, not guilt, for your parenting is the freeing focus of this chapter.

Chapter 6: Substitutes for Real Love: Imitation Love

When my child behaves badly, he or she does not feel loved.

Understanding how your child uses Imitation Love, as well as the problems with it, will really increase your effectiveness as a parent.

Chapter 7: Getting and Protecting Behaviors

Without Real Love, children will do almost anything to get rid of their feelings of emptiness and fear.

Learn about the use of Getting and Protecting Behaviors: lying, attacking, acting like victims, running, and clinging.

Chapter 8: Seeing Your Child's Getting and Protecting Behaviors

When children use Imitation Love, they can't feel your love.

In this chapter you will learn the consequences of children using Getting and Protecting Behaviors.

Chapter 9: The Power of Seeing the Cause of Getting and Protecting Behaviors

When your head understands, your heart will follow.

Learn a powerful metaphor that will help you feel differently about your children, then watch your anger just go away.

Chapter 10: Here's What to Do Next

We have organized this Guide in a logical progression. Though you can jump around, learning the principles in whatever order you feel you need them, we recommend that you read through the chapters in order.

Take your time. Read one chapter at a time. Apply what you learn. And when you feel you've got a practical understanding, move on to the next chapter.

You'll be surprised at how quickly you can implement these principles if you focus on them one at a time. Then, with all this new understanding, you can focus on the skills that will take the stress out of raising children who become loved, loving, and responsible.

Ready to start?



CHAPTER 1

**MORE THAN
ANYTHING ELSE,
YOUR CHILD NEEDS
TO FEEL LOVED**

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More Than Anything Else, My Child Needs to Feel Loved

Why we really don't understand this.

A large part of effective parenting is the interpretation of your children's behaviors which enables you to respond to them productively. Learn more about your responses.

Before they learn to speak, babies are somewhat limited in their ability to express their specific needs, but they still have many ways to tell us what they want: gestures, posture, facial expressions, crying, screaming, and a wide variety of body movements.

As we become familiar with a child, these behaviors tell us when he wants to be fed, changed, picked up, played with, and put to bed, as well as when he doesn't want to do something.

We've all learned to interpret these expressions, and we do it so often that we don't think much about it. When a toddler lifts her arms toward you, you know she wants to be picked up. If you ignore her, she might fall to the ground screaming. You know she's unhappy with your response and has an even greater determination for you to pick her up. All this is quite clear without a word being spoken.

As children get older, they gain the ability to describe their needs more accurately. When they're tired and hungry, they're no longer limited to crying and kicking but can clearly state in words exactly what they want.

Even when children acquire the ability to express themselves verbally, however, they continue to demonstrate many of their needs in non-verbal ways, especially when they don't understand exactly what they need—when they know only that they're uncomfortable.

As parents, we've all responded to fussy, unhappy children who are capable of speaking but just don't know what they want. If we fail to understand these unclear expressions of need, our children will amplify their irritation, demanding relief from a pain they can't quite describe.

A large part of effective parenting is the interpretation of our children's behaviors, which enables us to respond to them productively. When we fail to understand them, and when we respond in inappropriate ways, the consequences are disastrous.

We need to realize that when our children behave "badly," they're only reacting to essential needs that are not being met. When we fail to understand this, we feel inconvenienced by their behavior, and then we respond with criticism, lectures, attempts to control them, irritation, punishment, and withdrawal.

When we do that, of course, we're further neglecting their needs and making it even more likely that their unacceptable behaviors will continue or worsen.

AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

The Real Love Company has a large [YouTube channel](#) where you can get a more personal sense of what life and parenting with Real Love *feels* like. Like, Subscribe and click the "Bell" to the Real Love Company on YouTube and regularly watch videos that teach you how to eliminate your pain and fear and replace them with peace and confidence. In the Parenting Playlist and in the "All About the Parents" podcast, you can watch videos that teach you how to love and teach your children so they will feel confident, cooperative, and creative.

These happy children are loved, loving and responsible.

[Testimonials of the Healing Power of Real Love®](#)



CHAPTER 2

REAL LOVE—THE ESSENTIAL VITAMIN FOR THE SOUL

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Real Love—The Essential Vitamin for the Soul

What is Real Love?

The secret to powerful, effective parenting is Real Love. This chapter teaches you what Real Love—unconditional love—really is and how it affects your children.

So exactly what is it that children need most? Intuitively you already know. They need what we all need. They need that thing which is the most frequent subject of our music, novels, discussions, and often our behavior: **They need to feel LOVED.**

Regrettably most of us don't even know what love really is, and we certainly don't know exactly how to give the right kind of love to our children. So we tend to stand by in confusion and watch our children suffer—emotionally, spiritually, and, on occasion, physically—for the lack of the love we're not giving them.

When they communicate to us that they're suffering—with the anger, disobedience, and other behaviors we've discussed—we tend to react by treating their **symptoms** rather than supplying what they really need. We try to control their individual behaviors rather than eliminating the **cause** by giving them what they require. Our failure to give them this "essential vitamin of the soul" has tragic consequences for them and for us.

Fortunately, we can learn to give our children what they need, and in the process the symptoms they manifest will consistently disappear—or be prevented—just as many diseases are eradicated by the administration of the right vitamins. Whenever children behave badly or appear to be unhappy, it almost always means that they lack sufficient Real Love in their lives.

The Definition of Real Love®

Real Love is caring about the happiness of another person without any expectation for what we might receive in return.

We give our children Real Love when we care about their happiness, without any concern for what we want. When they're ungrateful, disobedient, and inconvenient, and when they make us look bad in the eyes of others, we're not disappointed, hurt, or angry, because our concern is for **them**. Real Love is unconditional.

Real Love is, "I care how **you** feel."
Conditional love is, "I like how you make **me** feel."

When we unconditionally care about our children's happiness, they feel a powerful connection to us. They feel included in our lives. They feel whole, safe, and not alone. Each moment of unconditional acceptance creates a living thread between us and our children, and these threads weave a powerful bond that fills them with a genuine and lasting happiness.

Nothing but unconditional love can create that feeling for them. With Real Love, nothing else matters; without it, nothing else is enough. It's that simple.

Conditional Love

How many of us can truthfully say we love our children unconditionally? Uncommon courage is required for us to honestly examine that critical question. When our children are clean and quiet, and when they get good grades, express their gratitude to us, give us kisses, say they love us, clean their rooms, don't fight with their siblings, make us look good, and otherwise do what we want, we usually smile at them, pat them on the head, hug them, speak in kind tones, and tell them we're proud of them. Our children interpret these behaviors as evidence that we love them.

But do we behave the same toward them when they whine, get bad grades, fight with one another, and break things, or when they're noisy, messy, ungrateful, irresponsible, and disobedient?

No, we don't. Without thinking about it, we frown, roll our eyes, sigh with disappointment, and speak to them with an impatient tone of voice. When they don't do what we want, we become irritated.

We must realize that disappointment and anger are feelings we experience only when we're primarily concerned about what we want. We do not have these feelings when our principal interest is the happiness of our children—the definition of Real Love. We'll discuss the effects and meaning of disappointment and anger shortly.

During the moments we experience disappointment and anger, we establish without doubt that we are loving our children conditionally. We don't mean to. We say we don't. We wish we didn't. We know we shouldn't. But we do. And no matter how we justify our disappointment and anger, the effect these feelings have on our children is undeniable.

Regardless of the time, effort, and money we spend on them, every time we communicate disappointment or anger, they feel separated from us and alone. If a child hears "I love you" each time we behave in positive ways toward him, there's only one way he can interpret the withdrawal of those behaviors.

When we become disappointed and angry toward our children, they can only hear this: When you're "good," I love you, but when you're not—when you're inconvenient to me, when you're "bad"—I don't love you, or certainly I love you a great deal less.

Every Bad Behavior is a Reaction to Pain

When a child hears this message, the damage is unspeakable. He senses that with his behavior he has to buy the love he receives. Without sufficient Real Love—the greatest treasure in life—he can feel only empty, afraid, and alone, the most painful conditions of all.

Every "bad" behavior we see in children is simply a reaction to that pain. We wonder why our children are angry and rebellious, and why they fight with one another. We

can't understand how they could use drugs and have indiscriminate sex after we've warned them of the dangers.

They do all these things because they don't feel loved by **us**. Each of these behaviors distracts and protects them from the insufferable anguish of feeling unloved and alone. We'll discuss this much more in The Second Principle. I am **not** advocating permissive parenting, which has terrible consequences. Children do need to be guided and corrected, but in loving and productive correction there is no role for disappointment and anger.

When we correct our children with sighs of disappointment and annoyed facial expressions, we communicate to them that our interest is for ourselves, not for them, and they feel that.

That is what hurts them. When our concern is genuinely for the happiness of our children—when we love them unconditionally—we are not disappointed or angry at them. Truly selfless teaching is never accompanied by those feelings.

As you continue reading this Guide, I'll discuss in detail how to correct children and how to teach them to be truthful, loving, grateful, and responsible. In order to be happy, they **must** learn these qualities, but before we can teach them anything, we must first begin to **fill their primary need to feel loved**.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- <https://reallove.com/>
- <https://realloveparents.com/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/TheRealLoveCompany>
- <https://www.facebook.com/RidiculouslyEffectiveParenting/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/reallovecompany>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/LovingParentsLIVE>
- <https://www.YouTube.com/c/RealLoveCompany>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/in/gregbaermd>
<https://www.Linkedin.com/in/reallove>
<https://www.Instagram.com/reallovecompany>
- <https://www.instagram.com/ridiculouslyeffectiveparenting>
<https://www.Pinterest.com/reallovecompany>



CHAPTER 3

THE EFFECT OF ANGER AND DISAPPOINTMENT

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The Effect of Disappointment and Anger

"But I have loved my children!"

This chapter teaches you the real effect of disappointment and anger and why you so easily respond negatively to your children, even though you don't mean to.

We like to believe—a belief reinforced by many parenting books—that we can express disappointment and anger to our children in healthy ways. We want to believe that our children are capable of making a distinction between our anger at **them** and our impatience with their **behavior**.

I assure you that children are not emotionally capable of accomplishing this hair-splitting differentiation—nor are most adults. If you have any doubt about that, look carefully at the face of your child while she's the object of your disappointment or anger. Even better, consider how YOU feel when people are disappointed or angry at you. Do you like it? Do you feel loved?

We may believe we hide these negative feelings from our children, but we deceive ourselves. The difference between unconditional acceptance and disappointment is unmistakable. Every child can feel it. Even though we don't do it intentionally, the effect of our disappointment—however mild—is awful.

Wait a Minute

At this point, many parents understandably protest, “But I have loved my children. Sure, I’m angry sometimes, but most of the time I’m not. Are you saying that a few moments of anger erase all the times I’ve been loving?”

First, we must see that most of us are “loving” toward our children mostly when they’re behaving in the ways we like. That is not Real Love, and our children feel that. They sense that they have to pay for our approval with their behavior, and that does not fill their need for unconditional love.

The true measure of our love for them is demonstrated by how we react to them when they behave “badly.”

All of us have received time, praise, and attention from our parents and others, but when it was conditional, it was quite unfulfilling to us, whether we realized it at the time or not. Only Real Love can create the connection to other people that makes us genuinely happy.

Now let’s suppose that there are times when you really are unconditionally loving toward your children, but on other occasions you also express your impatience and irritation at them. What is the overall effect?

To answer this question, I ask you to imagine that when you and I meet for the first time, we have only ten minutes to spend together. For the first nine minutes, our conversation is warm and friendly, and you get a real sense of acceptance from me.

During the last minute, however, I scream at you and chase you around the room with a butcher knife. What is the overall effect? Do you primarily remember our first nine minutes together? Do you feel loved and safe with me? Of course not.

The effects of fear and pain are overwhelming. The moments when we’re angry at our children, and the times we’re otherwise conditionally loving, leave a very deep and lasting impression. Until a child—or an adult—is utterly convinced that he or she is loved unconditionally, even a small amount of doubt or fear is sufficient to destroy the effect of many moments of acceptance and safety.

In the above metaphor I used a ratio of 9:1. In reality, very few of us can claim that we are unconditionally loving toward our children nine times for every occasion we're disappointed or irritated.

Moreover, in calculating our own Real Love: conditional love ratio, **remember that we can use only the occasions when our children are behaving badly. It is on those occasions that we demonstrate the true nature of our love for them.**

Why We Fail to Love

What keeps us from giving our children the Real Love they need so badly? We fail to love them only because we can't give what we don't have. If we haven't received sufficient Real Love ourselves, we feel empty and afraid—just like they do—and in that condition we're entirely occupied with both filling our own needs and protecting ourselves. We're simply unable to be concerned for the happiness of others, even our own children.

Giving or withholding acceptance based on another person's behavior is the essence of conditional love, and nearly all of us were loved that way as children.

When we made the football team, got good grades, and washed the dishes without being asked, our parents naturally looked happy and said things like "I'm so proud of you" or "Way to go!"

But when we failed a class at school, or fought with our siblings, or tracked mud across the carpet, did our parents smile at us then? Did they pat us on the shoulder and speak kindly as they corrected us? No, with rare exceptions, they did not.

Without thinking, they frowned, rolled their eyes, and sighed with exasperation. They used a tone of voice that was not the one we heard when we did what they wanted. Some of us were even yelled at or physically abused when we were "bad."

Other people in our childhood also gave us conditional approval. Teachers smiled and encouraged us when we were bright and cooperative, but they behaved quite differently when we were slow and difficult.

Even our own friends liked us more when we did what they wanted—in fact, that's what made us their friends—and that pattern of conditional approval has

continued throughout our lives. People give us their approval more often when we do what they want—and we do what it takes to earn it.

The Effects of Conditional Acceptance

Although it is given unintentionally, conditional acceptance has an unspeakably disastrous effect, because it fails to form the essential bonds of human connection created by Real Love. No matter how much conditional love we receive, we still feel empty, alone, and miserable.

Although we like to believe otherwise, because most of us have received conditional love from others all our lives, that's what we tend to give to those around us. We naturally pass on what we were given.

If you're impatient or angry with your children, do not look to them as the cause. **You're unhappy and unloving in any given moment only because you're not feeling enough unconditional love yourself, a condition that has existed for a long time, usually from early childhood.**

Because your parents are primarily responsible for the love you received as a child, your parents are responsible, to a large extent, for the way you feel and function as an adult and as a parent.

To put it bluntly, if you are an unloving parent—or an unhappy human being, for that matter—it's usually your parents' fault. It is critical, however, that you see this as an explanation of how you became as you are, not as a justification for blaming your parents for your problems.

Any child who doesn't receive sufficient Real Love is filled with emptiness and fear. It therefore follows—with rare exceptions—that a child or adult who is empty and afraid didn't receive enough Real Love, usually from childhood.

Now that you understand the real source of your emptiness, fear, anger, blaming, and other unproductive feelings and behaviors, you're much better equipped to do what it takes to change your behaviors and feelings.

Why We Can't Blame Our Parents

Although your parents are largely responsible for how you came to be as you are, continuing to blame them for your shortcoming or unhappiness is foolish, for at least two reasons.

First, it simply doesn't work. **Blaming them will never make you feel more loved or happy.** If you blame them for how you feel, you can't be happy until they change, and that makes you a slave to them.

As an adult you have become increasingly responsible for your own happiness and behavior, and no matter how much your parents are responsible for the past or present, every step now required to change your life is entirely your responsibility.

If you continue to be resentful and angry about the past, you'll be crippled in your attempts to be happy and to love your children in the present. Blaming will never get you what you really need, so why do it?

The **second** reason it's foolish to blame your parents is that **they loved you as well as they knew how**; they certainly didn't set out to cause you emotional pain. If they didn't have enough experience with Real Love themselves, they couldn't possibly have given you the Real Love you required.

I've never met a parent who got up in the morning and thought, *"Today I could unconditionally love and teach my children and fill their lives with joy. But no, I think I'll be selfish, critical, and demanding instead."*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources will help you replace 'need and fear' with 'peace and confidence' in your personal life, your family life, and in all your relationships:

- A Master Index <https://reallove.com/master-index/> from all the books, blogs, etc. Refer to it a lot.
- Sign up for our monthly newsletter <https://reallove.com/newsletter-signup/> if you haven't already.
- We have (free) conference calls <https://reallove.com/conference-calls/> five times a week, hosted by Certified Real Love Coaches. These are by telephone, not video. We don't keep records of who called and then bombard you with emails, or anything shady like that. The call dial-in number and the schedule are in that link.



CHAPTER 4

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF REAL LOVE

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The Central Role of Real Love®

How much love we have = how we feel.

In this chapter you will learn a valuable metaphor that helps you understand where your anger comes from (and it's not from your children).

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that we understand the central role of Real Love in our lives. When we believe that the behavior of other people in any given moment is the cause of how we feel, we are doomed forever to live in a prison created by the choices they make. What a dismal prospect.

If, on the other hand, we understand that how we feel is determined by how much Real Love we have—as a result of a lifetime of experiences, not just what we're getting in a given moment—we can embark on a lifelong mission of finding Real Love and completely changing how we see and respond to the world.

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Allow me to illustrate the role of Real Love in the following scenario:

Imagine that you're hungry and have only two dollars left in the world. Putting the money on a table, you're getting ready to go out and buy something to eat. Suddenly, I burst into the room, grab the two dollars, and run away before you can stop me.

Almost certainly you'd be angry, and you'd probably say that I caused your anger. Most people would. That seems to make sense. After all, you were fine until I came

in and took your money. When I did that, however, you immediately became angry, so I must be the cause, right?

No. Let's prove that.

Now imagine a different scene.

Again, I burst into the room, grab the two dollars that are sitting on the table and run away before you can stop me. But this time you have twenty million dollars in the next room—all yours.

How would you feel this time? **The loss of two dollars becomes insignificant when you have twenty million, so it's unlikely that you would be angry.** In fact, you might even try to stop me and ask if I could use another two dollars.

Emotional Dollars

We've just proven that I didn't "make you angry" in the first scene. We know that's true, because on both occasions **I** did exactly the same thing—but **you** chose to react differently the second time. If my taking two dollars **made** you angry, you would have been angry on both occasions, but you were not. The truth is, you became angry the first time only because you didn't have twenty million dollars.

This is much more than a cute metaphor. We can see the truth of this principle in real life. Every day other people—including our children—do rude, thoughtless, selfish, inconsiderate things around us, many of which affect us.

People inconvenience us, disappoint us, or attack us, and on each such occasion it's as though they're taking two emotional dollars from us. If those are our **last** two dollars, their behavior is a big deal, but if we have twenty million emotional dollars, losing two dollars becomes meaningless.

When we have enough Real Love in our lives, we feel as though we have twenty million emotional dollars with us all the time. With that greatest of all treasures, the little inconvenient things people do become relatively unimportant.

With Real Love, we have everything that matters. Without it, we become afraid and protect ourselves with anger. Our anger is caused by a lack of Real Love in our own lives, not by what our children or anyone else does in a given moment.

Healing and Repairing

Some people believe that if our childhood was less than perfect, we just need to “get over it,” like a bad dream. They believe that what we were given—or not given—so long ago couldn’t possibly continue to have a serious effect on us now, but without the most important ingredient for happiness, we unavoidably grow up empty and afraid.

You can’t build a solid house on a rotten, shifting foundation. If you were not unconditionally loved as a child, that’s the kind of foundation you have, and no effort you put into the walls, windows, and doors will ever produce the results you want. You must fix the foundation.

Fortunately, as you find Real Love now, you can heal all the wounds of the past, repair the foundation, and become the kind of person and parent you’ve always wanted to be.

In this chapter you learned that our emotional well-being hinges on the amount of Real Love® you have, rather than the actions of others; having ample Real Love allows you to better handle life’s challenges and even amend the emotional shortcomings of our past.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I highly recommend that parents learn a great deal more about the process of receiving and giving Real Love® by reading, viewing, or listening to the following:

[*Real Love and Freedom for the Soul—Breaking the Chains of Victimhood*](#)

Learn how to eliminate anger and achieve a level of peace and freedom.

[*Real Love and Post-Childhood Stress Disorder—Treating Your Unrecognized Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*](#)

Learn the real causes of personal pain and confusion.

Available online at www.reallove.com and Amazon.

Audiobook narrated by Greg Baer available from Audible



CHAPTER 5

ARE YOU ENTIRELY RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR?

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Are You Entirely Responsible for Your Child's Behavior?

But is it really all your fault? Is every child's problem a result of your mistakes?

In this chapter you will learn about taking responsibility, not guilt, for your parenting.

If we perfectly loved a child unconditionally from birth, for example, would he be guaranteed to be happy, loving, obedient, and responsible? In each case, probably not. Other people do play some role in how our children turn out, and inborn genetic influences make a significant contribution.

Then why do I focus on **our** role as parents? Because when we blame anyone or anything else, we unwisely divert our time and energy from what **we** can do to help our children. There is nothing in the world more essential to the emotional health and happiness of a child than Real Love, and **we** are primarily responsible for giving that to our children.

Even though other factors are involved, assuming that we are responsible for the feelings and behavior of our children is simply the most **effective** course we can take as parents. When we take that responsibility, we can entirely focus on what we can do to better love and teach them.

Notice that I said **we take responsibility, not guilt**. Walking around feeling guilty for what you have or haven't done is useless, even destructive. Feeling responsible, however, will help you take effective and productive actions.

The only disadvantage of assuming responsibility for our children is the guilt we might feel when we see our children's misbehavior as evidence of our mistakes. But we've talked about how unnecessary it is to feel guilty when we understand that we've done the best we could with what we had. **We simply can't give our children what we don't have.** Once we get over the hurdle of feeling guilty, being responsible for our children becomes a joy.

Admitting Our Mistakes and Learning to Love Our Children

In school most of us study subjects like geometry and history—despite the fact that we rarely use them in real life—but few of us are trained to help a child to become a responsible, loving, and happy human being, a skill most of us are required to employ every day as we engage in perhaps the most important job on the planet.

In school we learn dates and places and how to solve an equation for x , but we are left breathlessly unprepared for the occasions when a two-year-old stomps her feet and says **no!**, or when a teenager comes home with alcohol on his breath. Being inadequately prepared for the job, we unavoidably make many mistakes as parents. As long as we're willing to admit those mistakes, however, we can learn from them and correct them.

Understandably, we tend to deny our mistakes as parents. None of us like it the first time we look in the mirror and recognize that we have not been the loving parents we always hoped we'd be. Until we acknowledge that, however, we can't begin the process of learning how to love our children in the ways they need.

Ask Yourself the Following Questions

Take your time with this and let go of any need to justify or excuse yourself as a parent.

- When your child is disobedient or inconvenient, do you feel disappointed or angry? That's quite natural, but it's also a certain sign of the conditional love that is so damaging to a child.
- When you give your child a gift—money, material things, or your time—do you feel disappointed or offended if he or she fails to demonstrate appreciation for what you've done? Again, that's a natural reaction, but when we love our children unconditionally, our concern is for **their** happiness, and we do not become offended or hurt when they fail to give us what we want.

- When your children are not obligated to be with you—as they often are at mealtime, for example, or when you drive them where they need to go—do they often choose to spend their free time with you? Children love to be around anyone who unconditionally accepts them and makes a contribution to their happiness. If your children tend to avoid you, it is virtually inconceivable that you are unconditionally loving them.
- When your children behave badly, do you tend to spend less time with them, or perhaps avoid them completely? It's quite understandable that we tend to avoid anyone who behaves in ways we don't like, especially when that person is critical and angry toward us, but our avoidance is a certain sign that we are not getting what **we** want. That attitude is not compatible with Real Love.

Do not feel bad if you notice one or all of the behaviors I just described. Simply make the observation that you are not as unconditionally loving toward your children as you've thought. Once you recognize that, you can begin to do something to change your behavior and make a huge difference in your children's lives.

My Own Experience as a Parent

I know how hard it is to swallow the concept that parents are the primary cause of their children's unhappiness. For many years I did the best I could as a father, but I did not love my children unconditionally. I **couldn't** have—I didn't feel unconditionally loved myself and couldn't give what I didn't have.

So I gave my children the best I had—conditional love. I praised them and “loved” them when they were obedient, successful, grateful, and otherwise “good,” but when they were “bad,” I was disappointed, critical, and often angry.

Regrettably, that kind of love is worthless to a child, and as a result my children felt empty, unloved, and miserable. They reacted with anger, rebellion, withdrawal, and the use of alcohol and drugs. I tried everything I could think of to change their behavior—reason, discipline, pleading, manipulation, bribes, and the application of consequences—but nothing worked until I finally realized that they didn't feel loved by **me**.

Initially, I found that responsibility very heavy to accept, but I made a decision to sacrifice my pride for the sake of their happiness. As I took the steps to find Real

Love for myself and shared it with my children, their behaviors began to change without my doing anything to control them directly.

I have now seen this happen in thousands of families. When children feel loved, they don't need to use the behaviors that worry us, behaviors that are just reactions to their emptiness and pain.

Eventually, children do become responsible for their own feelings and behavior, but for quite some time we must accept that responsibility. If we're willing to do that, we can begin to give our children the greatest gift in the world.

The Three Primary Responsibilities of a Parent

Children need far more than just unconditional acceptance. We have three primary responsibilities toward our children, and we succeed as parents only as we fulfill them:

1. To love our children
2. To teach them how to love other people
3. To teach them responsibility

More simply, we're responsible for loving our children and teaching them what's right. When we do that, they can begin to choose to be loving and happy instead of empty and miserable.

AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Parenthood is potentially the most challenging and rewarding relationship in life. Don't make the mistake which most people do, which is to learn about parenting by trial and error.

Learn what you can do to help your children grow up loved, loving, and responsible as you watch the video streaming series *The Ridiculously Effective Parenting*.

Training—Learn and Master a "[Practical Process to Parenting](#)" and Raise Cooperative, Confident, Creative Children.

Available on RealLoveParents.com and RealLove.com



CHAPTER 6

SUBSTITUTES FOR REAL LOVE: IMITATION LOVE

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Substitutes for Real Love: Imitation Love

When my child behaves badly, he or she does not feel loved.

Understanding how your child uses Imitation Love, as well as the problems with it, will greatly increase your effectiveness as a parent.

In the absence of Real Love, children feel empty and afraid, and in order to eliminate these intolerably painful conditions they use whatever makes them feel better: anger, disobedience, whining, the approval of their peers, sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, and so on.

All these things briefly and superficially fill their emptiness or protect them from their fears, giving them a pale **imitation** of the genuine happiness that can be produced only by Real Love. When these distractions are used as substitutes for Real Love—as they so often are—they become forms of Imitation Love.

We must understand that all the ways our children behave that we find unacceptable—anger, rebellion, and so on—are just the ways they unconsciously get the **Imitation Love that temporarily distracts them from the pain of not having enough Real Love.**

When we understand that, their behavior is no longer as puzzling or frustrating to us. All the forms of Imitation Love—which we also use as adults—fall into one or more of only four general categories: praise, power, pleasure, and safety.

The Seduction of Praise

When children can't have the Real Love they need, they quickly learn that it feels wonderful to be praised for doing what other people like. Children wriggle like scratched puppies when they're told, "You're such a good boy/girl," and they'll do virtually anything to hear such words.

The quest for the satisfaction of approval and praise becomes a central driving force in most children's lives. In early childhood they're eager to do whatever it takes to please their parents and earn their praise.

Eventually, they also devote themselves to winning the praise of their peers. That motivation largely determines the clothes they wear, how they speak, the way they wear their hair, the music they listen to, and the friends they choose.

This pattern of buying the praise of others then continues through adulthood. Most adults base their decisions on winning the approval of others, an approach they learned as children.

On the surface, complimenting children appears to be a good thing. Unless we're filled with Real Love ourselves, however, there are significant dangers commonly associated with praising children:

- We praise them as a form of manipulation to get what we want.
- Children learn to seek praise as a substitute for Real Love (Imitation Love).
- They feel pressured to continue earning our praise and to make us happy.
- They continue to use praise as a form of Imitation Love for the rest of their lives, and it always fails to make them genuinely happy.

Although we often use praise with our children as a form of manipulation, it is possible to praise them in ways that will not encourage their use of praise as a form of Imitation Love.

The Pursuit of Power

When we don't have enough Real Love, we feel empty, alone, afraid, and helpless feelings we will avoid at almost any cost.

On the occasions when we can control the behavior of other people, we experience a sensation of power that briefly gives us a moment of relief from our intolerable sense of helplessness. We also feel a connection—superficial and unhealthy though it might be—to the people we control. Any sense of connection feels better than being completely alone. Regarding the abuse of power, we tend to think of dictators, slave owners, prison guards, and the like.

The most common abusers of power, however, are parents. As adults most of us have little sense of control over most things in our lives. We can't control the government, the traffic, the weather, our co-workers, our bosses, our spouses, and so on, but we've discovered that when we angrily bark at a young child, he or she tends to move more quickly.

Although it's rarely intentional, we do get a feeling of power from controlling our children, and it's natural that we then tend to repeat the behaviors that give us that feeling.

Children use power for the same reasons we do. Being small and weak relative to adults, children often feel helpless. When they can control the people and things around them, however, they feel less powerless, more connected, and less afraid.

Infants are delighted, for example, to learn that when they push an object, it moves; when they cry, people come running; when they push food off the table, it splatters on the floor and people scurry to clean it up.

A three-year-old utterly controls his mother while she chases him through a grocery store, and you can easily see on his face that he loves the experience.

In the beginning, these exercises of power can be quite innocent and even healthy, but they become harmful when they're used as substitutes for Real Love.

As children get older, they continue to explore their enjoyment of power. Usually unconsciously, children discover that with disobedience, defiance, and rebellion they can achieve a sense of power over their parents and others.

Power gives them momentary relief from the painful feelings of loneliness and helplessness that always accompany a lack of Real Love. It's no mystery, for example, that children go through the "terrible twos."

A child that age simply discovers the exhilaration of the power he wields when he says the word **no**. Power over other people is a seductive pleasure, one that our children often learn to use all their lives.

Children learn much about the effect of power by watching us. As they see how we love to gain an advantage over our opponents in athletic contests, in business, and in arguments, they learn to do the same.

When we attempt to control the behavior of other people in any way, we're using power as a form of Imitation Love. Consider how often we attempt to get people to do things our way or to believe as we do. Our children observe us as we do all that, especially as we do it with them.

Though we may not like to admit it, we teach our children in many ways that success and happiness are found in exercising power over other people. Curiously, we're then offended when they practice their growing powers on us—when they dare to resist us, for example, while we're trying to control **them**.

The Use of Pleasure

In the absence of Real Love, we eagerly pursue any activity that feels good and distracts us from our pain. As adults, we use sex, food, travel, gambling, shopping, and other forms of entertainment to temporarily diminish the discomfort of feeling unloved and alone.

When we can't give our children the Real Love they need most, we often give them the pleasure of toys, phones, video games, television, money, cars, and leisure time instead. We do this because we hope:

- we can make them happy.
- we can substitute these things for spending time with our children.
- we'll look like good parents—to them and to others.
- we'll earn their gratitude, however brief.
- we'll avoid the complaints we hear when children **don't** get what they want.
- we'll feel less guilty for the times we behaved badly toward them.

Pleasure feels good for a moment, but it never lasts, nor can it take the place of Real Love. In addition, when we try to satisfy our children with pleasure, we teach them to spend the rest of their lives desperately trying to find happiness in excitement and entertainment—an approach that always fails.

The Solace of Safety

If our children can't get enough praise, power, and pleasure, they'll do whatever it takes to prevent any additional discomfort, like the pain that accompanies our criticism and disapproval. That's why they lie to us, get angry, sulk, and avoid us—all to avoid the sting of our disappointment and anger. In order to feel safe, they engage in the very behaviors we dislike.

In many cases, children who appear to be obedient and cooperative are really just doing what they're told in order to buy safety from their parents. These children don't feel genuinely loved, just safe.

Many of them grow up to feel manipulated, alone, unhappy, and resentful that they were imprisoned by fear all those years. Safety does feel temporarily better than the acute pain of fear, but it's no substitute for feeling loved.

Imitation Love—Identifying It, Trading It, and the Problems with It

Don't focus too much on identifying categories. In the end, it doesn't matter **which** form of Imitation Love a child uses as a substitute for Real Love. All forms of Imitation Love become deadly distractions.

If Imitation Love is all we have to give our children, and if we call it "love," our children naturally believe it's the real thing, and then they work hard to get as much of it as they can. Even though the effects are superficial and brief, Imitation Love still makes them feel good. To ensure a steady supply of it, they give us Imitation Love, too—their gratitude and obedience, for example. In the absence of sufficient Real Love we receive this as praise and power.

The more Imitation Love our children give us, the more we give them. We're quite unaware that we're doing this, but we're **trading** Imitation Love with one another, and we prove that it's not Real Love every time we're disappointed or angry with our children.

There is no disappointment or anger in Real Love. Although this trading of Imitation Love does feel good temporarily, our children don't get the Real Love they badly need, and that leaves them feeling empty and alone.

The problem with unhappy children is always the same: they don't have enough Real Love in their lives. It really is that simple. We "love" them when they're good, and we "love" them less when they make mistakes and inconvenience us.

No matter how much praise, power, pleasure and safety they accumulate, they cannot be genuinely happy. Imitation Love is so deadly because it provides enough pleasure that children develop the hope that they'll be happy if they get enough of it.

The frantic search for Imitation Love is guaranteed to leave everyone feeling frustrated, alone, and miserable.

As we learn how to unconditionally love our children and teach them, they find the kind of happiness that is genuine and lasting. **In the presence of Real Love, Imitation Love becomes useless and therefore loses its seductive power.**

In this chapter you learned that children often resort to Imitation Love—such as seeking praise, power, pleasure, and safety—when they don't feel genuinely loved. Understanding this concept can significantly improve your parenting effectiveness by helping you recognize and address the root cause of your child's undesirable behaviors, which is the absence of Real Love®.

AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Use the [Pearls of Real Love](#) deck of cards to shape your thoughts and behavior and bring you the happiness and fulfilling relationships you've always wanted. Available in the store on RealLove.com.



CHAPTER 7

GETTING AND PROTECTING BEHAVIORS

*Real*LOVE.com®

Getting and Protecting Behaviors

Without Real Love, children will do almost anything to get rid of their feelings of emptiness and fear.

Learn about the use of Getting and Protecting Behaviors: lying, attacking, acting like victims, and clinging, and running and how your child uses them.

Feeling unloved and alone is unbearably painful. In that condition, children are afraid of anything that might add to their pain, and understandably they see that potential in virtually every experience. To protect themselves they use **Protecting Behaviors**: lying, attacking, acting like victims, and running.



We'll discuss the individual Getting and Protecting Behaviors below. They include all the behaviors we call "bad," and we need to remember that our **children do these things only because they're empty and afraid**, conditions we largely caused. Contrary to what we often believe, they don't behave badly for the primary purpose of inconveniencing, disappointing, irritating, or hurting us. They're trying only to protect themselves and get the Imitation Love that temporarily makes them feel less unloved and alone. When we believe that, our attitude toward them will change dramatically.

Lying

Lying is both a Getting and a Protecting Behavior.

Children don't lie because they're bad, which is often what we imply as we angrily confront them with their lies. They lie because they discovered at an early age that when they inconvenience us, we frown, sigh with disappointment, raise our voices, and physically and emotionally pull away from them.

Lying is one of the first skills they learn that enable them to avoid the painful withdrawal of our acceptance and love. They also lie in the hope that the favorable impression they create will persuade people to like them.

Most of us have loved our children conditionally. We certainly haven't intended to hurt them, but when they haven't done what we've expected, they have felt from our disappointment that we haven't loved them on those occasions, and **they've been correct** in that judgment.

We have loved them as well as we could, but we haven't loved them unconditionally and, that's the only kind of love that counts.

Children are terrified that we'll withdraw our affection from them when we see who they really are—with all their mistakes and flaws. Their fear is understandable because on many occasions, we **have** withdrawn our approval when they've inconvenienced and disappointed us, and then they have felt unloved and alone.

Unable to bear the pain of seeing our disappointment and anger, they've learned to hide their mistakes. When they've lied, we've expressed our disappointment and anger far less.

As I've talked with people about lying—like hiding our mistakes—many of them have said something like, "Oh come on. That's not really lying. Everybody does those things to create a favorable impression of themselves. It's natural—what's the big deal? What's wrong with it?"

Certainly, I agree that it's natural for us to want people to like us, and if a little deception will help us achieve that goal, we'll usually do it without hesitation. But it's still lying, because we're not telling the truth.

We don't like the word **lying**—and avoid admitting that we do it—because there's an implication that lying is intentional, and that those who do it are "bad."

Contrary to that belief, we mostly lie reflexively and unconsciously, to protect ourselves and to fill our emptiness. This doesn't justify lying, but it certainly makes it understandable.

What's Wrong with Lying?

Why am I making such a fuss about our lies? What's so terribly wrong with these unconscious lies we tell as we try to create a good impression and avoid the disapproval of others?

What we all want most is to feel the unconditional love of others, to know that they care about our happiness regardless of our mistakes, flaws, and fears.

Before you can feel my unconditional concern for your happiness (Real Love), however, you first must feel that I unconditionally accept you for who you really are. You can't feel loved until you first feel accepted, which we can illustrate with the following brief diagram:

Accepted → Loved

Similarly, you can't feel that I accept who you really are until you're certain that I actually see who you really are:

Seen → Accepted → Loved

And you can't be certain that I see who you really are until you tell me the truth about yourself:

Truth → Seen → Accepted → Loved

The process of feeling unconditionally loved can begin only when you tell the truth about yourself. **The tragedy of lying, therefore, is that when we lie, we simply can't feel loved.**

Lying Guarantees that You Will Feel Alone

Let's suppose that in a conversation you tell me several flattering things about yourself for the purpose of getting me to like you. That's not difficult to imagine, because most of us do exactly that every day without thinking.

And let's further suppose that your lies are successful, persuading me to indicate verbally and non-verbally that I like you. You might experience a brief sense of satisfaction from this, but in reality, my acceptance will be worthless, because deep inside you know I don't really see you.

Even if the things you tell me are true, you know I see only the small part of you that you have put on display to make me like you. You have put your best foot forward, and now you have to hide the rest of you—the parts that are selfish, angry, and afraid, for example—so I won't see who you really are.

Under those conditions, you can't possibly feel genuinely accepted by me, even if I express positive feelings about you—even if I love you unconditionally. You're alone. Your lies make it impossible for you to feel truly loved.

Whenever you do anything at all to get someone to like you, it's as though you're putting up a false image of yourself—a cardboard cutout of you looking your best. And then **you** are not really there at all. You're not even present in the relationship.

No matter what affection you earn from the people around you, their relationship is with the **image** you project, not with you, and then you are guaranteed to feel alone.

Why Children Lie

It works the same with your children. If you express disappointment or irritation on the occasions, they behave badly—which almost all parents do—your children will almost certainly begin a pattern of lying in order to avoid the withdrawal of your approval. Children tend to lie in the following ways:

- They deny their mistakes. You ask who broke the window, and he replies, "I don't know, Mother," even though he did it.

- They blame others. You confront two of them about a loud argument they're having, and they both say the other one "started it."
- They say what you want them to say. They say, "Thank you" every time you do something for them, but only because they've learned that you get angry when they don't express their gratitude, not because they're actually grateful.
- They do what you want them to do, even though that's not what they want to do. They take piano lessons, for example, or play Little League, or whatever, just because they know you want them to, not because it's something they really want to do.

These "little lies" may seem innocent enough, but as soon as a child does anything at all to win your approval, he or she is projecting an image that's not true, and then that child cannot feel loved unconditionally.

The moment children hide their mistakes and flaws, they feel separated from people and alone, and that is why lying is so bad for our children—because it makes them feel unloved. As parents, we selfishly feel personally offended when our children lie to us. We fail to see the terrible effect that it has on **them**.

Ironically, although hiding—lying—temporarily reduces the disapproval our children feel, their lies actually cause them to feel alone, the condition they hate most. And unless they find a source of unconditional love, they will continue to hide and lie for the rest of their lives—like most of us do now as adults.

The Solution

You can learn all about how you and your children can break out of this pattern of lying and how you can find the Real Love that will bring you genuine happiness and loving relationships in the *Ridiculously Effective Parenting Training* and in the *Real Love in Parents* book.

Attacking

Attacking is any behavior that motivates people with **fear** to do what we want. Anger, criticism, withdrawal of approval, intimidation, sarcasm, guilt, and the use of authority and power are all forms of attacking. We often attack when we're

afraid, hoping to scare people away who might hurt us. Attacking is then a Protecting Behavior.

We also use attacking as a Getting Behavior, to manipulate people to give us what we want when we feel unloved and empty. The most common form of attacking is anger, and we use this a great deal with our children.

Our children learn to use anger as a Getting and Protecting Behavior in the same ways we did:

- They use anger because that's what they've seen us use over and over with them and with others.
- They use anger because with their own experience they've learned that it's an effective tool for protecting themselves and for getting Imitation Love.
- They use anger because they don't know what else to do when they feel afraid and alone.

We must understand that our children get angry only because they don't feel loved. They get angry to protect themselves and to get Imitation Love in the form of praise, power, and safety. They discover that when they're angry, they don't feel as empty and helpless, two feelings they hate.

With anger, they can also get people to do things for them and stop hurting them. Notice how adults hurry and pay attention to a child who's having a fit. Children see these reactions, and that's why they throw their tantrums. Children who feel unconditionally loved and genuinely happy have no need to get angry. **With Real Love, anger simply has no purpose.**

Acting Like Victims

If I appear pathetic and helpless enough—if I act like a victim—I can attract your sympathy and accomplish two things: you might not hurt me (acting like a victim as a Protecting Behavior) and you might give me what I want (acting like a victim as a Getting Behavior). When people act like victims, they work with three tools:

- "Look at what you—or someone—did **to** me (protecting)."
- "Look at what you—or someone—should have done **for** me (getting)."
- "It's not my fault (getting and protecting)."

To those who believe they are victims, everything is unfair. They believe people should do things for them and never inconvenience them. Using expectations, demands, and guilt, they make other people feel responsible for making them happy. Their favorite words are **but** and **should**. If they make mistakes, there is always an excuse. Victims claim that nothing is ever their fault, and if we dare to dispute them, we are painted as insensitive and unkind. If we push victims to accept responsibility for their behavior, they make us feel guilty for hurting them, which justifies even further their victimhood.

The Importance of Identifying Victim Behavior

In our society, people act like victims so commonly that we've come to accept this behavior as normal. We must be able to identify victim behavior, or we'll be unable to do anything about it. Following are some examples of children acting like victims.

- When we talk to them about a mistake they've made, they say, "I couldn't help it." They're claiming they had no responsibility for their own choices and were helpless victims of circumstance or of the actions of other people. That is rarely a true claim.
- When we tell them they can't buy something, they say, "But all my friends have one; it's not fair." They're claiming to be victimized by us in the hope that we'll feel obligated to eliminate this grave injustice by giving them what they want.
- When we tell them they can't go somewhere, they counter with, "But everybody else is going."
- When we tell them they can't do something, they get that pathetic look on their faces as they say, "Pleeease." They imply that if we continue to ignore their pleas, we are unbelievably selfish and cruel.
- When we ask why an assigned task isn't done, they say, "I didn't have time."
- When children act hurt, and when they sulk, they're acting like victims. They've learned that the more wounded they appear, the less likely we are to punish them, and the more likely they are to get what they want and get away with unacceptable behavior.
- Children often choose to wait till the last minute to study for a test in school. Then when they're poorly prepared and get a bad grade, they blame the teacher for giving a "hard" or "unfair" test. They falsely portray themselves as victims.

In short, children who act like victims are spoiled, irresponsible, and lazy. They learn these beliefs and behaviors from us. We teach them to act like victims when we allow them to manipulate us and when we set the example of victimhood ourselves.

We don't intend to do it, but we encourage our children to act like victims when we're quick to give them sympathy and when we rescue them instead of satisfying their real need for acceptance and guidance.

When they use victimhood as a Getting Behavior, we tend to give them what they **want** instead of what they **need**. Children who are loved and taught to be responsible don't need to act like victims to protect themselves and get what they want.

Children often learn to act like victims by watching us. When a child behaves in a way we don't like, we commonly say something like, "I'm disappointed in you," or "How could you do such a thing?" Or, perhaps more often, we indicate our disappointment without words—when we silently spear a child with a disgusted expression, for example.

We act like they've hurt us, because then they'll feel guilty, and they'll be more likely to do what we want and not do the things we disapprove of. The message we communicate to our children is "How could you possibly do this—**to me!!**" Without realizing it, we act like enormous victims with our own children, making them responsible for our happiness.

Running

If we simply move away from a source of pain, we're less likely to be hurt. Withdrawing, avoiding people, leaving relationships, and being shy are all forms of running. So are drugs and alcohol.

Children most often run from us by simply avoiding us. Not many teenagers come home from school and look for us so they can get a hug and have a conversation. They tend to stay away from us, and that's because we give them disapproval and criticism instead of the love they need.

Although running can be an effective form of protection, the cost is high, because the runner is always alone. As we learn to love our children, they lose the need to run from us. They naturally want to be with people who make them feel loved.

Clinging

Clinging is a Getting Behavior. We see it in a young child who can't stand to be out of his mother's sight, clinging tightly to her leg. That behavior can be healthy at an early age, but many of us—because we enjoy the feeling of being indispensable in their lives—encourage our children to continue clinging to us emotionally far longer than is appropriate.

In what ways do we cling to our children and encourage them to cling to us?

- When we voice our approval or disapproval of everything they do, thereby teaching them that our approval is essential in their lives. Essentially, we encourage them to be dependent on us all their lives.
- When we offer excessive sympathy on the occasions when they suffer injustice. By doing so, we teach them to cling to the soothing sympathy we offer.
- When we say, "Give Mommy (or Daddy) a kiss." This seems like such an innocent expression, but it tells our children that we need their affection. We're clinging to our children for love.
- When we allow our adult children to live with us far too long.

When children cling, and when we cling to them, they can't become independent and happy human beings.

AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Join the *Real Love in Parenting* community on Facebook.

"Follow" [The Real Love Company](#) and [Ridiculously Effective Parenting](#) Pages.

Join a Real Love Facebook Group; [Real Love](#), [Real Love Parenting](#).



CHAPTER 8

SEEING YOUR CHILD'S GETTING AND PROTECTING BEHAVIORS

*Real*LOVE.com®

Seeing Your Child's Getting and Protecting Behaviors

Children get a brief sense of connection to the people who give them these forms of Imitation Love.

In this chapter you will learn the consequences of children using Getting and Protecting Behaviors.

Most of our children use Getting and Protecting Behaviors every day. It may be instructive to look at a few more of them. They are getting and protecting:

- when they argue with us or their siblings (attacking).
- when they avoid us (running).
- when they worry about earning the approval of friends with their choice of clothes, hair, and behavior (lying).
- when they play video games all day (running).
- when they make excuses about how they “couldn’t help it” (victim).
- when they use drugs and alcohol (running).
- when they hide their mistakes (lying).
- when they complain about what they don’t have (victim).
- when they get frustrated and irritated at the little things that happen around them (victim, attacking).

The Consequences of Getting and Protecting

With Getting and Protecting Behaviors, children purchase praise, power, pleasure, and safety. They get a brief sense of connection to the people who give them these forms of Imitation Love, and they temporarily feel less helpless and alone, but they still don't feel unconditionally loved or happy. In fact, Getting and Protecting Behaviors actually make it impossible for them to feel loved.

It's Real Love when other people care about **my** happiness without any concern for what **they** might get. It's Real Love when I care about someone else's happiness with no thought for my own reward. Real Love is always a gift freely given and freely received. It's a genuine caring that cannot be manipulated, traded, or forced.

Without Real Love, it's natural that we manipulate people to get attention, praise, and power, but the moment we do **anything** to get those things (Getting Behaviors) or to avoid fear and pain (Protecting Behaviors), what we receive is not a gift freely offered and can be **felt only** as Imitation Love.

When we use Getting and Protecting Behaviors with other people, we can't feel the moments of genuine acceptance they may offer us from time to time. We can **feel** only Imitation Love. With our Getting and Protecting Behaviors, we effectively turn gold into lead. The same happens with our children. When they use Getting and Protecting Behaviors with us, they can't feel our love—what a tragedy.

Perhaps the greatest danger of our children using Getting and Protecting Behaviors is that they seem to work, at least temporarily. These behaviors provide enough Imitation Love and superficial "happiness" that our children are distracted from their pursuit of Real Love. For that reason, we must teach our children not to use these behaviors.

I teach you how you can eliminate the Getting and Protecting Behaviors in your children in the *Ridiculously Effective Parenting Training* and in the *Real Love in Parents* book. The scope of this Guide was to help you understand their behavior.

AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Having emotionally healthy parents is ideal for raising emotionally healthy, grounded, confident children. But life is rarely ideal, so let's talk briefly about the solution to restoring marriages so strong, united parents are capable of leading their families.

No matter how many wounds have been inflicted in a marriage, they can be healed, giving both partners the sense of fulfillment and joy they've always wanted. Learn:

- Why our spouses are not the root cause of how we feel and behave
- The truth about why we get angry with our spouses and argue with them
- How to eliminate—not just manage—anger and conflict
- How to identify what we need to change about ourselves
- How you and your partner can both get what you want out of the marriage
- How you can break the cycles of expectation and disappointment
- How to prevent divorce, and how to know when it's the right option

There are no quick solutions to fixing a marriage. With Real Love®, you can begin to heal the wounds of the past and cultivate the lifelong commitment to stay with your partner while learning how to unconditionally love him or her.

Read [Real Love in Marriage: The Truth About Finding Genuine Happiness Now and Forever](#), and use the accompanying [workbook](#) which will force you to take the principles personally.

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Many individuals who are single also have the responsibility of raising children, either as a parent, stepparent, or in blended family situations.

If you are looking for your 'perfect partner', [Real Love in Dating](#) will help you build a foundation to help you understand yourself and the people you date.



CHAPTER 9

THE POWER OF SEEING THE CAUSE OF GETTING AND PROTECTING BEHAVIORS

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The Power of Seeing the Cause of Getting and Protecting Behaviors

After we understand the pivotal role of Real Love, and that Getting and Protecting Behaviors naturally result when we have insufficient Real Love, we can begin to see our children as they really are.

In this chapter you will learn how you can feel differently about your children and treat them much differently.

The Drowning Metaphor

In order to illustrate the power of changing our perceptions, imagine for a moment that you and I are in the Bahamas. The weather is delightful: perfect temperature, little humidity, and a slight breeze causing the palm trees to sway. We're eating lunch by the side of a pool, and you're listening to your favorite music from a live band in the distance.

As we're enjoying this perfect day, you notice that someone in the pool next to you is splashing you with water—first on your shoes, then higher up on your pants or legs or dress. You can't see who's splashing you because there's a deck chair between you and the person in the pool.

At first you ignore the splashing, but you're beginning to get really wet, and finally you become irritated and get up from your chair to say something to this idiot who's being so thoughtless. As you stand up to say something to him, you look over the chair that was in your way, and you see that the man splashing you is . . . **drowning.**

Instantly you realize that all this time he's been thrashing in the water only to keep his own head above water. He wasn't trying to splash **you** at all.

How do you feel now? Are you still angry at this man? Of course not—who in their right mind could be angry at someone who's drowning? In fact, as soon as you see why he's splashing you, not only do you lose your irritation, but you eagerly extend a pole to help him out of the water.

Let's ask some important questions about this event:

- How long did it take for your feelings of anger to be replaced by a feeling of complete acceptance? It happened in an instant. As soon as you understood that the man was drowning, your anger vanished.
- After seeing the truth of the situation, how much effort did you exert to control your anger? None. When you saw that the man was splashing you only in an effort to save himself, your anger simply disappeared. You didn't have to **control** yourself or **work** to make your anger go away.
- What did the drowning man have to do to persuade you to help him? Did he have to pay you? Apologize to you? Beg you? Of course not. You offered him your assistance without any conditions.

This is remarkable. With a single moment of understanding, you traveled the emotional spectrum from angry to not angry to unconditional concern for his well-being—the definition of Real Love®.

Achieving a Miraculous Change in Attitude

You can achieve this kind of miraculous change in attitude in real life too. Picture for a moment someone in your life who is irritating. Now picture his or her behaviors that annoy you. Can you now see that every one of those behaviors is one or more of the Getting and Protecting Behaviors?

Without exception, that is the case. And people use Getting and Protecting Behaviors for what reason? Because they're empty and afraid, a result of not having enough Real Love. Their need for Real Love is just as critical as the need of a drowning man for air.

All the people in your life who are behaving badly—including your children—are just drowning, and they're using Getting and Protecting Behaviors only to keep their own heads above water. Their drowning has nothing to do with you. It's not personal. Nobody drowns **to you**.

As people do their very best to keep from drowning, however, it's inevitable that they will splash the people around them, and the closer you are to them, the more you'll be affected. With an understanding of Real Love and Getting and Protecting Behaviors, the way you feel toward other people in real life—notably your children—can change just as quickly and dramatically as your feelings changed toward the man in the pool.

You now realize that without sufficient Real Love—without the single most important ingredient required for happiness—people feel like they're drowning all the time, and then they'll use the Getting and Protecting Behaviors that allow them temporarily to keep their heads above water. Regrettably, as they're splashing in the water with these behaviors, they often affect the rest of us in negative ways.

When you understand that, the effect is powerful:

- Your feelings change immediately. When you understand that every time your children use Getting and Protecting Behaviors, they're simply drowning—not trying primarily to annoy **you**—you can't stay angry at them for one minute longer.
- You don't have to work at controlling your anger. It just goes away.
- Your negative feelings are actually replaced by a desire to help your drowning child.

When your head understands, your heart can follow. When children behave badly, they're just using the Getting and Protecting Behaviors—which certainly can be inconvenient to us—that are inevitable when they don't feel loved.

It's especially sobering when we realize that **our** failure to love them sufficiently is the primary **cause** of their behaviors. With these realizations, we can gain a desire to love and teach them when they behave badly, rather than to control their behavior for our own benefit.



CHAPTER 10

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO NEXT

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CHAPTER
10

Here's What You Can Do Next

You've completed *The Ultimate Parenting Guide and Parenting Tips*, which means you are part of an exclusive group of parents who understand that their child's behavior is motivated by pain, fear, and emptiness.

Simply by applying the understanding you have gained in this Guide, you will already be able to feel more peace.

So what's next?

The foundations you've laid as you've gone through this Guide are solid—they'll help you understand yourself and your child and start making headway to raising a happy, loving, and responsible child.

We can say with utmost confidence you'll see improved reactions in yourself and improved behavior in your child.

But the wonderful thing about Real Love Parenting is that there's no limit to what you can achieve. Your next step is to develop your parenting skills so that you can raise a confident, cooperative, creative child.

That's how you achieve real peace as a parent: creating and living a life based on Real Love principles.

Ready To Level Up Your Parenting?

If you want to make parenting more fun and start implementing the principles you've learned in this guide along with the skills to execute them, you're going to want to join *The Ridiculously Effective Parenting Training*.

You'll get access to:

- ✓ 45 hours of streamed video training.
- ✓ Care and personal attention from Greg.
- ✓ Access to hundreds of archived Video and Written Answers.
- ✓ Indexed support material with hundreds of pages and topics.
- ✓ Private Facebook support group.
- ✓ Access to conference call archives with Greg.
- ✓ Weekly parenting newsletter with tips and lessons.



You'll rest easy knowing you have learned and mastered a practical process to parenting and you will have access to the trainings and community you need TO RAISE A CHILD WHO IS CONFIDENT, COOPERATIVE AND CREATIVE.

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