

**PREPARING
CHILDREN
FOR
SUCCESS
IN SCHOOL
AND LIFE**

Second Edition

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**PREPARING
CHILDREN
FOR
SUCCESS
IN SCHOOL
AND LIFE**

20 Ways to Increase
Children's Brain Power

Second Edition

MARCIA L. TATE

Foreword by Debbie Silver

CORWIN

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FOR INFORMATION:

Corwin
A SAGE Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
(800) 233-9936
www.corwin.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
18 Cross Street #10-10/11/12
China Square Central
Singapore 048423

President: Mike Soules
Vice President and
Editorial Director: Monica Eckman
Publisher: Jessica Allan
Senior Content Development
Editor: Lucas Schleicher
Associate Content Development
Editor: Mia Rodriguez
Editorial Assistant: Natalie Delpino
Production Editor: Toni Mueadjadi
Copy Editor: Megan Speer-Levi
Typesetter: C&M Digitals (P) Ltd.
Cover Designer: Gail Buschman
Marketing Manager: Olivia Bartlett

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FOREWORD

I first heard about Dr. Marcia Tate shortly after she began presenting workshops based on her best-selling book *Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites*. My colleagues who had seen her kept telling me that her professional development sessions were like no other. As an author and presenter, I was curious to see what was unique about her work and her delivery. What I found is that she is a seasoned educator, mother, and grandmother who is full of wisdom and grace. She seems to look directly into the hearts and minds of her audience as she states her simple truths and offers precise advice on how to “do better.”

It's hard to imagine a reader who is not already familiar with Dr. Tate, but if by chance this is your first encounter with her work, prepare to be engaged, informed, and inspired. Known for her up-to-date research-based information and strategies, Dr. Tate takes writing and presenting to a new level. She engages her audiences not only by having us make plans for action but also by providing us the time and space to practice the tips she offers. Throughout this book readers will find explicit interactive opportunities to read the understandable information, reflect on its implications for their own lives, and plan strategies that will work in their personal circumstances.

This book takes us on a journey of what we can do from the prenatal stage to the developing adult stage to help children learn to live successful lives. Along the way we learn about how to better communicate with children and how to create a home environment conducive to helping our young ones thrive. Dr. Tate gives us specific advice about dealing with children who are neurotypical as well as those who are wired

a little differently. She gives us concrete steps for handling even the toughest challenges with our kids.

This edition contains updated research and an insightful look at the effects of the COVID pandemic, along with escalating social tensions. Dr. Tate has traveled the world presenting for and listening to over half a million educators and parents. She gives uncomplicated advice in a reader-friendly manner that can be revisited periodically to assess how things are going.

Reading this book feels like having a conversation with a knowledgeable, trusted friend. Dr. Tate weaves essential concepts with personal stories and observations. Her realistic recommendations are supported by common sense and a variety of approaches to accommodate different parenting styles. Every parent and educator who reads this book will be nodding their heads, thinking, *Yes, this will work. I'm going to start doing this better.*

As I finished reading this revised edition of *Preparing Children for Success in School and Life*, my initial reaction was, “Where was this book when I was a new mom who needed exactly this kind of guidance and affirmation?” Immediately I started a mental list of all the expectant parents and new and struggling parents and teachers I wanted to send this book to. I believe *Preparing Children for Success in School and Life* should be required reading for every adult who presently or potentially will act as an advocate for a child. It is that good!

—Debbie Silver, teacher, consultant, and author of *Fall Down 7 Times, Get Up 8: Raising and Teaching Self-Motivated Learners, K–12* (Corwin, 2021)

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Being an effective parent is probably more difficult today than ever before. However, some people are doing it well on a daily basis. Families come in all shapes and sizes. There are two-parent, single-parent, and foster families; there are grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts, uncles, sisters, and brothers who all fulfill the critical role of *parent*. You see, true parents are not the people who simply give birth. Parents are the people who strive to meet the everyday physical, mental, social, and emotional needs of the beautiful children who are blessed to be within their care.

This book is dedicated to those parents who desire to become better at what they do daily. It is my belief that no matter how great a parent one strives to be, each day, that parent should set specific goals to become better. This book will enable you to do just that! With the inception of the pandemic and the world changing as it is, if we are not working to improve, then we begin to move backward. I strive every day to become a better wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend to the important people in my life.

This book is also devoted to my parents, Alvin, a Methodist minister under whose administration two churches were built in the Atlanta, Georgia, area, and Eurica, my mother and Alvin's devoted wife for more than 35 years before he passed away. My parents equipped me and my two sisters, Ann and Eleanor, with values, morals, and the belief that we were capable of accomplishing whatever we put our minds to and worked hard to achieve. We all have been very successful both professionally and personally, in great part thanks to them!

This book is also dedicated to our three children, Jennifer, Jessica, and Christopher, of whom I am so proud. There were times when Tyrone and I were not necessarily at our best as parents, but despite our efforts, you persevered, and you should be pleased with the wonderful adult human beings you have become. When I look at you, I realize that your dad and I must have done something right. You are also making wonderful parents for your own children, our nine grandchildren.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Corwin, particularly my editor, Jessica Allan. I am honored to be this book's author and feel that it has the capability to make a positive difference in the lives of parents and their children everywhere.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Marcia L. Tate, EdD, is the former executive director of professional development for the DeKalb County School System in Decatur, Georgia. During her 30-year career with the district, she has been a classroom teacher, reading specialist, language arts coordinator, and staff development executive director.

Marcia is currently an educational consultant and has taught over 500,000 administrators, teachers, parents, and business and community leaders throughout the world. She is the author of the eight books in the best-selling *Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites* series and four additional books: *Formative Assessment in a Brain-Compatible Classroom: How Do We Really Know They're Learning?*, *100 Brain-Friendly Lessons for Unforgettable Teaching and Learning K–8*, and *100 Brain-Friendly Lessons for Unforgettable Teaching and Learning 9–12*, and her latest book, *Healthy Teachers, Happy Classrooms*, which is designed to address both the personal and professional lives of all educators. Participants in her workshops refer to them as some of the best ones they have ever experienced, since Marcia uses the 20 strategies outlined in her books to actively engage her audiences.

Marcia received her bachelor's degree in psychology and elementary education from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. She earned her master's degree in remedial reading from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, her specialist degree in educational leadership from Georgia State University, and her doctorate in educational leadership from Clark Atlanta University.

Marcia is married to Tyrone Tate and is the proud mother of three children: Jennifer, Jessica, and Christopher, and grandmother of nine grandchildren: Christian, Aidan, Maxwell, Aaron, Roman, Shiloh, Aya, Noah, and Alyssa.

Marcia and her husband own the company Developing Minds, Inc., and can be contacted by calling the company at (770) 918-5039, e-mailing her at marciata@bellsouth.net, or visiting her website at www.developingmindsinc.com. You can also follow her on Twitter and Instagram at @DrMarciaTate.

PART I

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE

To understand the purpose of this book, we will use the brain-compatible strategies of storytelling, visualization, and metaphor. Visualize, if you will, two cans of Coca-Cola. One can is unopened and filled to the brim with liquid. The other can is totally empty. Imagine yourself taking your bare hands and attempting to crush the full can of Coke. Try as you might, it will be very difficult, at best, to crush the can. There may be a few dents or dings on the outside of the can, but it will remain virtually intact. Now try to crush the empty can of Coke. It should be very easy to collapse since there is nothing inside the can to prevent you from doing so.

This demonstration is a metaphor for the way some parents choose to raise their children. Like the full can of Coca-Cola, some parents *fill their children* with the principles essential for a successful life. Therefore, when these children are bombarded by outside influences that would *crush their healthy existence*, such as negative peer pressure, inappropriate role models from the media, or enticements to engage in detrimental behavior, it may have little to no effect on their inner being. Other parents who do not take the time or bother

to fill their children, develop human beings who are easily crushed by outside influences or who look to other things to fill their cans.

This book will attempt to recommend essential strategies for filling the cans of your children. It is a compilation of the following life-changing programs I have been trained to teach to people around the world:

- Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*
- Don Lowry's True Colors system, a personality and temperament inventory that identifies the strengths and challenges of all people
- *The Power of Positive Thinking*, a course I developed based on the extraordinary things that happen when people think positively, as well as on the book *The Power of Positive Thinking in Business*, by Scott W. Ventrella
- My book on classroom management, *Shouting Won't Grow Dendrites: 20 Techniques for Managing a Brain-Compatible Classroom*
- My book on brain-compatible teaching, *Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites: 20 Instructional Strategies That Engage the Brain*
- My personal experiences as a wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, administrator, and professional development leader for almost 50 years

These programs are replete with strategies for filling children of any age with the values and morals essential for healthy mental, physical, social, and emotional growth and development. Enjoy your journey through the pages of this book, and set goals to become a better parent and person for having read it!

CHAPTER 1

.....

DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD

Rules without relationships lead to rebellion.

—McDowell (2011)

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Since relationships form the basis of every interaction among human beings, it is only fitting that the initial chapter deal with the parent-child relationship. Relationships are everything! In fact, according to Runkel (2017) in his book *Screamfree Parenting: How to Raise Amazing Adults by Learning to Pause More and React Less*, in relationship battles, there are no victors, only casualties. I have personally observed blended families where a stepparent moves into the home and does not bother to develop a relationship with the stepchildren. Then, when the stepparent tries to tell the stepchildren what to do or what time to be home, the reply becomes, *You can't tell me what to do! You are not my mother!* or *You are not my father!* On the other hand, when the stepparent takes the time and effort to bond with the stepchild and develops a relationship with them, when the stepparent asks the child to

do something or not to do something, the child is more likely to comply. In fact, keeping even small promises and commitments is essential to building trust (Covey, 2014). That trust grows with a sustained relationship.



When people have strong emotional bank accounts with other people through the deposits of courtesy, kindness, honesty, and keeping commitments, a reserve of trust is built up that compensates for any shortcomings. When the trust account is high, communication is easy and effective (Covey, 2020).

There is a concept known as the *emotional bank account*, which I learned about as I was being trained to teach *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. This concept literally changed our family life! It uses the brain strategy of metaphor and compares our relationships with people in life to a bank account, but not a monetary bank account; it is a relationship or emotional bank account. Just like with our financial accounts, we make emotional deposits and withdrawals as we interact with our family members, friends, coworkers, and others. If we experience more withdrawals (negative interactions) with one another than deposits (positive interactions), then our mutual bank account is soon overdrawn. If we continue that practice, the relationship becomes bankrupt. What, then, is divorce? A bankrupt relationship that has experienced far more or larger withdrawals than deposits—so many, in fact, that the account needs to be closed.



Strong marriages have at least a five-to-one daily ratio of positive to negative interactions (Parker-Pope, 2010).

Parents who have strong relationships with their children make far more deposits than withdrawals on a daily basis. Yet what do you think is the average number of minutes per day that fathers spend in meaningful conversation with their

children? If you guessed 7 minutes, then you are correct. For mothers, it is not much better—about 11 minutes. If you spend more time than that with your child, reach across your body with your dominant hand and pat yourself on the back.

Who determines what constitutes a deposit or a withdrawal? If you said the recipient, then you are correct. Therefore, you have to really know your child to know what they would consider positive or negative interactions with you. However, there are a few things most people would regard as deposits. These include treating one another with courtesy, spending quality time engaged in meaningful activities, attending extracurricular or school events, establishing a trusting relationship, showing recognition for a job well done, and being a good listener. There is a reason human beings possess two ears and only one mouth: We should be listening twice as much as we speak.

Here is a true story. My husband and I were eating dinner at a local restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia, when I noticed a family of four sitting at a nearby table. The family consisted of a father, a mother, and two teenage sons. We sat and ate for more than an hour, and I observed that the family members said no more than several words to one another during that entire time. You see, the father was reading the newspaper, the mother was eating and staring into space, one son had earbuds in and was listening to music on his smartphone, and the other was alternately eating and texting. I thought, *This is a sign of our times*. These parents missed a prime opportunity to talk with and listen to their teenagers—to find out what was going on in their lives, who their friends were, how school was going, or what their future dreams were. None of those conversations took place. Everyone was caught up in their own personal activities.



Role models, particularly if they are parents or other relatives, may influence teens' attitudes and actions, help them make healthier choices, and provide them with a more positive self-image (Fremont, 2020).

Is it any wonder that teenagers spend time talking with strangers on the Internet? One of the five basic needs of the human brain is the need to belong, to have someone to talk with and someone who will also listen. The problem is that when that someone is a stranger, the conversation may lead to a dangerous liaison. Find quality time to spend with your child. It will pay huge dividends toward a meaningful relationship.

Many parents try to substitute things (clothes, toys, electronic gadgets, and so forth) for time, thinking that material possessions will make their children happy. Things may make people happy temporarily, but the joy is short-lived! Have you ever noticed that some of the unhappiest people in the world have the most money and the greatest number of personal possessions? If you will admit it, the fondest memories you have from your childhood are not of things you received but of time you spent with the important people in your life.

Put first things first! (Covey, 2020, p. 167). Make quality time to spend with your family. I doubt that any person comes to the end of their life and makes the following statement to loved ones gathered nearby: *I wish I had spent more time at the office!* Most of the regrets come from missed opportunities with the family and friends you love! Remember that *your children do not care how much you know until they know how much you care!*

HOW CAN I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

- Make more deposits than withdrawals in the bank accounts of your family members. For every negative interaction, there should be 5 to 10 positive interactions. In other words, for every time you must tell your child something they do not want to hear, even if it is for their own good, there should be 5 to 10 times when you are telling them or showing them how special they are to you. I will never forget the time when my husband made a major deposit in our daughter Jessica's bank account. Jessica's date for the senior prom became ill at the last minute and

could not take her. Since we knew it was too late for her to get another date, on prom night, Jessica's dad invited her to be his dinner date at one of Atlanta's best restaurants. He even cleaned up the car and purchased a wrist corsage just for her. After dinner, her dad dropped Jessica at the prom, and she rode home later with friends. Neither Jessica nor her dad will ever forget the special evening they spent together! What a deposit in both of their bank accounts! That major deposit alone increased the amount of contact Jess and her father had after she left home for college.

- Whenever possible, have dinner together as a family. Be sure that you and your child assist in preparing the dinner, setting the table, and clearing the dishes. Each family member should have a designated job to do, which makes the whole experience easier for everyone. If this week it is one child's turn to set the table, next week that same child may be the one who puts the dishes in the dishwasher. It is not the dinner that makes the difference; it is the quality time spent in conversation around the table that matters most! In fact, when National Merit Finalists were compared with one another, one of the major characteristics they had in common was their daily conversations with family members around the dinner table.
- When it is not possible to have dinner together as a family, due to work, church, or school commitments or extracurricular activities, find other times to work on your relationship with your child. One ideal time to have these conversations is in the car. Turn off the radio, have your child put down the smartphone or tablet, and talk with them in the car. Ask them about their school day, friends, aspirations, and short- and long-term goals, and allow them to talk to you about whatever they wish. Remember to do at least as much listening as you do talking—maybe even more!
- Designate a specific night of the week as a *family night*. Make this night a priority and let nothing keep any member of the family from being available during this time.

Plan an activity the family can engage in together, such as dinner out at a restaurant, popcorn and a movie, or a night of bowling. The family may want to spend this night at home watching a video that family members take turns selecting, or playing board games such as Monopoly, Scattergories, Scrabble, or Taboo. When my children were all living at home, Friday night was *game night*. On Friday night, the children did not have to complete homework and my husband and I tried not to schedule meetings so we could all be home together. We would play games and have fun! When I began to work on my doctorate, the game night did not happen as often and I did not realize how much my children missed it until the day my son, Chris, asked, “Mom, why are we not playing games anymore?” Now that they are grown, we still value those times, and we still play games when they come over to visit. My daughters, sons-in-law, and I are very evenly matched in a competitive game of Scrabble. My husband and I play backgammon, and my husband and his brother Greg play chess.

- Board and card games are even good for parents. They are one of the 10 things that keep people living beyond the age of 80. According to George Bernard Shaw, “You don’t stop playing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop playing” (BrainyQuote, n.d.). Games encourage social interaction and higher-level thinking and are loads of fun!
- Make dates with your child periodically. If you have more than one child, make a date with each one separately. Since no two children, even twins, are exactly alike, allow your children to determine what they would like to do on their date with you. Then enjoy the company of each child and make them feel special by giving your time to only them.
- Make dates with your spouse or significant other. My husband and I have been married for more than 40 years, and we still make dates. I travel a great deal, and he and I make a point of designating time most weekends to spend with one another. The date can consist of a meal out at a fancy

restaurant, or it can be as simple as a night watching a sporting event together on television while munching on goodies. By the way, I did not even like football until I married my husband many years ago. Now it is one of my favorite sports.

- Let your child know that you are there for them and if they have a problem, they can come to you. Then when they come to you, be truly there for them. Put all work, chores, and smartphones aside and really listen! Try to seek first to understand what the problem is by actively listening as they talk. Ask questions for clarification, but don't even attempt to help solve the problem until you are clear about what it entails and you have encouraged your child to share their own thoughts about how it should be handled. Then work together to find a solution.



The happiest and healthiest adolescents are raised by parents who talk through problems with them when they occur and use their control not to discipline but to guide their teenagers (Feinstein, 2009).

- If you are a single parent, you may need to provide a positive male or female role model for your child. The Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations can assist you in supplying a man who can develop a relationship that may make a positive difference in the life of your son or a woman who can make a positive difference in the life of your daughter. While there are boys who experience life positively without a male figure, increasing bodies of research across disciplines are showing that boys need positive male role models along the way (Nagel, 2006).
- Companies have mission statements, and so do some people. More than 20 years ago, I wrote my personal mission statement. Why not gather your children together when they are old enough to understand the task and work as a family to write a family mission statement? This statement is based on universal principles and should reflect what

you are all about as a family and what you want your major contribution to society to be. When I teach the course *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, one task for the class is to write their personal mission statements. One teacher in a class many years ago described his mission in one sentence, quoting a popular bumper sticker: *I want to be the kind of person that my dog already thinks I am.* Enough said!

- Schedule family meetings periodically, perhaps once a month, when the entire family can get together and discuss their accomplishments and challenges from the previous month. Allow children who are old enough to express their opinions and add to the discussion. If the family has written a mission statement, this is a good time to see what progress has been made in accomplishing the family's mission or purpose.

ACTION PLAN FOR DEVELOPING A RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CHILD

What will I commit to do to ensure that I develop a relationship with my child?		
RECOMMENDATIONS	CURRENTLY DOING	PLAN TO DO
Make more deposits than withdrawals in the emotional bank accounts of my child.		
Have dinner together as a family.		
Find additional opportunities to build my relationship with my child.		
Designate a specific night of the week as <i>family night</i> .		
Play games (i.e., board or card games) with family members.		
Make dates with my child.		
Make dates with my spouse or significant other.		
Actively listen to my child when they have a problem.		
Provide a positive role model for my child, if needed.		
Write a family mission statement describing what the family is all about.		
Schedule family meetings periodically to discuss family accomplishments and challenges.		
Goals and notes:		

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