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Family & Relationships

Raising Good Kids in Tough Times: 7 Habits for Parent Success
Roger W. McIntire
Summit Crossroads Press
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As a family consultant, University of Maryland child psychologist, teacher and author, McIntire brings years of professional experience to a book that addresses raising children in today's complex and often violent times. An unpretentious book structured on seven good parental habits, it is readable, well organized and full of sensible advice for parents. It also includes practical examples in the form of parent-child dialog throughout the text.

Although McIntire is an educator, the book is refreshingly free of educational jargon, and covers the traditional accepted basics in plain language. For instance, "Habit 1—Listen Well," is a clear explanation of active listening, complete with rules. This chapter, like others, also includes exercises and boxed brights repeating major points. The book also has a workable index and a few fill-in charts to guide progress; however, the whole would benefit from relevant art, perhaps photographs or even light-hearted sketches.

Along with active listening, other desirable parental habits proposed are: intelligent teaching, parental role modeling, keeping adult perspectives and caution about punishments. McIntire's cautions, which are frequent, are especially wise. Unlike some parenting experts, McIntire sees both the forest and the trees, and sometimes clearly states a truth, which—although it should be obvious—is often over-looked among the details of a situation. A chapter, "Show them you like them—help them like themselves," for example, points out that telling a child, "I love you" is not much without "I like you." Another important chapter is, "Send the right messages about values and characters." It thoughtfully discusses blame and credit, helpful routines, the timing of character development and issues such as sex, alcohol and drugs.

McIntire's approach might be fresh help to parents, and the timing of the book, as parents consider the difficult times as the new century arrives, could not be better.

Sally Ketchum