Exercise: Identifying your parenting priorities.

At the end of this three-step exercise, you will have your very own parenting mission statement.

Step 1: Ready, Set, Dream
The aim of this first step of the exercise is to brainstorm the raw material and ideas and then create a master list of intentions or priorities.

Get in a quiet frame of mind. Close your eyes, if helpful. Imagine your daughter or son as an adult, ready to go out into the world. Now imagine giving her or him the most useful, valuable, nonmaterial gifts for a successful journey. What are your deepest wishes for him? What does she need to know? What qualities will serve him best? What's important? What will sustain her? Don't filter or edit your responses. Just let your thoughts bubble up and out.

Now bring yourself back to the present and write down those thoughts. When doing this, it's not unusual to think of things that you either appreciate in yourself or wish you had more of. Go with these, if they came into your mind; they are valid. If helpful, consult the examples on pages 187–188 before you do any writing.

Write your initial thoughts here:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Now, leave this list and plan to return to it later. Once you have some distance and a fresh mind, revisit your list, and reconsider and refine what you wrote above. Omit any ideas that no longer feel important, and add new ones that make the list feel complete and most relevant. These are your parenting priorities.

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Step 2: Categorize and Define Your Priorities

The purpose of Step 2 is to organize your priorities into categories and reflect on what each means to you. Using your list from Step 1, organize your priorities into five general categories on the lines below. If helpful, have a look at how Dave and Beth did their lists on pages 189–190 before you proceed.

1._____

_____

_____

2._____

_____

_____

3._____

_____

_____

4._____

_____

_____

5._____

_____

_____

Step 3: Create My Parenting Priorities Statement

As you did with your values in Chapter 3, this final step involves creating a statement of intention that includes the five priorities you listed above. Think of it as your mission statement for parenting. If helpful, see Dave's Parenting Priorities Statement on page 191.

Your Parenting Priorities Statement is a reminder of what you believe is most important for your child's future. As with your Quality of Life Statement from Chapter 3, use whatever form works best for you. Think it through and write it in a way that enlivens your commitment with enthusiasm, joy, and conviction.

My Parenting Priorities Statement

_____

_____

_____

_____

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