



# Parent *pages*

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



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## Do you micromanage your kids?

When I was a child, the summer was mine to do with as I pleased. As long as my mother knew where I was, I could ride my bike to the library, pool or ice cream store. Little did I know that this ability to plan, execute and evaluate my days taught me how to be an adult. My parents were practicing co-regulation; they were teaching me how to grow up.

Babies and young children are other-regulated; parents meet their needs. Days are planned so they can concentrate on growing, talking, and walking. By the time children are adolescents, we want them to self-regulate, which means to monitor their own behavior and emotions to accomplish goals. Somewhere in-between, parents and children practice co-regulation, where parents gradually hand over the reins, while providing guidance. This is a crucial stage for development; without it, children may either rebel or remain dependent on others.

Micromanaging happens when well-meaning parents over-plan or over-control the lives of their children. Over-planning happens when a child is scheduled for too many classes and activities and has little or no time to decide for himself what he wants to do. Such children learn little else about managing their day other than riding in the car from one activity to the next. This prevents a child from learning how to take a large project and break it up into smaller achievable goals. Instead, he will wait for someone to tell him what to do next.

**It is a part of God's plan for your child to grow and mature. It is a part of your job as a parent to gradually allow that to happen. God will bless your efforts in more ways than you can imagine.**

A child that is over-



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controlled is rarely given the opportunity to make decisions. Choices about clothes, food, friends, and activities are made for her, assuring the choices are all good. She does not learn how to evaluate choices or correct mistakes. She may not be able to accept responsibility for errors or may be too afraid to make a choice. Going along with the crowd becomes the easiest path for this child.

When a child is allowed to co-regulate, there is no guarantee he will make the right choices or achieve all goals. Co-regulation allows children to practice, make mistakes, and learn from mistakes with guidance from parents. While it may be easier to plan and decide for children, it is better to give them practice. Learning from mistakes is the best way to learn discernment; evaluating choices is the best way to develop wisdom regarding future choices; and making and keeping goals develops a strong sense of confidence.

Another school year is ending, and this is a good time to

think about how much your child has grown and matured. What can you expect your child to do this summer that was beyond his ability this time last year? How might your child participate in decisions regarding her time for the summer ahead?

Think about changes regarding expectations and responsibilities for your child. For young children, it might include the addition of a family chore. For older children, it might be adding to the activities list things the child can do alone. The point is to recognize that your child is maturing and to make adjustments that allow him or her to continue to grow.

Each child, regardless of age, should have some time in the day that is free of requirements. This is especially true for children who spend their days in organized childcare, as their days are planned for them. Children who spend the summers at home should know what chores or activities should be finished before free-time. The familiar whine: "I'm bored" is an opportunity for your child to develop creativity.

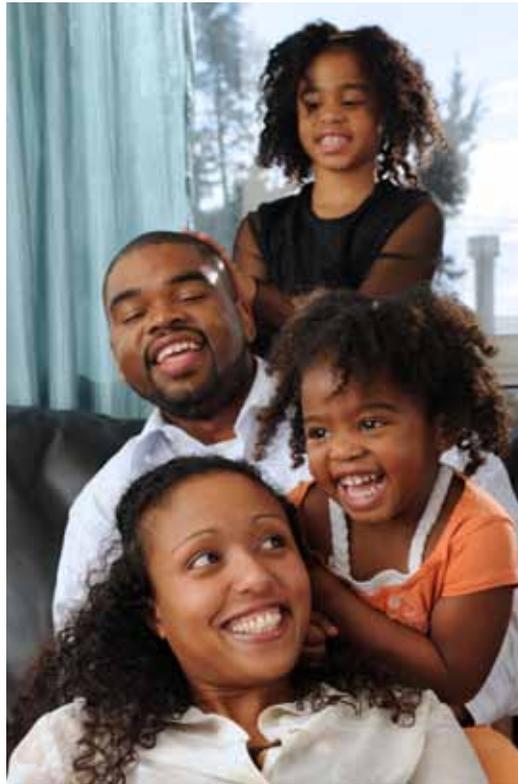
As children grow older, they should have more participation in decisions regarding teams, lessons, and family chores. Your child may not be ready to make all decisions, but each year she should have the opportunity to contribute more. While it can be difficult to watch a child make a mistake, remember that mistakes made at this age are easier to learn and recover from than mistakes made in young adulthood. Children need practice in everything they learn—not just piano and soccer.

Even young elementary-age children should have family

chores. A co-regulating parent will encourage his child to make a list of what needs to be done each day (including enjoyable activities the child chooses). A few minutes at the end of the day can be spent encouraging the child to check the list and re-plan the next day. Remember, in a few short years this child will be planning a career.

For older children, it is important to for them to create and accomplish long-term goals. Summer is the perfect time for a building or learning project. Here, co-regulation means you watch and help when needed. Anything that your child has a passion for, from digging a pond to learning to play harmonica, can present a wonderful possibility for learning and family memories.

**"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1 Cor. 13:11).**



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## For further study:

Check out Good Todo as a way for your child to plan the day and for you to monitor progress. <http://goodtodo.com>.

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