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The 7 worst things parents do:

1. Baby your child
2. Putting your marriage last
3. Push your child into too many activities
4. Ignore your child's spiritual life
5. Be your child's best friend
6. Fail to give your child structure
7. Expect your child to fulfill your dreams

The 7 Worst Things Parents Do by Psychologists John and Linda Friel

1. BABY YOUR CHILD

Proverbs 22:6 - Train up a child in the way **he should go**: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

- The purpose of parenting is to expose our children to the world out there, one bite at a time.
- The safety of our home is the place our children should learn to “fail forward.”
- Teach your children responsibility and concern for others.
- You aren't doing them a favor letting them “think” life revolves around them or their spouse will baby them.
- Do not remove struggle or consequences from their lives.
- Do not speak against “those in authority” over your child's life. (You don't always get your way in life.)

2. PUTTING YOUR MARRIAGE LAST

- It is said the greatest gift you can give your child is a good marriage.
- You can give your child everything, but if they fail at family, they fail at life!
- Take time for each other. By doing so you will “model” for your children that the world really doesn't revolve around them.
- The percentages of people that divorce at the “empty nest” phase of life are overwhelming.
- “Invest” in your marriage or you won't have anything to “withdrawal” after your children leave.
- Keep the biblical priorities in line:
 1. God
 2. Spouse

3. Children
4. Job

3. PUSHING YOUR CHILD INTO TOO MANY ACTIVITIES

- Don't teach your child that happiness comes from keeping busy.
- People that are "driven" are often in need of repair.
- "Overly" busy people are often so detached from their feelings that aren't aware of how unhealthy their lives have become.
- Such as I have, give I unto you...
- If your child has a talent or is inclined toward a certain skill, sport, or hobby then let them participate and receive instruction, but keep it in perspective and balance.
- Remember, the helmet comes off someday!

"More, More, More! Somewhere on the way to the 21st century, it seems as if the majority of middle-class parents decided that it would be a good thing to work themselves to death --- and then just for good measure, they decided to work their children to death, too." *John and Linda Friel*

"Our children may have excellent grades and a wonderful performance at the recital and not have such an excellent life." *John and Linda Friel*

Pushing our children **outside** the home for fulfillment, enjoyment, and peace **teaches or models** a very dangerous lifestyle or lesson.

"Families become so outer-directed, so focused on producing, earning, spending and then earning some more to keep up with the next round of spending that there is hardly any time left for anything else. 'Anything else' means: family, joy, laughter, feelings, sex, play, dreaming and grieving, among others." *John and Linda Friel*

4. IGNORING YOUR CHILD'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that **seems right to a man**, but **its end is the way of death or destruction**.

- Our culture will typically devote between 13 and 17 years toward a "natural education" and never go to first grade spiritually.
- Don't put spiritual things last in your life – model correctly.
- Talk to your children about a RELATIONSHIP with God.

5. BE YOUR CHILD'S BEST FRIEND

"Parents are pals nowadays, because they don't have the guts to be parents." *H. Jackson Brown*

- Friends offer no authority or strong direction; they primarily are supportive in nature.
- “I want my child to find his or her own way...” Someone will lead them by default.
- If your basic need is to gain approval, affirmation, and acceptance from your child, you will be a poor parent.
- God hasn’t designed our children to be the source of meeting our “relational needs.” That is what our spouse is for.
- Ask the hard question, “Why am I afraid to say no?”

6. FAILURE TO GIVE YOUR CHILD STRUCTURE

- Don’t confuse providing **external structure** with providing the **real or internal structure** that will govern their lives.
- Children learn **internal structure** and discipline by first experiencing **external structure**. (direct commands, bedtime, work habits, etc.)
- **Internal** structure is given by **consistently** teaching your children the values from which you make decisions.
- Those values will be the **foundation** that they will base their future choices upon, even in your absence.
- Don’t just give the answer, provide the equation!

EXAMPLE: Watching for cars when you cross the street stays **external** for a long period of time; eventually the child will **internalize** the instruction, and it becomes their own.

7. EXPECT YOUR CHILD TO FULFILL YOUR DREAMS.

- It is a very damaging thing when a parent lives vicariously through their child.
- You will teach your child to be a “performance junkie.”
- They will base their future happiness on **unrealistic expectations** and eventually live with an underlying **disappointment**.
- We are called to shape **their future**, not mold their future in our image or expectations.

Jeremiah 1:5 - "I knew you before you were formed within your mother's womb; before you were born I **sanctified you and appointed you** as my spokesman to the world."

God has a plan for your child; don’t confuse “His” plan with “yours.”

There is no real contentment outside of fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives.