

Hi there!

I appreciate you taking the time to check out this ebook and I hope you have as much fun reading it as I had creating it.

I have created Parenting the Lefkoe Way with only one thing in mind. *You.* I'm on a mission to spread the message that parenting is no more a difficult chore, instead it's the most fulfilling job that you will ever have.

I want you to know that you too can have a loving and lasting relationship with your children. Not only that, if you want to find fulfillment, become a better parent, be a kinder human, help your children to be more confident, independent and encourage them to live their greatest life, then you are at the right place!

If you want to check out the course right away then click on the link below:

<http://www.TheLefkoeWay.com/Products>

Thanks for downloading this ebook and for giving me the opportunity to guide on this journey.

With Love.

Shelly





By

Shelly and Morty Lefkoe

Table of Contents

Introduction: How We Learned What We Teach In The Book	4
Common Parenting Problems ... Sound Familiar?	5
Why What Most Parents Do Doesn't Work?	7
How We Might Unwittingly Lead Our Children to Form Negative Self Beliefs	12
How to Solve Daily Family Problems While Promoting Positive Self-Beliefs In Your Children	15
Why the Beliefs Our Children Form Are So Influential Later In Life?	20
What's My Job as a Parent?	22
The Good News and The Bad News About Parenting	23
What You Might Believe That Could Cause You to Parent "Ineffectively"	26
Belief #1: I am responsible for my child's behavior	26
Belief #2: Children should have the same standards of behavior as adults	27
Belief #3: I'm the boss	30
Belief #4: My job is to produce results with my children	32
There Is No Such Thing as a "Perfect Parent"	36

INTRODUCTION: HOW WE LEARNED WHAT WE TEACH IN THE BOOK

In this book we present an approach to parenting that is based on what we've learned from over 20 years of experience helping over 20,000 people change their behavior in our private practices.

What we learned from working with these people is that negative beliefs they formed earlier in life were causing many of their problems today.

These problems ranged from everyday issues such as procrastination, fear of public speaking, the inability to stand up for oneself, and the fear of taking chances, to more serious problems such as depression, the inability to get a relationship to work, eating disorders, frequent anxiety of all types, phobias, and severe stress.

We also learned that many of the beliefs that contributed to these problems were formed when they were young children observing the behavior of often well-intentioned parents.

As a result, we've seen the connection thousands and thousands of times between what parents do, the beliefs that children form, and how these beliefs affect their lives.

COMMON PARENTING PROBLEMS... SOUND FAMILIAR?

Have you ever had the experience of being on the phone and your child wanted your attention? When we ask this question in parenting workshops we usually get a laugh. Children seem to be programmed to want our attention the moment our hand touches the phone.

“Have you done your homework yet?” Does a day ever go by without you speaking these words? If your children are anywhere between nine and 18, getting them to do their homework probably is a hassle in your household. Either your children put it off until the last minute and then don’t have time to complete it—or they rush through it without really putting in the time and thinking required—or they do it at the same time they are talking to friends over the Internet.

What four words do you utter almost every evening that almost always lead to some degree of unpleasantness? “It’s time for bed.” Regardless of your children’s age, at some point during the evening after dinner you realize your child is not in bed yet. And when you remind her of the time, she doesn’t want to go to bed. If your child is very young, you probably hear: “Not now!” “I don’t wanna!” “Why do I have to?” As she gets older it’s: “I’m just not tired. If I go to bed now I’ll just lie there unable to sleep.”

When was the last time your children said: “Mom, what can I do to help around the house? You and dad work so hard I think I should contribute more.” What? You’ve never heard that in your house? Well, neither have most other parents! If you have a typical family, getting your kids to do their chores is the source of daily arguments. They either “forget” to do them or they rush through them and do a poor job: They leave grease on the washed plates, a couple of wastebaskets un-emptied, or a room that looks like a tornado had swept through it.

It seems that almost every parent struggles with these four situations. We know we did until we learned that there are solutions that made parenting much easier for us and improved the results we got with our two girls. In this book we will show you exactly

how to effectively deal with each of the four situations described above and many similar daily occurrences.

But we will go one BIG step further.

We'll show you how to go beyond merely managing your child's behavior today and help you significantly influence the quality of your children's life when they grow up.

Sometimes it seems as if getting our children to do what needs to be done is mostly what parenting is all about. That and getting them to learn what needs to be learned, such as how to deal appropriately with people, eating healthily, and so forth. And, of course, we want our children to be happy.

For most of us, achieving these three goals means we got our job done. But although doing what needs to be done, learning what needs to be learned, and being happy are certainly important for children, achieving them has relatively little to do with how our kids experience their lives **as adults**.

So what does? What is it that influences your child's future success and happiness?

It's what your children believe about themselves, other people, and life that determine how their lives turn out.

We'll explain this assertion and provide plenty of evidence for it later on, for the moment, just ask yourself these two questions:

What is the possibility of someone having a good, nurturing, long-term relationship if in childhood he had formed the beliefs: **I'm not lovable; I'm not deserving; relationships don't work; men/women can't be trusted?**

What is the possibility of someone pursuing a career with confidence and enthusiasm if she had formed the beliefs: **I'm not capable; I'm not good enough; Life is difficult; I'll never get**



what I want; Mistakes and failure are bad?

So in this book we will show you how to get your child to cooperate and do what needs to be done. In addition, and even more importantly, we will show you how to help them form the beliefs that support a successful and nurturing life as an adult. Let's begin.

WHY WHAT MOST PARENTS DO DOESN'T WORK

Let's return to the four situations we described at the start and look at the approach most parents would take.

On the phone

More often than not when our children run up to us while we're on the phone saying, "Mommy, I think my turtle is dead," or, "Daddy, look what I did, I did the whole puzzle, come look right now,"—we reply, frequently with at least a little bit of annoyance, "Not now, can't you see I'm on the phone?"

What would most children conclude about themselves if they heard this reply often enough? How might they feel about themselves? Based on our experience with over 20,000 clients, they'd conclude: **I'm not important, What I want is not important, What I have to say is not important.**

Homework

When children put off their homework repeatedly, most parents say things like:

"How many times do I have to tell you to stay off the Internet (or the phone) until your homework is done?"

"What's wrong with you?"

"Don't you care about your schoolwork?"

“Do your homework, now!”

“I never have to tell your brother to do his homework and notice that his grades are always better than yours.”

These comments might engender enough fear to have children comply with our requests — when we are watching.

But this approach is unlikely to have children do their homework before getting on the Internet when we are not around.

Moreover, such comments and our anger cause our children to become angry and resentful. That frequently leads to a break in our relationship with them.

However, there is an even more detrimental long-term consequence to this approach to solving the homework problem.

You see, children will likely begin to form beliefs like **Learning is not fun, I’m not good enough**, and **There’s something wrong with me**.

Imagine their lives as adults if our children grow up to have these beliefs.

Going to bed

We used to have a hard time getting Brittany, our youngest daughter, to go to bed. In the early days this is what our conversation sounded like:

“It’s late and you need to go to bed.”

“But I don’t want to. I’m not tired.”

“Get into bed. It’s a school night and you need your rest.”



It wasn’t long after we finally got her into bed when we would hear:

“Mom, I want some water.”

“Go to sleep. We need some alone time.”

A few minutes later Brittany would appear in front of us.

“I’m scared. I heard a noise.”

One of us would say something like:

“Get into bed now and stop stalling. There is nothing to be afraid of; now stop bothering us.”

If you yell loud enough and the threat is severe enough, your children will yield and brush their teeth, get into bed, and stay in bed.

That is one possible solution.

It’ll usually work with young children.

Unfortunately, based on such experiences children will often conclude, **What I want doesn’t matter, I’m powerless, My feelings are not important, I don’t matter, and I’m a burden.**

If our children form these beliefs they may grow up feeling that others are in control of their lives, they won’t express their feelings because they don’t matter, and they’ll likely be afraid to assert their desires to others if they feel they don’t matter or are a burden.

Chores

When your children won’t do their chores at all:

Joan frequently handled this problem by saying to her daughter:



“Susie, get up here and do the dishes. I’ve been working all day and I ask you to do this one thing and you just won’t.”

Ten minutes later when she still hasn’t shown up in the kitchen,

“Susie, I do so much for you and everything I ask seems just too hard for you.”

We know what Susie concluded after hearing those words night after night because she was our client: **I’m selfish. I’m bad. I’m not worthy.**

When your children rush through chores and don’t do them well:

Frank not only had a hard time getting Bruce to wash the dishes, Bruce was so anxious to finish that the dishes were almost as dirty when he finished as when he started.

Frank would usually say:

“Bruce. Come back up here to the kitchen. Can’t you see that the dishes are still dirty? You’re just not careful. You don’t watch what you’re doing. If that’s how you are going to clean the kitchen don’t bother. I end up having to come in here and redo everything you’ve done.”

Again, Bruce was one of our clients who was always dissatisfied with whatever he did.

Some of the beliefs he had formed as a child included: **I’m not capable. I’m not competent. Mistakes and failure are bad. I’m inadequate.**

SIDEBAR: None of this is to say that your anger will necessarily lead your children to form negative beliefs. Parents can be angry without having a negative impact on their kids, depending on what they say when they're angry and the context of their relationship with their children.

For example, we had always told Brittany that we were never angry at *her*, only at what she *did*. It is important to let your children know that you love them—that you love who they are—absolutely and unconditionally. And that you are upset about something they did. Making the distinction between who we are and what we do is crucial. Our children are not “bad” and we should never say or do anything that might leave them with that belief, even though they might frequently do things that are inappropriate. (This distinction needs to be made every time you are angry, not just a few of times.)

One day Brittany, who was three years old at the time, and her best friend Joanna had been quiet for what seemed like a long time—too long for three year olds. So I went to check on them. I heard giggling in the bathroom and upon entering I saw all of my cosmetics, including an expensive eye cream, floating in the sink. Without looking up Brittany said: “We’re making a potion, mom.” I was so shocked and upset that I yelled: “Brittany, I’m furious at you.”

Brittany looked up with panic on my face and asked quietly: “At me, or what I did?” . I had to laugh. “At what you did, Brittany.” And then Brittany went right back to mixing her potion. Later on I had a talk with the girls about asking permission before touching other people’s things.

Now I bet that after reading how **most** parents try to solve these problems ineffectively you can’t wait to find out how to solve them effectively.

We will present those solutions soon.

But if you’ll stick with us for just a bit we’d like to help you understand why we are so concerned about the beliefs our children form.

That will enable you to understand why the solutions we offer later are much more useful in the long run than the more typical approaches.

HOW WE MIGHT UNWITTINGLY LEAD OUR CHILDREN TO FORM NEGATIVE SELF BELIEFS

Why do we say and do things that may result in our children forming negative beliefs about themselves and life?

To begin with, most parents are not aware that children are forming beliefs about themselves based on parental behavior, which doesn't appear to be harmful at all on the surface.

But even when they are aware of this, they can have a hard time stopping their appropriate behavior because they are rarely aware of the conflict in most families between what they as parents want and what children are able to do.

Parents, being adults, generally like quiet; children are not quiet and cannot even understand why anyone would value quiet.

Parents for the most part want their house to be neat, young children don't care about being neat.

Parents want to sit down for dinner when it is ready and before it gets cold, children are almost always doing something that is far more important to them and don't want to stop doing it when their parents call them.

In other words, parents usually want their children to do things **that they are developmentally incapable of doing. They want their young children to act like little adults**, which they cannot possibly do.

SIDEBAR: Other examples of this point include: Children weren't born knowing that ice cream melts if left out the freezer, that bikes rust if left out in the rain, and that food spoils if not wrapped up and put in the refrigerator. Things like this seem obvious to adults; they are not to young children. If we expect children to "do things right," we have to explain what "right" is. We may need to explain something many times to a child under the age of six or seven before they really get it. And, finally, there are some concepts that young children are just incapable of grasping.

The question is not, do children frequently "disobey" their parents. The only question is how parents react when their children are not doing what the parents want them to do.

And because few parents go to parenting school and most bring their own beliefs from their childhoods with them, their reactions range from annoyance and frustration to anger and abuse, with every possibility in between.

What is the question every young child asks all day long?

Hint. It's only one word.

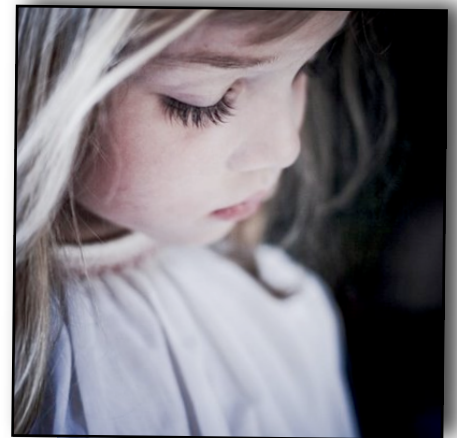
Yes, it's "Why?"

Children think their parents (because they are adults) know everything and have all the answers.

Children know that they don't have the answers (kids are always saying, "When I grow up, then I'll be able to ...").

It's as if the child thinks to herself, "If my parents don't like what I do a lot and are unhappy with me, they **must** have a good reason. I guess **I'm not good enough** to have their approval."

In other words, children form their beliefs trying to make sense of their parents' unhappiness, frustration, or anger with them.



Some of the phrases parents use have become clichés in our society:

“How many times do I have to tell you?”

“Don’t you ever listen?”

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Are you just clumsy/stupid?”

What would it mean to a child aged two to six or seven to hear those phrases uttered repeatedly in anger or frustration?

Twenty thousand clients have told us:

I’m not good enough. Mistakes are bad. I’m not capable or competent. I’m inadequate.

Important Note: It is important to emphasize here that rarely will just a few parental actions or statements lead children to form beliefs, positive or negative. It is only when something is done or said many times that a child forms a belief. It’s as if children say to themselves, “Why does this keep happening? Oh, now I know what it means.”

So it is unlikely that our children will form negative beliefs based merely on how we deal with their homework, chores, etc. But they will if our actions and words are inappropriate (as described above) in many of our interactions with them.

I hope you enjoyed reading the Part-I. In the next part, we’ll learn:

- ✓How to Solve Daily Family Problems While Promoting Positive Self-Beliefs In Your Children
- ✓Why the Beliefs Our Children Form Are So Influential Later In Life?
- ✓What’s My Job as a Parent?
- ✓The Good News and The Bad News About Parenting

HOW TO SOLVE DAILY FAMILY PROBLEMS WHILE PROMOTING POSITIVE SELF-BELIEFS IN YOUR CHILDREN

Now that you know why we need to be aware of how our behavior as parents affects the beliefs our children form, it will be much easier for you to understand our solutions to the four situations we listed in Part-I.

These approaches lead to fewer struggles and better resolutions to the issues facing your family in the present; at the same time they help your children form beliefs that will make a positive impact on their futures.

On the phone

Remember the telephone situation we described earlier.

Here's another way of handling it.

Ask the person you're talking to on the phone to hold for a minute and put your hand over the mouthpiece. Then look directly at your child and say:

“What you have to say to me is very important and I can't give you my full attention right now. As soon as I get off the phone (or at dinner tonight, or when I put you to bed tonight) you will have my undivided attention. **I'm really sorry I can't listen to you right now because I know that's important to you, but I will real soon.**” (Anticipate the negative belief that might be formed as a result of your behavior in the situation and do something that would result in a positive belief.)

Your child may still be disappointed or even annoyed, but he would never form the belief, **I'm not important**, as he would from the earlier approach. If you do what you promise after the call he probably will conclude just the opposite, **I am important. What I have to say is important.**

Homework

Here's another approach for getting your children to do their homework that some parents try after they learn the importance of listening, asking questions, allowing children to help solve parenting problems, and helping their children form positive beliefs.

“Jason, you've had a long day at school and then you've been busy with your sports (or other after-school activity). You probably need a break. I trust that you will give yourself enough time to do your homework before you get too tired. I know that you'll be responsible for your work. If you need some help just call.”



(Look at the situation from the child's point of view. Children are much more likely to listen to you if they feel you really understand what they are feeling. Allow them to be responsible; you'd be surprised how often they accept the challenge.)

If this approach doesn't work and the homework isn't getting done, try this.

“Jason, are you having any problems with your homework? How can I support you in getting your work done as I love and care about you and don't want to see you fall behind.” (Find out why the child is not doing what you've asked and offer support.)

What beliefs are likely to get formed from these two scenarios? **What I need is important. I'm important. I'm a responsible person. I'm capable. I can be trusted.**

Going to bed

After we learned a lot from our clients about how beliefs were formed, we tried something like this.

It worked with Brittany.

“Brittany, honey, I know you’re building a castle right now. How many minutes do you need until you’re finished?” (Children usually will come up with a small number. If the time is too long, compromise between the amount of time they say they want and what you think is more reasonable.) (Looking from the child’s point of view and showing respect for what’s important to her.)

Then I said, “Sweetie, I know that you love building your castle and you wish you could do it forever. (Validate the child’s feelings.) But I love you so much that I want you to get a good night’s sleep so you’ll be wide-awake for your day tomorrow. So in five minutes (or whatever time Brittany said) I’ll come up and get you and then we can snuggle and read a book.” (What I want you to do comes from the parent’s concern about the child, not from an arbitrary command: “Do it because I say so.”)

She answered with a grin, “Thanks mom. I can finish one part of my castle by then.”

When I came back, I said lightly,

“Okay, time’s up. Now do you want to march into the bathroom, or should we tip toe, or should I carry you into the bathroom?” (Give choices whenever possible.)

Brittany formed several positive beliefs from getting her to bed this way. **What I want is important. I matter. I can get what I want in life.**

Chores

Here’s another approach to the chores problem that we tried that almost always worked.

We held a family meeting. Each of us was asked to write down what each did on most days and bring that to the meeting.

When Blake was about 12 and Brittany about six, here is what each list included:

Brittany: Set table
Clear table



Blake: Wash dishes
Empty wastebaskets
Feed cat
Gymnastics after school every day

Morty: Take care of insurance for family
Go to the cleaners
Food shopping (share with Shelly)
Laundry (share with Shelly)
Pay bills
Business work (about nine hours a day)
Get gas for car
Get kids ready for bed
Change cat litter

Shelly: Play with children
Take Blake to van stop for school
Make breakfast
Take Britt to classes
Food shopping
Make lunch
Clean kitchen
Do laundry
Drive Blake to play date and pick her up
Drive Blake to gymnastics
Return phone calls
Clean the house
Pick Blake up from the van stop
Spend time playing with Blake and hearing about her day
Read to Brittany
Get gas for car
Prepare dinner
Get kids ready for bed



After all of us finished reading our lists, I said:

“Blake and Brittany, I can’t do it all without you. I want to have time to play with you and I want some time for myself and some alone time with daddy. You are each an important part of this family and I need support. Let’s brainstorm how we can divvy up chores in a way that everyone feels satisfied. Maybe we could draw them from a hat, or rotate them so that no one gets bored doing the same thing every week. How do you think we can resolve this?” (Allow children to be involved in choosing what they will do. Don’t just order them to do something, which frequently results in resistance and resentment.)

When one of the children agreed to do a specific chore, such as doing the dishes after dinner, and they still didn’t do it, you might have heard a conversation like this in our house.

“Britt, dishes!”

“I know mom, I’ll do them later.”

“Honey, I know that you have things you’d rather be doing and you agreed to clean the kitchen. And remember, keeping agreements is what allows us to depend on each other.” (Let them know you understand how they feel and then remind them that they choose to do the specific chore.)

If they continue to not do it you can say,

“Maybe if you bring your music up here it would make it a bit more tolerable.”

(There’s no reason that chores have to be unpleasant. Depending on how we set it up, children can conclude: **Work is boring and is to be avoided**, or **Work can be fun**.)

Some combination of these conversations almost always worked with our children.

As a result of dealing with them in this way they concluded,

I am important. What I feel is important. What I do matters. I have the power to impact my life.

WHY THE BELIEFS OUR CHILDREN FORM ARE SO INFLUENTIAL LATER IN LIFE?

Imagine that you know two teenagers, Liz and James.

Liz has the beliefs: **I'm not important, I'm not good enough, No matter what I do it will never be good enough, Mistakes and failures are bad, If I make a mistake I'll be rejected, I'm not worthwhile.**

James believes the opposite: **I am good enough, I am important, Mistakes and failures are learning opportunities, I am competent and capable. I am worthwhile.**

Picture them in high school. The teacher asks a question. Both know the answer but whose hand goes up, Liz's or James's?

There is a tryout for the debate team. Both want to be on the team, but who goes for it?

There is a school play. Who tries out for the lead?

Some of the kids on campus use drugs. Which of the two is more likely to participate?

Years later when they decide to get married, which of them is more likely to have a nurturing, long-term relationship?

Who is more likely to have a successful career?

Can you see that their choices and the way they live their lives are caused primarily by what they believe?

SIDEBAR: While it is true that many people succeed financially despite having negative beliefs, it is also true that these people struggle a lot more than they need to on the road to success. Moreover, they may have successful careers but it is unlikely they will have feelings of deep fulfillment and peace of mind.

Positive beliefs generally lead to a positive life and negative beliefs lead to a negative life.

To make it easier to see how our beliefs influence our lives we've provided examples of issues many people face and the beliefs that cause them.

Procrastination: **Mistakes and failure are bad. What makes me worthwhile is doing things perfectly. I'm not capable. I'm not competent. No matter what I do it will never be good enough.**

Relationship problems: **I'm not deserving. I'm not lovable. Women/men can't be trusted. Relationships are difficult. I'm not good enough. Men/women have all the power.**

Difficulty in confronting people: **Anger is dangerous. If I express anger I'll be rejected.**

Worrying about what people think of you: **I'm not worthwhile. I'm not good enough. What makes me worthwhile is having people think well of me and like me.**

Social anxiety: This problem, which afflicts millions of people, is evident in the common discomfort people have in meeting new people, social situations in general, and even one-on-one conversations. A few of the beliefs underlying this problem include: **It's dangerous to have people focus or put their attention on me. Mistakes and failure are bad. What makes me worthwhile is having people like me or think well of me. No matter what I do it will never be good enough.**

WHAT'S MY JOB AS A PARENT?

Given the impact that the beliefs we form in childhood have on the rest of our lives, what is the most important job of a parent?

Yes, we agree that what a child **does**, what a child **learns**, and how a child **feels** are all very important.

But what is going to have the biggest impact on our children when they grow up?

Their beliefs, right?

And if this is true, then your fundamental job as a parent is to help your children form positive and useful beliefs about themselves (that's their self-esteem), about other people, and about life.

Your touchstone as a parent should be:

What conclusion is my child likely to reach as a result of the interaction I just had with him/her?

If it's positive, congratulations. You got your job done.

If it's negative, go back, apologize, and fix it up.

Some of the parenting behaviors that lead to positive beliefs may take a little more time than the ones that lead to negative beliefs.

It seems easier and quicker to yell, punish, and threaten.

But what might work in the short term is likely to produce serious problems for your children later on. And if you think about how many times you have to threaten and yell,

it actually takes more time than the four positive parenting scenarios we described above.

Taking the time to explain, to acknowledge your child's feelings, to ask their opinion, and to treat them with respect and dignity actually results in you getting more of what you want from them in the long run than yelling or punishing.

THE GOOD NEWS AND THE BAD NEWS ABOUT PARENTING

At this point we can just hear many of you thinking:

“Oh, my God, what did I do to my children?”

“What negative beliefs have I caused them to form?”



We don't want you to beat yourself up and feel guilty about what you've done so far.

Rather, we want you to realize how your behavior affects what beliefs your children form so that you can use that knowledge to help your children create happy and healthy lives for themselves.

There is **good news** and **bad news** for you as a parent.

The bad news is that you have to be very careful how you interact with your children because you are the reality from which they are forming their beliefs about themselves, people, and life.

For example, if you are critical of them most of the time, they will likely conclude, **I'm not good enough.**

If they have a hard time getting your attention a lot of the time, they are likely to conclude, **I'm not important.**

If what they want has little impact on what the family does, they are likely to conclude, **I don't matter.**

The **good news** is that **how you behave with your children has no effect on them whatsoever the next day.**

“Wait a minute!” you might say.

“Didn't you say that our beliefs are formed as a result of the experiences we have in childhood with our parents?”

Let us clarify what we mean. You see, our childhood experiences can be very painful at the moment they occur, but the **experiences themselves** are not what impact us as adults.

What does have an impact?

Not what happened—but **the meaning we gave to what happened.**

The **beliefs** we formed about the events stay with us and run our lives forever—unless we get rid of them.

For example, we've had a great many clients who, as children, were yelled at, spanked, sent to their room, and verbally abused.

The experiences they had were horrible.



They were seeing us because, as adults, they were afraid of taking risks, they were never satisfied with their work no matter how good others thought it was, they didn't apply for promotions or better jobs because they were uncertain they could handle the increased responsibility, and they felt uncomfortable in social situations.

It seemed to them as if the earlier experiences were having a significant negative impact on their adult lives.

After working with them for a short time these clients realized that as unpleasant as the experiences had been, they were not happening in the present.

What really **was** affecting them in the present were the beliefs they had formed when these events took place: **I'm not good enough. Mistakes and failure are bad. I'm not competent. I'm worthless. I'm not capable. Life is dangerous.**

These beliefs that existed in the present, not the events that only existed in the past, were what determined their lives in the present.

And it's never too late to get rid of those beliefs.

We have developed a series of processes we call **The Lefkoe Method** that enable our clients to be able to identify and eliminate all the negative beliefs they formed in their childhood.

When the beliefs formed in childhood are eliminated in the present, the past loses its hold on us and the problems caused by the beliefs begin to go away.

As parents, however, the best thing you can do is help your children form positive beliefs during your interactions with them.

As you've seen in the examples above, the parenting that accomplishes that usually produces the best immediate result as well.

I hope you enjoyed reading the Part-II. In the next part, we'll learn:

- ✓What You Might Believe That Could Cause You to Parent “Ineffectively”
- ✓Belief #1: I am responsible for my child's behavior
- ✓Belief #2: Children should have the same standards of behavior as adults
- ✓Belief #3: I'm the boss
- ✓Belief #4: My job is to produce results with my children
- ✓There Is No Such Thing as a “Perfect Parent”

WHAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE THAT COULD CAUSE YOU TO PARENT “INEFFECTIVELY”

What we mean by “ineffective” parenting is parenting that leads to negative beliefs.

Apart from not knowing the importance of beliefs and not understanding what children are capable of at different ages, both of which are true for most parents, the major reason there is so much ineffective parenting is that most parents have inappropriate parenting beliefs.

Let's take a look at some of the most common beliefs parents have.

If you're a typical parent, a few of them may sound familiar to you.

Belief #1: I am responsible for my child's behavior

When our daughter Blake was ten, Morty saw her take a friend's hat and he immediately told her to give it back.

A few minutes later, he began to wonder about his action.

Why did he tell Blake what to do?



If her friend got angry and didn't want to be friends with Blake anymore, that would be a good lesson for her about respecting other people's property.

And if her friend didn't get angry, then it was just a game and Blake would give the hat back on her own.

There were a half dozen other possible outcomes.

Why did Morty feel he had to make sure she gave the hat back right away?

He discovered after a little exploration that he believed **I am responsible for my children's behavior toward others.**

And if I am responsible, then I have to constantly monitor her dealings with others.

Once he had identified **his** belief, the next question was:

What conclusion would Blake eventually come to if he continued this type of behavior long enough?

Possibly, **I can't figure out things on my own** (because Dad is always telling me what to do and not to do).

Or, **I need someone else to make sure I do the right thing.** (With this belief, what would happen when someone told her that “everyone” was trying drugs or having sex? If she couldn't count on her own judgment, she might have to listen to what everyone else was saying.)

The belief that you are responsible for your child's behavior toward others may lead you to do things that inhibit the development of independence and a healthy self-esteem in your child.

Your intentions may be good, but your actions may lead your children to experience self-doubt.

Belief #2: Children should have the same standards of behavior as adults

On several occasions, Brittany, then age four, took about ten two-to-four-inch pieces of Scotch tape from Morty's desk and put them on her bedroom walls and furniture.

Morty asked her to not take any more tape because she was wasting it.

She repeated her behavior on several more occasions and Morty found himself getting increasingly annoyed because she wasn't listening to him.

“Brittany,” he warned her, “If you keep taking my tape, you won't be allowed in my office anymore.”

But threats didn't faze her.

At that age, Brittany seemed to march to her own drummer.

It was hard to enforce any rules.

At meals, she would always half-sit, half-stand, as if she were getting ready to take flight from the table.

We must have said, “Sit down!” ten times a meal.

We were always nagging, cajoling and creating “consequences.”

Finally, Morty asked himself:

What is Brittany concluding about herself and life as a result of these interactions?

One possibility might be: **I can't do what I want to do in the world. I need someone else's permission.**

And perhaps: **If daddy's constantly unhappy with what I do, there must be something wrong with me. Or, Others know and I don't.**

(NOTE: You might think that a child who behaves in this way couldn't possible form these beliefs but you'd be wrong. There are many examples of people who were quite a handful when they were younger and had very low self-confidence later as a result of beliefs just like these. Some of them have been our clients.)

Morty began to think about what he believed that produced his anxious, nagging behavior.

When he finally discovered it, he realized that it was a belief that a great many parents had: **Children should have the same standards of behavior as adults.**

Putting several inches of tape on the wall is wasting tape by adult standards; it is a game by a child's standards—and a very inexpensive game at that.

Standing during a meal is not polite by adult standards, but children are filled with energy and have a hard time sitting still at any time.

In fact, there is a lot of evidence they can pay better attention if they are permitted to move around than if they are forced to sit still for long periods of time. (Many schools have successfully dispensed with the standard fixed desks and allow children to sit, lie, walk around, stand and kneel during classes with excellent results.)

When a child is repeatedly told: “Don't do this and don't do that!”—when the child merely is doing what is natural for a child her age, what makes sense to her, what feels right to her—she almost always would experience the “don'ts” as an invalidation of her, not merely as an instruction from her parents not to do a specific thing.

She probably would conclude: **There is something wrong with me. I can't do anything right, so why bother? I'm not okay.**

And if a child who is feeling angry (or upset, or any other feeling) is repeatedly told:



“Don't be sad;”

“You're not really angry at your friend; she didn't mean it;”

“That shouldn't upset you;”

“Don't cry;”

—she will likely hear the injunctions as:

There's something wrong with the way I am. What I feel doesn't matter. Or I can't trust my feelings.

If our children form beliefs like these they will grow up to be people who feel limited in many ways instead of realizing they are full of potential.

They'll feel bad about themselves when they could be feeling great.

They may feel overwhelmed by what happens in life—that it's too hard to get what they really want, if not impossible.

And they might even settle for less because they believe that what they feel, want and do doesn't really matter anyway.

Don't you know a lot of people who live like this?

How do you think they got that way?

Belief #3: I'm the boss

One particularly detrimental parenting belief is: **We do it my way around here because I'm the parent.**

In other words, **I'm the boss, just because I'm the mother (or father).** There are a hundred times a day when a child asks,

“Can I have a snack?”

“Can I have a friend over?”

“Can I watch TV?”

“Can I ...?”

“Do I **have** to?”



There is no objectively "right" answer to many of these questions.

Often the answer is arbitrary.

Sometimes you give one answer; sometimes another.

Why one or the other? No reason; it's just what you feel at the moment.

Or, even if you think you have a reason, just as good a case frequently can be made for the opposite response.

If your child challenges you and asks, "Why?"—you may respond, "Because I'm your mother (or father)."

When the answer is arbitrary, why do we think that we need to retain the authority to provide the answer?

We could say instead,

"I don't think that I have a better answer to that question than you do. What do you think? Why do you think that?"

Again, what conclusion would children probably reach if what they want is overridden frequently by the arbitrary commandments of their parents?

How would they probably interpret continually asking, "Why can't I?" and hearing their parents answer, in effect:

"I don't need a reason; I'm your mother (or father)"?

**What I want isn't important. I have no control over my life. I don't matter.
Reasons aren't important; only power is important.**

Belief #4: My job is to produce results with my children

This belief, perhaps more than any other, robs people of much of the joy of parenting, and it leads their children to form negative beliefs.

Many parents believe that the most important thing in any given interaction with a child is achieving a specific result:

finishing the book that is being read
brushing their teeth
playing a new game by the rules
getting dressed
eating a meal



One underlying parenting belief that could produce such behavior is:

My job is to produce results with my children.

This belief is probably accompanied by the related belief: **A successful parent is one who gets his child to obey.** (Don't most parents of young children consider the ultimate compliment to be: "Your child is so well-behaved"?)

As a parent you probably find yourself frustrated and upset when your children want to do something that you don't want them to do.

If getting your children to behave in certain ways and to complete tasks is your goal, then you are doomed to frustration and upset because children often won't cooperate.

Your annoyance comes from assuming that the **point** of brushing teeth is to get the teeth clean; that the **point** of playing a game is to complete it while observing the rules; and that the **point** of reading a book is to finish the story.

Why?

Who said so?

You did, right?

But children do not usually have the same standards as their parents.

Read the following stories and see if maybe the parents' "point" is not necessarily the best one.

Remember the last time you heard a parent say:

"My kids are wonderful. They always obey me."

Or, "They never talk back."

Or, "They are never a problem."

Did you sigh with envy and say, "Oh, I wish my kids were like that?"

Think again.

What beliefs would a child have to have to always obey, never talk back, or never be a problem?

Joan, one of our clients, always did what her parents wanted when she was a kid.

Her parents described her as "the perfect child."

She came to work with us because she had problems standing up for herself and her husband complained that she never knew what she wanted.

She admitted that this was because she never felt that what she wanted mattered.

Three of the beliefs that caused her to be "the perfect child" and which caused her to be unhappy as an adult were: **What I want doesn't matter, I'm not important, and What others want is more important than what I want.**

Larry was praised constantly by his parents for being so well-mannered as a child.

When he first spoke to us he complained that he cared too much about what people thought of him. And that he often didn't tell people what he really thought if he didn't know how they'd react.

He had concluded: **The way to be accepted is to make people happy, to never upset them.**

This is why he was such a "well-mannered" child and overly concerned with what people thought of him as an adult.

When Brittany was young, it was a running battle to get her teeth brushed at night.

Sometimes she'd resist going into the bathroom.

Other times she'd refuse to open her mouth.

Or she'd bite the toothbrush, turn her head, or jump up and down.

I was constantly annoyed that I couldn't get Brittany to brush her teeth and I let Brittany know it.

I had had lots of gum surgery and was fanatical about everyone in the family brushing and flossing regularly.

One night I just lost it: I had my arm around Brittany's head and was ready to push the toothbrush in her mouth when I heard a little voice in my head saying:

"At what cost?"

So I let Brittany go and said:

"Sweetie, I'm sorry for holding you the way I just did. I know you don't want to brush your teeth right now so I'm not going to force you to. Just listen to me for a minute

because I want to tell you what happened to me when I didn't brush my teeth regularly when I was a little girl. I love you and I don't want you to look like this."

I opened my mouth with my lips covering my teeth, making it look as if I had no teeth. Brittany pointed to my mouth and laughed. Then I laughed =).

We talked for a few minutes and then Brittany said:

"Give me the toothbrush. I want to brush my teeth now."

Not long afterward, when both of us recognized we had the parenting belief we're discussing here, I changed my focus to having fun during this activity, rather than completing the activity.

When Brittany didn't want to go to the bathroom to brush her teeth, I'd ask Brittany how she would like to go to the bathroom—with me leading a parade and her following, with her in my arms or on my back, or did she want to meet me there in five minutes?

This change occurred in other areas, as well.

Before Morty recognized he believed, **My job is to produce results with my children**, if Brittany interrupted Morty to talk about various things while he was reading to her, he'd try to get her to stop talking so he could finish the book.

Again, he would feel annoyed because he was being frustrated in **achieving what he had as his goal**.

Later Morty thought, isn't listening to children as important as reading them? Isn't allowing them to say whatever was on their minds to their parents as important as reading to them?



After realizing this, he discovered that when he used the time they were in bed with a book to allow Brittany to talk about whatever she wanted, they had some very interesting and fun conversations.

Their time together became more meaningful to both of them.

Morty ended up reading to her a lot, but, more importantly, Brittany was probably forming positive rather than negative beliefs about herself and life.

What if you decided that the primary purpose of every interaction was to assist your children to create positive beliefs about themselves, people, and life?

It might open your mind to many other possible ways of enjoying time with your children.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A “PERFECT PARENT”

If at this point you’re thinking, “Why didn’t I know all this before I messed up my kids?”, I want to remind you of something we said earlier:

Nothing you do affects your children the day after you do it.

What determines the rest of their lives is the meaning they give to what you do.

And that meaning can always be changed.

You can’t mess up your kids for life, because they always have the opportunity to eliminate any negative beliefs they formed as a child when they grow up and realize they have them.

Moreover, there is no such thing as a “perfect parent.”

All we can do is commit to do our best as parents, which includes learning what works and what doesn’t, rather than flying by the seat of our pants and hoping it all turns out.

We can never anticipate every interpretation our children will make of our behavior.

But we can constantly ask ourselves the question:

“What are my children likely to conclude as a result of the interaction I just had with them?”

And then learn from the answers.

As parents we made many mistakes with our two children and they formed many negative beliefs as a result.

But as they were growing up we were learning what we’ve written about here.

As a result we made fewer mistakes as they grew older, and fewer with our second child who was born six years after the first.

Now you know the essence of what has taken us many years to learn from our thousands of clients and our experience as parents of two incredible children.

Being a parent is hard work.

No profession or job is more difficult.

And no profession or job is more rewarding.

When Morty is asked, before he delivers a speech or workshop, how he wants to be introduced, he always says:

“Tell them my favorite word is ‘daddy,’ especially when uttered by one of my two daughters. That’s the most important thing they can know about me.”

We trust that what you’ve learned in this book will make the time you spend with your children easier, more fun, and far more effective.

As you parent your children you are taking the most important and rewarding journey a human being can take.



Could you imagine the difference in the next generation of children if every parent read this ebook now and experience Parenting - *the Lefkoe Way*?

I sincerely hope that you enjoyed learning from this e-book series. If you think you are ready to take the next big leap, then I welcome you to check out the 7 CD course that will truly transform your parenting.

Feel free to log on to our website to learn more.

Warmly,

Shelley