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Author of the International Bestseller

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

PRESENTS

How to Develop Your Family Mission Statement



“If you were to ask me, ‘What is the one thing that would have the greatest impact for good on my family?’ I would answer, ‘Work with your entire family to develop a family mission statement.’ It will be the single most important and far-reaching leadership activity you can do.”

—Stephen R. Covey



*Stephen and
Sandra Covey*

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Step 1: Explore What Your Family Is All About

Work on Two Things

1. Vision

2. Purpose

1. What is the purpose of our family?
2. What are we all about in life?
3. What is our identity as a family?
4. What kind of family do we want?
5. What kind of home do you want to invite friends to?
6. What is embarrassing to you?
7. What makes you feel comfortable at home?
8. What makes you want to come home?
9. What makes you feel drawn to us as parents so that you are open to our influence? How can we as parents be more open to your influence?
10. What are the things that are truly important to us as a family?
11. What are our family's highest priorities?
12. What are our unique talents, gifts, and abilities?
13. What are the principles we want our family to operate on (such principles as trust, honesty, kindness, service, etc.)?

Three Ground Rules

1. Listen respectfully.

2. Restate accurately.

3. Record or write the expressions.

- What is our responsibility in caring for our children?
- What is my responsibility in caring for my partner?
- What is our responsibility in caring for aging parents?
- What is our responsibility in caring for extended family, such as adult brothers and sisters?
- What competencies do we want our children to develop in each of the four dimensions (physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual)?
- How do we want to make a difference in our community? in the world?

STEP 2: Write Your Family Mission Statement

Envision a twenty-fifth or thirty-fifth wedding anniversary or family gathering. Describe in detail:

- Who is there?
- What is the feeling?
- What is the quality of the relationships?
- How are problems resolved?

Reminders...

The four parts of a family mission statement are:

- Desired characteristics of the home.
- Desired effect upon family members.
- Meaningful purpose.
- Identified source of power (principles).

The criteria of a good family mission statement are:

- Write it as if it were timeless.
- Deal with both ends and means.
- Deal with the four basic needs: to live, to love, to learn, to leave a legacy.
- Deal with all family roles.

STEP 3: Stay on Course

1. How are we living in relation to our family mission statement and destination?
2. What do we need to do to get back on course?
3. How can we keep ourselves actively working on our family mission statement?

Mission Statement Cautions

1. Don't rush them.

2. Don't dictate them.

3. Don't forget them.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: How can we apply this material if we are a soon-to-be-married couple?

Answer: Completing separate Personal Mission Statements and then merging common elements of both into your marriage mission statement is a good way to start. Also useful is to write down what the marriage ceremony would say if you actually had to write it. (Many do.)

Other considerations may include:

- How do we want to act as parents?
- How will we treat each other?
- How will we finance our family?
- How will we treat our children?
- What kind of home environment do we want our children to grow up in?
- What specific competencies do we want to develop in our children while they are growing up?
- How would we like to be remembered by our family members?

Question: How can we apply this material if we are a newly married couple?

Answer: Couples who have recently married should carefully look at a written copy of their marriage ceremony statement and the words said by the officiator. Essentially, the marriage ceremony statement is your beginning marriage mission statement—a point to start from. In a very real sense, the marriage ceremony was an effort to create a jointly held values system. Vows, promises, specific counsel, and words of encouragement may be incorporated into your marriage mission statement. Merging common elements of your individual Personal Mission Statements into your marriage mission statement is also helpful. If your later roles include that of parent, you may wish to expand your marriage mission statement to include your children in an updated family mission statement.

Other considerations may include:

- What kind of partner am I?
- What kind of partner do I want to be?
- How do I want to treat my partner?
- How can I encourage and assist my partner in his/her aspirations and responsibilities?

- What five or six basic values do we agree will serve as a compass to us and give our lives an unchangeable direction?
- What kind of parent do I want to be?
- How do I want to relate to my children?
- What specific competencies do we want our children to develop?
- How do we see our family on our tenth or twenty-fifth anniversary or family reunion?

Question: I'm a single parent. How can a family mission statement help me?

Answer: Being a single parent means dealing with single leadership and a double dose of responsibility. First, work on your own Personal Mission Statement to get a sense of the specific values and principles you want in your leadership. The Values and principles you identify and want your family to live by can be a great stabilizing influence in your family.

Then expand your mission statement to include your children. To help with the extra burden of responsibility, consider identifying support persons among extended family and friends who are willing to lend a hand occasionally or serve as role models to your children. If the children are old enough, they should participate in home-management responsibilities. Include in your family mission statement ways to accomplish family chores, maintain order with family rules, relieve stress, and also ways to have fun as family. Identify what is working well and smoothly in the family and what needs improvement. Identify what each child can do to contribute to the family and appropriately take some of the load off you.

Question: How can we apply this material if we are a blended family?

Answer: Two families that come together to form a new family have unique challenges that, if adequately met, can result in enduring and meaningful relationships among all family members. You may wish to consider the following suggestions in formulating your family mission statement:

First of all, spend time in developing your marriage mission statement, keeping in mind that the two of you will need to become a unified and stable force in your family. (Refer to the question and answer above regarding newly married couples.)

Reaffirm your purpose in having a blended family.

Agree together on common strengths, values, and principles.

Determine how both of you can become a team and share family-leadership responsibilities in a caring and sensitive manner.

Discuss with each other who will discipline the children, and when and how the children will be disciplined. Agree on specific ways to discipline (not punish) children so correction and growth takes place while still maintaining loving relationships.

Reinforce each other as parents. Have a date night and spend regular time together.

Live the principles and exemplify the values you want the blended family to live by. This process may take some time, but it will create credibility.

Seek to develop warm and loving relationships with each child. This will also take some time. Be a true friend as well as parent to your children. Make regular deposits into their Emotional Bank Accounts, such as keeping confidences, listening to understand, and doing small acts of kindness.

When you both feel you have created warm and trusting relationships with all the children, and they feel listened to and understood, they will likely become open to your influence. That is the time to begin developing your family mission statement and creating a common family vision. Ensure that all family members are deeply involved in the process so there will be ownership of your family mission statement by all family members. Be patient and take your time.

Question: How can we apply this material as grandparents?

Answer: When you become grandparents, you may want to write a mission statement about your own life and how you want to relate to your grown children and grandchildren. Remember that it is never too late to be wise parents of your grown children, assisting them in sensitive and thoughtful ways. They will need you. They will need you all their lives. And even if they do not tell you this, they still feel it inside. You may wish to include ways you can be supportive to your adult children and their families.

A grandparent mission statement can be developed by reviewing and renewing your marriage mission statement and family roles as parent and grandparent. Consider what your dreams are for the future. Serious consideration and planning should also be given to retirement and how to deal with the challenges of old age, including loss of your partner in the years to come.

Grandparents might think about a three-generation mission statement. Think about activities that include all three generations such as vacations, holidays, and birthdays. What family and extended family activities would you like to do to help stay in touch and maintain relationships? Consider involving your children and grandchildren in developing this three-generation mission statement.

SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS

Our family is happy and has fun together. We all feel secure and feel a sense of belonging. We support each other fully in our seen and unseen potential. We show unconditional love in our family and inspiration for each other.

We are a family where we can continually grow in mental, physical, social/emotional, and spiritual ways. We discuss and discover all aspects of life. We nurture all life forms and protect the environment.

We are a family that serves each other and the community. We are a family of cleanliness and order. We believe that diversity of race and culture is a gift. We hope to leave a legacy of the strength and importance of families.

The mission of our family is to create a nurturing place of order, truth, love, happiness, and relaxation, and to provide opportunities for each person to become responsibly independent and effectively interdependent, in order to achieve worthwhile purposes.

The mission of our marriage is to:

- Cherish each other.
- Remember each other's dedication to the family.
- Date once a week.
- Take a short trip together every three months.
- Learn new things together.
- Dance and sing and make things.
- Spend a lot of time together.

The purpose of our family is:

To live a healthy lifestyle in a reasonably neat and clean house and to be wise in the manner in which we use our talents in supporting ourselves and others.

To love each other by being positive and supportive about ourselves and others and by expressing our love often in word and deed.

To learn by being supportive and cooperative in establishing an atmosphere of learning in our home and by helping each other to learn through books and enriching experiences.

To leave a legacy by being trustworthy, by living honorable personal lives, by laying a foundation of integrity for the future generations of our family, and by serving our family and those outside our family.

In our home, family members, friends, and loved ones unite together for comfort, encouragement, laughter, and fun. Each family member contributes to plan celebrations and activities that enlarge the feelings of family love to renew and enrich one another.

We serve each other with kindness, courtesy, tenderness, and sensitivity—maintaining order and cleanliness while safeguarding the dignity and respect of all.

We not only see the noble and exemplary seed within each person, but we nourish through expecting the best and providing opportunities to express, grow, and develop individual greatness.

Each family member is a branch on the family tree and increases the beauty and strength of family life. As the family is extended, and new and distinct limbs are grafted in, the tree is infused with deeper stability, energy, and majesty to withstand the winds of adversity.

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Books	Audios
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People	The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People Unabridged And Three CD Set
The 8th Habit	The 8th Habit (Unabridged)
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens	The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens (Unabridged) and Two CD Set
The 7 Habits of Happy Kids	The 7 Habits of Happy Kids (Unabridged)
The Leader in Me	The Leader in Me (Unabridged)