

Raising a Successful Child

THE MANUAL

"Family psychologist McKee tenders a concise road map to building a positive, rich bond with one's child."

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

**DR. M.
MARK
McKEE**

WINNER OF THE 2011
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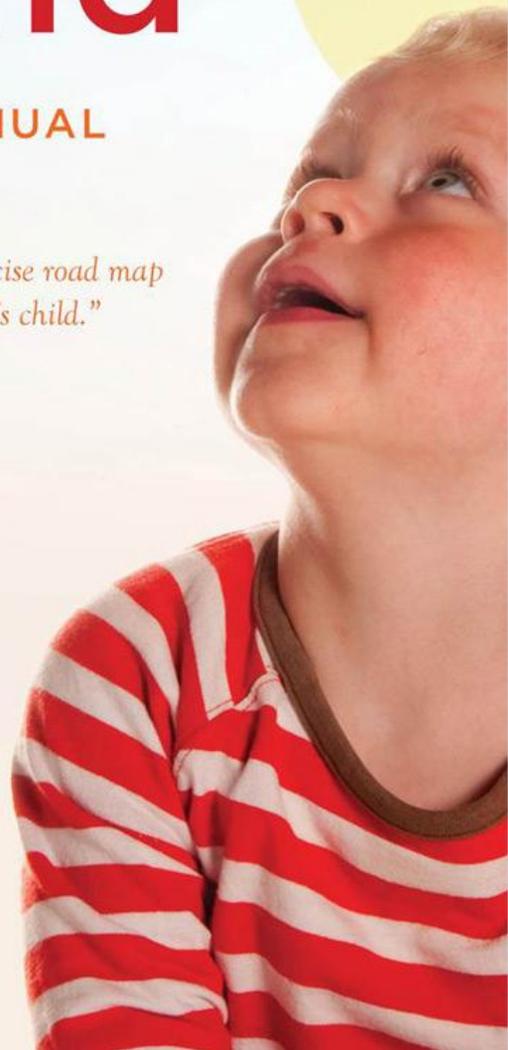


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Preface to Raising a Successful Child (The Manual) by M. Mark McKee, Psy.D.

By Joan Franklin Smutny

There is no shortage of books on raising children. Yet, parents I know often find them too lengthy or fear-based to address their immediate concerns. Exploring all the things that can go wrong and what families should do to avoid these problems does little to build confidence in parents or children. Mark McKee's *Raising a Successful Child (The Manual)* departs from this trend, offering parents a concise, clearly written guide on the art of parenting that distills not only the most pertinent research on the subject but his own experience as a psychologist who has worked closely with families for over 20 years.

Centering his book around the theme of building a strong and healthy parent-child relationship, McKee offers parents a clear, accessible guide—no easy feat in a time when families face a dizzying array of advice from every side. His book tempers the hubbub of so many prescriptions and “how-to's” and gently guides parents to the most essential ingredient—the relationship they've been creating with their children from the first days of life. What parents discover, through this book, is that shifting attention from what their children are doing (or not doing) to the relationship will enable them to approach their challenges in a new way. The book inspires different sorts of questions than we

commonly see in parenting books. Rather than, “How can I make my child perform better in school?” Or “How can I stop her tantrums whenever we go out?”, new questions arise: “How can I build a relationship with my child that nurtures healthy growth and well-being for both of us? What would that look like? What does my child need from our relationship right now and what might I do differently?”

Unlike other published writing I’ve seen, this book looks deeply at the ecology of the parent-child relationship—that is, the specific ways it needs to respond to the natural changes in a child’s cognitive, emotional, and social growth. What McKee shows is that when parents attend more to growing a strong and healthy relationship, when they carefully consider what they are bringing to it and then use the book’s principles to nurture and sustain it, they will find the solutions they seek to a variety of problems. In the process, parents often become more proactive, more able to recognize new growth in their children and respond in appropriate ways. They begin to anticipate needs, rather than being caught off guard by behaviors they don’t understand and then reacting in ways that don’t work for their children.

Raising a Successful Child (The Manual) makes it clear that the most urgent demand upon parents is to *be with* their children. In practical terms, this means not merely sitting in the same room, but actually interacting in a way that builds and strengthens the relationship—playing, telling stories, sharing thoughts, going for walks, reading, making things, singing songs, and so forth. McKee

offers many suggestions for making the time parents spend more beneficial in building trust, stimulating curiosity, providing needed structure, and instilling the confidence that will enable their children to become more independent. Essential to this process, according to the author, is self-awareness on the part of parents with regard to their own inherited ideas about child-rearing. Equipped with the information in this book, parents can weigh the assumptions they've acquired from their own family history, social networks, and the media against the facts, and thereby develop more informed responses to the particular needs or struggles of their own children.

Since *The Manual* presents a relationship-based approach to parenting, it makes sense that the question of discipline should come at the end. Though important, discipline works best in the context of a strong, mutually beneficial parent-child relationship. McKee provides sensitive, perceptive guidelines for parents on how to structure their children's experiences in ways that promote growth in confidence and self-control. He illustrates in concrete ways how parents can help children understand the idea of consequences so that they can connect their own behaviors to the circumstances that follow. *Raising a Successful Child (The Manual)* presents discipline as another dimension of parents relating to their children where the possibility of becoming self-disciplined comes with practice, patient reinforcement, and sometimes, the smallest of steps.

Raising a Successful Child (The Manual) is an eminently humane book, by which I mean that it steers clear of alarmist sentiments or vignettes of struggling parents, and instead guides readers to an essential wisdom on tending the parent-child relationship. This may sound simple, but it is a profound undertaking. Any parent who reads this manual will assuredly re-visit its pages again and again, and will find in its wise counsel the most trustworthy and sustaining support for raising their children.