

# C.S. Lewis & Co. Publicists

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Dear Editor/Producer,

When parents learn to replace rewards and punishment with problem solving, fairness, and logic, something amazing happens. Parenting gets easier and children become cooperative and respectful.

For more than twenty years, parenting educator, family counselor, and child behavior specialist BONNIE HARRIS, MS ED, has been developing a new way to discipline children—and has changed the lives of countless parents and children in the process. In ***Confident Parents, Remarkable Kids: 8 Principles for Raising Kids You'll Love to Live With*** (AdamsMedia, 2008), Harris has distilled her groundbreaking work into eight key principles and practical strategies parents can use to navigate through everyday challenges.

What's different here is a fundamental shift in how Harris approaches parenting. She emphasizes the *parent's* role in self-discipline—staying calm and looking at the child's behavior with a neutral, detective's eye to see what lies at its root. Acting out is the child's only way to tell parents she needs help with an obstacle standing in the way of her successful behavior. Once parents learn how to decode this behavioral language, the rest is a snap.

Harris has gained an international reputation as something of a child whisperer. Parents look on with astonishment as she transforms their defiant bully into a pleasant peer mediator. How does she do it? Harris knows something about children that few parents, teachers, or childcare workers know: When children misbehave, they are not *being* a problem, they are *having* a problem.

The message of this book is that all children are wonderful, responsible, capable people who want to do the right thing and behave in appropriate ways once parents learn how to give them acceptance, understanding, and support.

Author of the parenting classic, *When Your Kids Push Your Buttons and What You Can Do About It* (Warner Book, 2003), which was translated and published in seven countries, Harris is an experienced media veteran with national radio and television credits, including *The Today Show*. She is passionate about teaching parents a foolproof way to make consistent parenting decisions so their children will succeed and their family life can be balanced and peaceful.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

Cathy Lewis

# How to Raise Remarkable Kids

**New book introduces a fresh approach to disciplining, communicating, and problem solving with your child.**

When your child misbehaves, you react—usually with a form of criticism, blame, or punishment. That’s because, like most parents, you think your child is being a problem. Imagine instead that you could see her as *having* a problem, and that her behavior provided the clue to helping her solve it.

That’s the big idea behind a new book by parenting and child behavior specialist BONNIE HARRIS, MS Ed, called ***Confident Parents, Remarkable Kids: 8 Principles for Raising Kids You’ll Love to Live With*** (AdamsMedia, 2008). She says misbehavior means your child is *having* a problem, not *being* a problem.

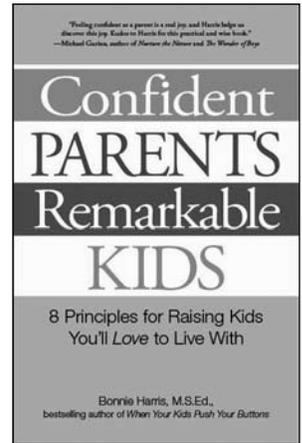
This shift in perception will change everything about the way you parent. Harris offers eight well-researched parenting principles and dozens of practical ways to apply them to everyday situations. In times of stress or crisis, the principles give parents a deep reservoir of strategies to draw from to counteract the feeling of “I’ve tried everything and nothing works.”

Illustrated with true stories throughout, this practical guidebook details each of the eight principles, and takes readers through seven of the most common parenting challenges—from bedtime and sibling rivalry to homework and chores—showing how real families used this parenting approach to find satisfying solutions.

Readers also learn:

- How to decode what your child’s behavior is signaling
- Why punishment and rewards don’t work—and what to do instead
- How to master “connective communication,” a new way to talk and listen to your child and help him resolve problems
- How to help your child succeed by supporting her strengths and recognizing her limitations
- How to help children take responsibility for their actions and understand the consequences of their behavior
- How to recognize when your expectations aren’t realistic

Parents who calmly, confidently exercise self-discipline are the best models of self-discipline for their child. This book is for parents, teachers, school counselors, childcare workers, pediatricians, and everyone else looking for a better way to relate to children and help them thrive.



Punishing behavior is like grabbing at the weeds; it is a temporary fix. But by digging to the roots of the behavior, addressing the emotional state, and understanding the underlying need, the behavior itself will disappear.

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# About the Author

BONNIE HARRIS, MS ED, is a specialist in parenting and child behavior; an esteemed educator, workshop leader, and national speaker; and a counselor known for her pioneering child behavior strategies. She is the author of *Confident Parents, Remarkable Kids: 8 Principles for Raising Kids You'll Love to Live With* (AdamsMedia, 2008).

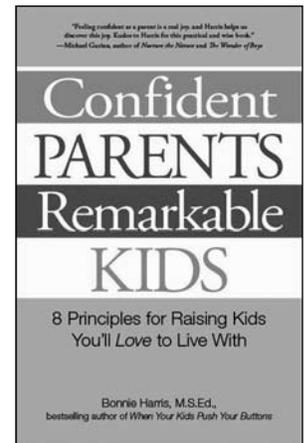
Harris has been a parent educator and counselor for more than twenty years. She received her master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Bank Street College in New York City. In 1990, she founded The Parent Guidance Center in Peterborough, NH, now The Family Center, a nonprofit organization that provides local families with parenting resources. In addition to teaching at The Family Center, Harris has a private consulting business, Connective Parenting, dedicated to guiding parents in the discovery of why both they and their children behave and respond the way they do. She provides parent counseling and coaching, runs educational workshops, and conducts trainings for teachers, therapists, and other professionals who work with children.

Her previous book, *When Your Kids Push Your Buttons and What You Can Do About It* (Warner Books, 2003), was named one of the top ten best parenting books by *New York Post*, and has been translated and published in seven countries.

A lively and popular public speaker, Harris is best known for her "Buttons" workshops and professional trainings, based on her top-selling book. She also gives keynote speeches and presents to professional audiences internationally on a variety of parenting topics. Two recent presentations were at the International Family Therapy Association, in Reykjavík, Iceland, and the Parents As Teachers conference in St. Louis, where she appeared alongside T. Berry Brazelton, MD, and John Gottman, PhD.

Harris is an experienced media pro who has been interviewed widely on television and radio, including *The Today Show*, ABC Singapore, and New Hampshire Public Radio, and has been featured in such publications as *Parenting*, *Parents*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Essence*, and *Working Mother*, among many others. To see video and audio clips of her interviews and workshops, and to read her parenting blog, visit [www.connectiveparenting.com](http://www.connectiveparenting.com).

Harris is the mother of two grown children and lives with her husband in Peterborough, NH.



If you don't want your children to leave the nest without so much as a glance backward, now is the time to begin focusing on and nurturing what you admire, respect, and love about them.

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# Segment Ideas / Interview Topics

## Why Punishing Children Doesn't Work

*Learn what to do instead.*

Punishing a child for misbehaving does nothing to teach responsibility. It's simply a quick-fix solution that uses fear to motivate and only offers short-term results. Harris proposes a new way to discipline children that's proven highly effective. Learn:

- Five reasons punishment fails
- How chronic punishment can lead to bullying and aggressive behavior
- How to walk your child through the eleven steps of problem solving
- How to stop arguing with your child and begin negotiating
- How to get your child to write a contract committing to a future plan

## Connective Communication

*Discover how to use "the most important skill in parenting."*

Harris developed connective communication as a way to communicate with children that encourages listening, talking, and feeling important to one another. Although simple and commonsensical, it's one of the hardest skills for most parents to accomplish because, like learning a foreign language, it doesn't come naturally for most of us. She discusses:

- The eight steps of connective communication
- How to get a child to view you as an ally and sounding board
- Top ten communication mistakes parents make
- How to keep your problems and your child's separate
- How to use connective communication with a preverbal child
- Connective communication activities to practice together
- How to open up a non-communicative child

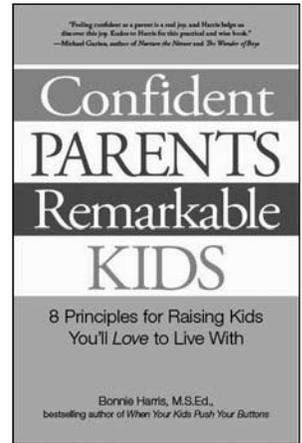
## Why Praise Is Overrated

*Why too much praise and too many rewards are bad for kids.*

Self-esteem was the parenting buzzword of the nineties. Now, says Harris, we have an epidemic of entitled twenty-somethings, many of whom require so much praise in the workplace that companies are hiring "praise consultants." Learn:

- How praise can undermine a child's initiative
- Why praising normally expected behavior can backfire
- How to offer useful praise that's specific and descriptive
- How to encourage a child without praise

—MORE—



Children whose parents give out checkmarks and smiley faces to induce behavior they want typically feel angry, frustrated, or hopeless when they get a check minus or a frowny face.

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## Managing Sibling Rivalry

*How to bring peace to your household—for good.*

Every parent with two or more children has to cope with sibling rivalry, from arguing and hoarding toys to mean-spirited competition and physical fights. Harris offers proven success strategies for parents at their wit's end. Learn:

- How to avoid getting sucked into “the triangle game”
- How to learn the “no-blame solution”
- What the behavior of each of your children signals
- How to use sibling conflict to spur greater connection
- How to help siblings negotiate a solution and agree on a contract

## Setting Children Up for Success

*Learn to set realistic, achievable expectations for your child.*

So many parents still feel bad because they didn't measure up to *their* parents' expectations. Harris says when parents have expectations that are *appropriate* for their child's character, capabilities, and age, it sets the child up for success. She discusses:

- How expectations that are too high can hinder a child's ability to solve problems and think independently
- How to nurture a child's self-confidence
- How misbehaviors signal the need to adjust your expectations
- How to help a child with too-high expectations of herself
- How to role play with your child to help him identify strengths and weaknesses

## Are We Medicating Disorders—or Our Children's Behavior?

*Child behaviorist says our children are being overmedicated.*

Harris says when young children are overstimulated, misunderstood, or are not fitting in at school, it's natural for them to act up. These behaviors are the only way they know how to signal their need. Unfortunately, parents, teachers, and school counselors don't always recognize this. As a result, children in epidemic numbers are being needlessly prescribed medications for ADHD, bipolar disorder, and depression, among others. Find out:

- How to rule out environmental/situational causes of behavior before treating brain chemistry imbalances
- How stress affects children's behavior
- What your child's behavior is really trying to tell you
- How to cope with a child who is inattentive, aggressive, or depressed
- How well-meaning parents may be harming their children's health—and what to do instead

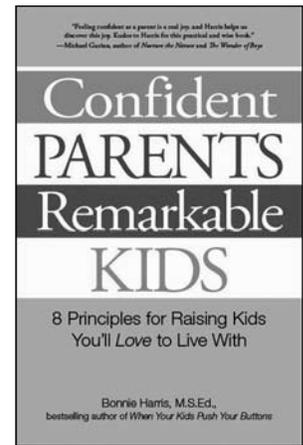
## 5 Steps to Negotiating with Kids

- Acknowledge that what your child is arguing about is important to her.
- Ask to hear her side of the story/point of view. Take it seriously.
- State what is important to you/your concerns/your side of the story.
- Ask: How can we make this work for both of us? Or, how can you make that happen?
- Be open-minded and willing to compromise, but be clear when you have reached your final answer.

# The Eight Principles of Confident Parenting

1. **My child wants to be successful.** Believing this principle means understanding that the misbehaving child is dealing with an obstacle that is preventing successful behavior. Understanding that children want to be successful implies a trust in the child's capability, which is fostered by encouragement and correction, never by disapproval and blame.
2. **Behavior is my clue.** When our children are acting out, they are trying to tell us something. If you remember this, your perception will automatically change from my child is *being* a problem to my child is *having* a problem. The behavior provides you with a clue to what the problem might be.
3. **My child's greatest need is acceptance.** Acceptance does not mean condoning behavior, but it does mean unconditional love. It leaves the child knowing "I'm okay." Acceptance means my child is free to have his own needs and to hold his own perceptions, beliefs, and opinions. He does not have to be like me or think like me—or like his brother.
4. **Expectations must be set for success.** Too often we set our children up to fail with our inappropriate expectations. With all the best intentions, we can inadvertently prevent our children from discovering their own way. This encourages dependence on us or someone else—often leading to bad decision making.
5. **Connection strengthens relationship.** Any obstacle in your child's way of success is your opportunity for connection. *Connection is THE preventive measure* against risky, rebellious, and defiant behavior. Reconnection can happen hours, days, weeks, even months or years later—it's never too late.
6. **The behavior I focus on grows.** Mostly parents focus on the behaviors they don't like—and they grow. As parents, when we highlight the qualities we want our children to develop, it can draw out attributes our children may not know they possess. No matter how far off track a child has gotten, there is at least one small area in which competency can be supported and encouraged.

—MORE—



## Steps to becoming a sounding board for your child:

1. Don't take it personally.
2. Don't try to fix the problem or teach a lesson.
3. Look for the *cause* of the behavior.
4. Listen.
5. Trust.

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7. **Problem solving, not punishment, teaches responsibility.** With punishment, children either “behave” out of fear or “behave badly” out of defense. Consequences should be natural or logical, understood, and agreed on ahead of time. With problem solving, the parent becomes guide and facilitator of the child’s own thought process, which helps build conscience and good decision making.

8. **Good boundaries mean good balance.** With a good boundary, a parent can be of far better help to the child who has a problem, because the parent is not taking responsibility for it. And the child is more cooperative with the parent’s problems when he doesn’t feel blamed or responsible for them. The needs of the parents are as important as the needs of the child—the key is to balance both sets of needs.

**Every child needs to:**

- Be respected.
- Have a sense of personal power.
- Be unconditionally accepted.
- Be trusted and to trust others.
- Feel like an important member of the family.
- Know what to expect and what is expected of him.
- Have clear boundaries between his own and the parent’s responsibilities.
- Have positive, caring models.

# Six Myths and Truths about Parenting

**MYTH** Punishments are necessary to help a child learn.

**TRUTH** Punishment is a quick fix that often works at getting a desired result—today. But in the long term, it puts all the power in the parents' hands, and the child simply learns to behave how the parents want rather than learning to self-correct. A strong-willed child will simply resist.

**MYTH** There's no such thing as giving a child too much praise.

**TRUTH** Praise, especially when it's excessive or given for normal, expected behavior, can lead to children who feel entitled, emotionally manipulated, or who lack self-motivation.

**MYTH** When children misbehave and get into trouble, it's usually the parents' fault.

**TRUTH** As a parent, you are not responsible for your child's behavior. You are 100 percent responsible, however, for *your* words and behaviors, which strongly influence your child. When a child "misbehaves," it means there is an obstacle standing in the way of his success. Your job is to help him find out what that obstacle is.

**MYTH** Love is all children need.

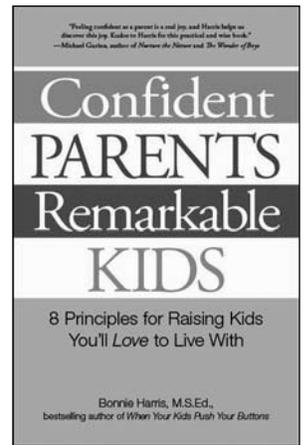
**TRUTH** More important than love, even, is unconditional acceptance. If you accept the whole child—strengths, weaknesses, and differences—you will really see her, know her, and be able to help her succeed. She, in turn, will have confidence and a strong sense of self.

**MYTH** The more you expect of a child, the more likely he will meet those expectations.

**TRUTH** Parental expectations that are unspoken, age-inappropriate, too high, or unrealistic can invite unintended behaviors from your child—either stress-related or rebellious. Adjust your expectations and you help your child succeed.

**MYTH** Children need and want parents to set the rules.

**TRUTH** Children have an innate sense of logic and fairness. What children need is clear boundaries—between your problems and theirs. Good discipline requires mutually established rules. Children need strong limits, the opportunity to solve their own problems, and to experience the consequences of their behavior.

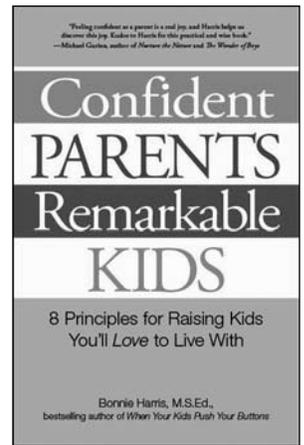


Research has shown that extrinsic learning—or reward-based learning—goes no farther than what is perceived necessary to achieve the reward. Also, the more people are rewarded for doing something, the more they are likely to lose interest in whatever they had to do to get the reward.

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# Suggested Interview Questions

1. When a child misbehaves, you say the child is *having* a problem, not *being* a problem. How does this shift in perception change the way we parent our kids?
2. What's wrong with punishments and rewards as ways to motivate kids and teach them better ways to behave?
3. If behavior offers clues to a child's problem, how can parents decode those clues to get to the root cause of the behavior?
4. You say parents are not responsible for their child's problems or a child's happiness. Explain this.
5. How does self-discipline of the parent trump disciplining the child?
6. How do difficult children, or "button-pushing children," as you call them, teach parents what they most need to learn?
7. How do a parent's expectations affect the child's behavior?
8. What is connective communication?
9. Why is connective communication, in your view, the hardest skill for parents to learn?
10. What aspects of a child should parents focus on, and how could a parent's focus potentially promote negative behaviors?
11. How does a parent make the transition from punishing to problem solving?
12. How do you teach kids to be responsible for their actions and understand the consequences if they aren't?
13. Can you teach kids how to negotiate?
14. Give me an example of how to apply your eight parenting principles to a ordinary situation, say, getting kids to go to bed.
15. What's the single most perplexing concept for parents to grasp about this new parenting approach?
16. What's the most surprising thing parents learn when they apply your eight parenting principles?



When we tell children what to do, when, and how to do it, the message we send is, *You have to do what I say, because you don't know any better.*

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# Advance Praise for the Book

“Harris helps us discover the joy of feeling confident as a parent. Her eight principles are simple and sensible. They provide keys to parenting well in our very challenging age. Kudos to Harris for this practical and wise book.”

—MICHAEL GURIAN, author of *Nurture the Nature* and *The Wonder of Boys*

“A truly informative, practical book that will serve as an invaluable resource for parents and professionals alike. Bonnie Harris educates us with empathy, compassion, and humor.”

—ROBERT BROOKS, PHD, Faculty Harvard Medical School  
Co-author of *Raising Resilient Children* and *Raising a Self-Disciplined Child*

“An imminently practical book! Beginning with utter respect for the child mixed with curiosity about how he ticks, Ms. Harris opens doors for a new way of thinking about being a parent. Imagine beginning with the idea that the child actually *wants* to succeed, and then creating responses that support what the child already wants! Revolutionary. Here is a parenting book that treats parents as grownups, treats children as not insane, and extols the virtues of adult self-doubt.”

—MICHAEL TROUT, Director of The Infant-Parent Institute

“Bonnie Harris has the uncanny gift of being able to put herself in both a parent’s and a child’s shoes. Her powerful insights rise above the typical quick fixes and how-to tactics, and offer a rare two-way mirror for parents and children to truly see each other and connect—for life.”

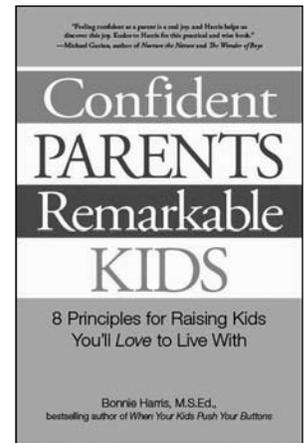
—LU HANESSIAN, author of acclaimed memoir *Let the Baby Drive: Navigating the Road of New Motherhood* and host of *Make Room for Baby*, Discovery Health Channel

“A must-read for parents looking for practical and empathic ways to deepen their connection with their children.”

—KAREN B. WALANT, PhD, author of *Creating the Capacity for Attachment*, board member of Attachment Parenting International

“A rich and very readable book loaded with accessible information. How I wish I had such a guide when I was a young parent!”

—ELVIN KAPLAN, MD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and of Community and Family Medicine, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center



As a parent, you will always question and have doubts. You will make plenty of mistakes. You will never be perfect. But knowing you have dependable principles to rely on will inject your parenting with confidence.

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