

THE PARENT YOU WANT TO BE

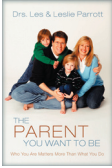
In chapter 2 of *The Parent You Want to Be*, we described our personal parenting retreat at Salish Lodge outside of Seattle, but you don't need to schedule a retreat to come up with a plan for becoming the parent you want to be. In fact, you can do it in a matter of minutes with the following exercise.

We recommend that you print out two copies of this exercise – one for each of you.

Section 1: Exploring Where You Came From

This first section is designed to help each of you better understand the people who have shaped you most in your role as parents. If you and your spouse are completing this section of the exercise together, take turns answering the following questions after you have each answered them on your own.

1. Describe some of your most vivid positive memories as a child with your parents. What stands out and why?



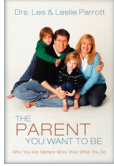
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2. What admirable qualities did your father have that shaped the person you've become? Give some specific examples of how these qualities made you a better person. What did he do that made these qualities evident? What can you do to emulate them?

3. What admirable qualities did your mother have that shaped the person you've become? Give some specific examples of how these qualities made you a better person. What did she do that made these qualities evident? What can you do to emulate them?

4. What qualities do you think were missing in either one of your parents? How would you be a better person if your parents had exemplified these traits?



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Section 2: Sharing Your Self-Reflection

This second section facilitates a bit of inner exploration of your personality and shows you how your personality can't help but shape you as a parent—for good and for not so good.

1. Because of your natural hard-wiring, what one or two positive traits do you instinctively bring to the enterprise of parenting? How do these positive traits shape your child?

2. Take a deep breath, do some honest reflection, and identify one or two traits you currently lack that would significantly improve your effectiveness as a parent. In other words, what missing trait is likely to be your biggest hurdle on the road to becoming the parent you want to be?

Section 3:

This third section gets more personal, so do your best to put your guard down and cultivate a receptive heart and listening ears. The goal is to learn a bit more about yourself—like when you look in the mirror.



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1. Invite your spouse to share with you one trait that he or she sees in you that makes you a great parent.
2. Invite your spouse to share with you one trait that he or she perceives to be deficient in you—a trait that would make you a more effective parent. This is a time to invite feedback and avoid defensiveness.

“The day the child realizes that all adults are imperfect, he becomes an adolescent; the day he forgives them, he becomes an adult; the day he forgives himself, he becomes wise.”

- Alden Nowlan

Section 4: Identifying Your Top Two Traits

Finally, we want you to review the list of the “ten traits worth considering” (see below). These are the same ten traits we introduced in chapter 2—the same ten that make up the coming chapters in this book. Your job is to do two things:

First, identify two traits from the list that you believe you are most naturally inclined to embody. In other words, which two traits come easiest to you? While you’re at it, identify the two traits that you think come easiest to your spouse (this can make for good discussion).

Second, identify two traits that you believe would make you a better parent. In other words, which two traits do you currently lack but seek to attain? And if you have more than one child, do you wish to exemplify more of a certain trait with each unique child?

Here, with more amplification, are the “ten traits worth considering”:

Giving the Praise They Crave: Being an Affirming Parent

Counting to Ten—Again: Being a Patient Parent

Hearing What They Don’t Say: Being an Attentive Parent

Seeing a Picture of Their Future: Being a Visionary Parent

Building a Better Bond: Being a Connected Parent

Commemorating Milestones: Being a Celebratory Parent

Keeping Your Word: Being an Authentic Parent

Creating the Safest Place on Earth: Being a Comforting Parent

Instilling Wisdom: Being an Insightful Parent

Practicing the Presence of God: Being a Prayerful Parent

Once you’ve completed the four sections of this exercise, be sure to talk them over with your spouse, taking as much or as little time as you like.