



Prayer: Just Get Started. (From: *The All-Time 10 Best Tips on Prayer* by Jim Stephens, www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf)

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." "Don't bite off more than you can chew." "Take it one step at a time." "Keep your goal within reach." "Just do it!"

JUST GETTING STARTED is the way to begin. Don't spend too much time thinking about it. Don't wait until you are "in the mood". Don't look for the "right time" or "right place". Obstacles will always come up that make for wonderful excuses why you should be distracted from prayer or be delayed in starting your prayer. Ignore them and focus on just getting a start, even if it's a very small one. If the present time doesn't seem quite right to you, then maybe just talk to God "along the way". Pretend He is your invisible friend next to you as you drive or walk somewhere during your day. Be open and honest as you get started. "I don't know if you're there right now or not, but I hope you can hear this. I'm on my way to the store and I don't have time to stop and pray, but it would be nice if you come along with me and help make it a smooth trip."

Incidentally, I experience that there is a very real force which actively attempts to prevent me from praying. I have to overcome that force by making effort almost every time. If I were you, I'd expect it.

NIGHT TIME PRAYER OR MORNING PRAYER. Most of us decide to pray at the end of the day. This is good, but usually by then I'm not only physically tired, but I'm emotionally drained as well. Often it will seem that you haven't got the spiritual energy and power to initiate a conversation with anyone, let alone God. Who would want to invite the Almighty God to visit them in such a state of mind?

A recent experience proved to me that tiredness is not real. I was going to go to bed early because I felt unusually tired. Several of the kids had been ill and I was feeling it too. Then the phone rang. It was my best friend from 800 miles away. We hadn't talked in a month and he was going to be coming this way. 15 minutes later, I was emotionally and spiritually recharged. Why? The energy that is generated from positive emotional give and take can revive us. It's even better than sleep.

So at the end of today, try not to plop down in front of the TV and watch whatever is on for an hour. I can pretty much guarantee that it will NOT revive you spiritually or emotionally. You might even be feeling worse after watching TV. So end today differently. Take time for an honest talk with God.

MORNING PRAYER is vital for starting your day so don't neglect it. If you have to, even get up just 10 or 15 minutes earlier. Morning prayer really helps prepare you for the various events and circumstances that lie ahead. Think over the upcoming day as you pray. Even review your schedule with God and look for His insights on how to handle situations and responsibilities that you will encounter. If you are going to be meeting a person that is difficult for you to love, ask God for His perspective. New insights from prayer, especially in loving difficult people, can be very exciting.

START SMALL. Any new relationship with another person starts out with small talk. It's the same with prayer. Even a meeting of old friends who haven't seen each other for a long time starts with small talk. Take time to get acquainted with God. Sometimes getting started is the hardest part, so start with honest small talk about how things are going.

If you are learning to pray, then you realize, of course, that you are on unfamiliar ground. But remember that everyone started in that same place. Even the greatest men of prayer throughout history started where you are. They had doubts in the beginning. They had their "ups and downs" in prayer.

WORK UP TO LONGER PRAYERS. Start with three or four minutes at a time. Then, when you are ready, try seven. Eventually you can reach twelve comfortably. Then challenge up to 21 and 40 minutes a day. Finally you can attempt 60 minutes a day. This is probably the most spiritually satisfying if you desire to go that far.



Ten Effective Alternatives To Nagging

By Michele Weiner-Davis

Let's face it. Relationships can be frustrating sometimes. They can be particularly frustrating when we want something from our partners and they resist doing it.

And when nothing changes, we find ourselves saying the same thing over and over and over. In other words, we nag. It would be one thing if nagging worked, but the truth is, not only doesn't it work, it usually breeds hostility and distance.

And when two people feel hostile and distant, they are even less likely to cooperate with each other. In fact, a recent study suggests that persistent nagging corrodes the foundation even more than infidelity. Isn't that amazing?

But what besides nagging can you do if you really need to get through to your spouse? Take a deep breath. The following are ten effective nagging alternatives.

1. Ask for what you want rather than complain. When we want our partners to do something they haven't been doing, we usually complain about the past rather than ask for what we want in the future.

We say, "I can't stand it when you leave your dirty dishes on the sink," instead of, "It means a lot to me when you remember to put your dishes in the dishwasher. I would appreciate it if you did that more often. It would be great." When we complain, our spouses become defensive and less likely to want to fulfill our wishes.

Remember, talk about what you want, not what you're unhappy about.

2. Be very specific. When you ask for something, make sure you are concrete, using action-oriented words.

For instance, instead of saying, "I wish you were more affectionate (a vague term)," Say "I really like it when you hold my hand in public or when you sit next to me on the couch while we watch television." Here's another example. Instead of saying, "You need to be more thoughtful around my friend," say, "My friend is very sensitive about her weight and it would be great if you didn't talk about how much weight you've lost when she's here."

If you're not specific, your spouse will fill in the blanks and oftentimes do it incorrectly. Don't take that chance, use action-oriented requests.

3. Set your sites on small changes first. Don't be too ambitious with your requests or they will be overwhelming. Only ask your spouse to do something that can be accomplished in one week.

For example, a man complained that his wife had piles in every room in the house. His desire was for her to clean the whole house. That was a gigantic goal. So, I helped him break it down into doable steps. He asked his wife if she could just start with the home office and do that in one week. She was able to agree to that and upon completion, they both felt great which motivated her to keep going to the next room and so on, until the entire house was straightened up!

10. Express general appreciation. In addition to offering compliments when your spouse is making an effort to do what you ask, it is also a good idea to express appreciation whenever you think of it regarding anything at all.

Appreciation builds good will which is the foundation for healthy relationships where there is mutual caretaking, love and respect. We all like acknowledgment for our efforts to be good human beings and loving partners. Give your spouse at least three compliments a day and watch how quickly relationship change takes place.

See other alternatives to Nagging: <http://www.huntsvillemarriage.com/Documents/Nagging.pdf>

Parenting Tip

Comment:

We have found this book and material to be very insightful and very helpful and have shared it with many parents. The videos are very beneficial as well.

Over the next couple of weeks we will be sharing the essential content of this book: **Children Are From Heaven**, by John Gray.

- Jim & Hiromi Stephens
- District 1, Marriage & Family Ministry

Introduction by John Gray

The skills of positive parenting contained in **Children Are from Heaven** took me more than thirty years to develop. For sixteen years as a counselor of adults with individual and relationship problems, I had a chance to study what didn't work in my clients' childhoods. Then, as a parent, during the next fourteen years I began to develop and use new and different parenting skills. These new insights and skills have not only worked in raising my own children, but also in thousands of other families.

Just as the world today is different, our children are different. They no longer respond to fear-based parenting. The old fear-based approaches actually weaken a parent's control. The threat of punishment only turns children against their parents and causes them to rebel. By reading **Children**

Are from Heaven, you will learn practical ways to update your parenting skills. You will not only learn what doesn't work, but what you can do instead. You will learn new ways of motivating your children to cooperate and excel without having to use fear tactics.

Children Are from Heaven

Our job as parents is to support our children in special ways so that our children become stronger and healthier. If we interfere and make it too easy, we weaken children, but, if we make it too tough and don't help enough, then we deprive them of what they need to grow. Children cannot do it alone. A child cannot grow up and develop all the skills for successful living without the help of their parents.

There are five important positive messages to help your children find within themselves the power to meet life's challenges and develop their full inner potential. Throughout **Children Are from Heaven**, we will explore a variety of new parenting skills based on communicating each of these five messages.

The messages are:

1. It's okay to be different. All children are unique. They have their own special gifts, challenges, and needs. As parents, our job is to be able to recognize what their special needs are and to nurture them. Boys in general will have special needs that are not as important for girls. Likewise, girls will have needs

that may not be that important for boys. In addition, every child regardless of gender has special needs associated with his or her particular challenges and gifts.

2. It's okay to make mistakes. All children make mistakes. It is perfectly normal and to be expected. Parents can most effectively teach this principle by making sure they acknowledge their own mistakes in dealing with and supporting their children and each other. When children see their parents apologizing on a regular basis, they gradually learn to be accountable for their own mistakes.

3. It's okay to have negative emotions. Such negative emotions as anger, sadness, fear, sorrow, frustration, disappointment, worry, embarrassment, jealousy, hurt, insecurity, and shame are not only natural and normal, but an important part of growing up.

Negative emotions are always okay and they need to be communicated. Parents must learn to create appropriate opportunities for children to feel and express their negative emotions.

4. It's okay to want more. Too often children get the message that they are wrong, selfish, or spoiled for wanting more or for getting upset when they don't get what they want. Parents are too quick to teach the virtues of gratitude instead of giving their children permission to want more.

Positive parenting skills teach children how to ask for what they want in ways that are respectful to others. At the same time, parents will learn how to say no without getting upset. Children will feel free to ask for what they want, knowing that they will not be shamed.

5. It's okay to say no, but remember mom and dad are the bosses. Children need permission to say no, but, just as important, they need to know that their parents are in charge. Letting children say no opens the door for them to express feelings and to discover what they want and then negotiate. It does not mean you will always do what the child wants. Children who don't get this opportunity go through unnecessary rebellion around puberty.

Using the five messages of positive parenting and remembering that children are from heaven, will help you give your children the best preparation they could have to make all their dreams come true, which is what all parents want for their children.

Compliments of the District 1
Marriage and Family Ministry,
FFWPU
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