



## Prayer Tip: Create A Holy Environment For Prayer.

(From: [The All-Time 10 Best Tips on Prayer](http://www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf) by Jim Stephens, [www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf](http://www.themarriagelibrary.com/Resources/10-Tips-Prayer.pdf))

Each one of us is definitely influenced by our environment.

Whole fields of college study are now investigating how color, smells, sounds and even touch influence us in positive and negative ways.

I encourage you to be absolutely serious about the environment for your prayer. We all know that eating a lot of junk food will gradually over time lead to a decline in our physical health. The exact analogy applies to the health of our mind and spirit. The current state of television, movies, some music and art can have a seriously negative effect on your spiritual health.

I heard a wonderful example recently. A father was having the usual argument with his children about some TV show or movie or music or something. He didn't like it and they thought that it was OK. It wasn't really "hurting" them although they knew there were immoral and violent parts in it.

The next day he made their favorite brownies but before serving it, he let them know that he had put a tiny speck of dog poop in it. Certainly it was only a tiny bit and it wouldn't really be a problem.

But as you would expect, they wouldn't even touch it, even though it was just a tiny speck of dog poop.

The analogy is obvious. We allow all kinds of "dog poop" in the spiritual environment around us and totally disregard any effect it might be having.

When my wife and I want to pray and the children have the television on in the other room, I have to totally get out of earshot in order to be able to pray. Almost every television show I know will destroy my prayer environment. You can't have give and take with a TV. It is totally the master and you are totally the object if you enter a relationship on its terms. It will not respond or react to anything you do so be careful not to become a "tube slave".

If you find a place in your house that is the most comfortable for you to pray, then cultivate the atmosphere in that area. Each time you pray there, you will be adding good energy to the place and making it more suitable to better and better prayers. I believe that inanimate objects absorb energy from the living things around them. Then they reflect that energy back. As an example, my children say they can feel closer to me when they are sitting in my favorite chair or if they put on my favorite jacket.

So cultivate your own "prayer place" with your prayer energy.



## Strategies for Difficult Conversations

By Sheri & Bob Stritof, from About.Com Guides

### Ways to Address the Difficult Conversation

**1. Don't Say "We Have to Talk."** Start your conversation with a statement that acknowledges that the topic is difficult, sensitive, confrontational, or touchy. Clarify that you know that you have different perspectives and that you want to work together to have a better understanding of those perspectives.

**2. Suggestions for Beginning the Talk.** "I've been thinking about ...", "What do you think about ...", "I'd like to talk about ...", "I want to have a better understanding of your point of view about ..."

Don't beat around the bush. Keep it simple. Stay on topic.

### When and Where to Have the Difficult Conversation

**3. Don't Manipulate Your Spouse.** Don't invite your spouse out to the movies when you really plan on having "the talk" at a restaurant. Be honest.

**4. Timing of the Talk.** Pick the right time for the conversation. Don't ask your spouse to agree to a time to have the talk without having calmed yourself down first. Don't have a difficult conversation before or after sex.

**5. Don't Expect to Have the Talk Immediately.** It is important that you give your spouse some time to think about the topic you want to talk about but this shouldn't be postponed for a long time. Mention you would like to have the discussion within 48 hours.

**6. Don't Trap Your Spouse.** If you have the conversation in the car or on an airplane, etc. you are trapping your spouse.

**7. Agree on Where to Have the Talk.** Unless your spouse agrees to having the talk in a public location such as a restaurant, take your kids to a babysitter, and have the talk at home.

### Strategies to Use During the Difficult Conversation

**8. Show Respect for Your Spouse.** Don't speak down to your spouse. Don't assume your spouse knows what you want to talk about. Don't interrupt when your spouse is speaking.

**9. Be Aware of Non-verbal Communication.** Maintain eye contact. Acknowledge what you hear with the understanding that acknowledgment is not necessarily agreement.

**10. Be Prepared.** Back up your concerns, thoughts, and ideas with research and facts. Keep your conversation on the topic you agreed to discuss. Don't talk on and on.

**11. Reach an Agreement You Both Can Live With.** Then set a time to follow-up to see how you are both dealing with the issue.

**12. Know When to Get Help.** If the issue or situation continues to create problems in your marriage, the two of you may have the need for a counselor or a mediator.



# Remind Children Of The Lessons They've Learned, Not Their Mistakes

By Robert Chen

We can all agree that part of achieving personal mastery is to transform mistakes, failures and setbacks into learning opportunities that will make us stronger for the future.

Mistakes are great because we just can't learn that much from our successes, but what most people don't realize is that when they are learning from their negative experiences, they may be inadvertently making a harmful mistake.

One summer, I was riding my bike around the block when a few kids from another neighborhood asked to ride my bicycle and agreed to let me hold one of their bicycles for insurance. I had a bad feeling but I was young and naive so I agreed. After the first child rode off with my bike, they proceeded to push me aside and took their bike back and rode off. After trying to chase them for several

blocks to no avail, I decided to head home, devastated.

What I didn't mention in the beginning of this story was that it was actually my older brother's bicycle. He had just put on some new brakes and this was the first time he let me take it out for a ride. I delayed going home because I was so afraid to tell my brother for fear of retaliation but luckily for me and to my surprise, my brother was very caring and understanding. He didn't even yell at me.

Needless to say, I learned a lesson that day: Don't lend my bicycle to strangers and more generally, trust my intuition.

This experience strengthened me as a person but when I was learning from this, I made one big mistake: I held on to the negative experience to remind myself of the lesson.

I used to think it was necessary to vividly replay the "negative" experience to remind myself of the lesson I learned. I feared that if I forgot about the mistake, I would forget the valuable lesson.

What I didn't realize was that by replaying the negative experience, I was actually filling my mind with negative thoughts

such as shame, humiliation, and helplessness — all of which are not great ingredients for building a healthy self-image.

When you repeat this type of thinking in a habitual way, even if your intentions are good, you're going to experience lower self-esteem because that's what you're subconsciously feeding into your mind.

Mistakes are a necessary step to learning but once the lesson is learned, there is no need to dwell on the actual experience itself. The focus should be on the lesson and how you will apply this positive takeaway to other situations in the future.

What's scary is that parents unknowingly lower the self esteem of their kids by reminding them of their mistakes. I hear it all the time:

"Johnny, remember the time when you didn't listen to your mother and touched the stove and burned your hand really badly?"

or...

"Lisa is always tripping over things. She is the clumsy one in the family."

I understand that the parents' intentions are good, but good intentions do not necessarily translate into positive behaviors.

When someone close to you makes a recurring mistake, focus on clarifying the lesson in the mistake and stop reminding that person of the actual mistake.

Remember the lesson, forget the experience.

**Compliments of the District 1 Marriage and Family Ministry, FFWPU**

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