

# Creating Positive Learning Habits: Featuring Tim Elmore, Founder of Growing Leaders

<http://www.orkingmother.com/blogs/plate-spinning-building-business-and-bringing-baby/creating-positive-learning-habits-featuring>

August 27, 2012

Posted on August 27, 2012

It's that time of year: school is starting (or has started) for most of our children, and with it comes the excitement and anticipation of a school year. When I was a teacher, I used to start the first week off with a "Toast to Change." We would acknowledge the mistakes of the past, let them go, and set new goals for the future. We'd then have an apple juice toast and write down and display our goals.

As parents, we have the same challenge ahead of us. We need to help our children set and achieve learning goals – but that's often much easier said than done. Admittedly, we want so badly for our children to be happy and successful in school, that we do everything in our power to make it happen. In the following guest post, educational expert Tim Elmore shares some suggestions to create positive learning happens in our children.

By Tim Elmore, founder and president of Growing Leaders ([www.growingleaders.com](http://www.growingleaders.com))

I love the first week of school. I always have—as a kid and as a parent. Last week, on his first day in class, a kindergarten student handed his teacher a note from his mother. The note simply read: "The opinions and ideas expressed by this student do not necessarily represent those of his parents."

This scenario is hilarious and all too familiar isn't it? The first week of school is a time for everyone to establish a foundation of habits and attitudes for the year. As we embark on a new school year, parents and children are awash with the excitement and the fatigue that comes with a new routine. The official "learning season" has begun. But does that mean a hand-off to the teachers and you wait for your children to come home smarter? Not even close. The foundation for learning is built in the home.

In my experience working with hundreds of thousands of students at [Growing Leaders](http://www.growingleaders.com), and from homeschooling our own children, it's clear that the most successful, well-rounded kids are the ones who have been taught the value of life-long learning. They have been positively influenced by parents about the healthy quest for knowledge.

In that spirit, I want to share five strategies for creating positive learning habits in your home that will serve as a foundation for discovery:

## 1. Don't think CONTROL; think CONNECT

Our ambition as parents is often to seize control, governing every action and directing each step as our children study and work. But when parents over-program their child's schedule, it can lead negative responses and even be a [detriment to their health](#). Instead of controlling, work to truly connect with them. Ask *and listen* to their thoughts and opinions; if we do that, they will be more willing to reciprocate. By connecting, we build a different kind of relationship that bears the weight of honest truth. We earn the respect to genuinely influence our children.

## 2. Don't think INFORM; think INTERPRET

This is the first generation of kids who don't need their parents to get information. It's available 24/7 through their smart phones and tablets. So they have the information, what they need from us is interpretation. Parents must help children make sense of all they know—help them understand the

context of experiences, relationships, politics, work and faith via a balanced lens. Discuss together what's behind movie plots, books and technology. Teach them *how* to think, not *what* to think.

### 3. Don't think ENTERTAIN; think EQUIP

I've seen parents who become absolutely consumed with entertaining their children to keep them happy. I think a better approach is: How can I equip my children for the future to make themselves happy? If I give them relevant tools to succeed (in whatever form that takes), they will stay engaged. Happiness is a byproduct. Let's shift from busying them so they're happy, to enriching them so they're fulfilled. True satisfaction comes from growth and figuring out things—like how to keep from being bored—on one's own.

### 4. Don't think DO IT FOR THEM; think HELP THEM DO IT

Parents have been committed to giving kids high self-esteem for 30 years now. We wrongly assumed, though, that it would come from simply telling them they're special and awesome. According to the American Psychological Association, healthy and robust self-esteem actually comes from achievement, not merely affirmation. Sure, it's quicker for you as a parent to do things yourself—but it's better to transfer a skill.

### 5. Don't think LECTURE; think LAB

When our young people do wrong, the first thing we want to do is lecture. It's the quickest way to transmit an idea. It isn't, though, the best way to transform a life. As parents, we must begin creating environments and experiences where children can consider and process truths about life. There are life lessons to be found everywhere. Travel to new places, interaction with influential people, service projects, and even movies and amusements can be sources of discovery and discussion in preparation for their future. It works like science class—along with a lecture, there is a lab in which to actually experiment.

Taking a holistic approach to our children's learning is the best way to ensure academic and personal success over their lifetime. What are some ways you instill positive learning habits in your children? What have been some of your most effective "teachable moments?"

*Tim Elmore is founder and president of Growing Leaders ([www.growingleaders.com](http://www.growingleaders.com)), an international non-profit created to develop young leaders who can impact and transform society. He works with parents, teachers, coaches and mentors across the globe on how to create a balanced environment that enables children to lead themselves well and influence others in a positive way. Tim latest book is [Artificial Maturity: Helping Kids Meet the Challenge of Becoming Authentic Adults](#).*