

Becoming a Source of Joy?

What principles of Self-Government will help me become a greater source of joy?

Joy is often a result of how we see the world. In fact, we all see the world differently. There are many reasons for these differing views of life.

First, we are taught to see things a certain way by our parents, families, the media and friends; this is called social programming. In addition, each person has a variety of different interests, and attention spans. Some people process things more quickly than others around them. Some process from an emotional / physical place, while others process from a spiritual, or a logical place. But, undoubtedly, the aspect of vision that makes the biggest difference for people, is their *altitude* while seeing. Yes, their *altitude*.

The altitude of sight is a spiritual condition, or position, in which a person views the world. We either see the world through the lens of selfishness and desire, or through the lens of gratitude and purpose. Two people can see the same event completely different, depending upon what altitude they are viewing it from.

Imagine, for a moment, a mother and a father working in the kitchen together. The father is doing dishes, and the mother is making cookies for the family's evening snack. Each of these characters could view this experience from a completely different altitude.

The mother could be thinking, "Life is so mundane! All I ever do is cook. I have cooked in this kitchen five times today. I'm so worn out. I can't wait for the kids to go to bed so that I can rest and do something for me."

The father could be thinking, "Is there anything better than this? My family is happy and fed. The children are laughing and playing. I am working beside my lovely wife in our own home. My wife is so caring, so giving and loving! She does so much for us. She is the perfect mother and wife. I hope this little effort I am making to help with the dishes brings her a bit of extra joy tonight."

The mother in this story sees the scene from a lower altitude than the father. She sees herself in a struggle and focuses on feeling captive in her role as mother and caretaker. The father in this story sees himself as free, even though he is doing the dishes. He is content, and recognizes the goodness that is evident in his circumstances. He is hoping to share some of joy he feels with his wife, and the mother of his children.

What is joy? It has been sought after by people of, and from all ages – we seem to be naturally

engineered to pursue it. Many think that joy is a feeling of happiness, or a mood that comes into our lives by chance or circumstance. Too many of us seek joy in experiencing pleasure or acquiring possessions. But real joy is not fleeting and doesn't require a set of unique circumstances. However, it can be aspired to, sought after, and obtained. But we need to look in the right places. In fact, we can feel joy even when we feel sorrow, not just in times of happiness.

"Joy is to shout; to rejoice; the passion or emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good;" -Noah Webster (1828 dictionary)

Joy is to shout and rejoice for goodness. The Greek origin of the word good means "God-like". So, to be joyful is to spiritually shout or rejoice when God's hand is seen in daily living, even in the seemingly mundane tasks. To be joyful then is to live in a state of gratitude to God for the goodness of this worldly experience.

In our lives we experience deep, spiritual joy for our physical gifts including the beauty and grandeur of the earth and nature. This spiritual joy for physical gifts includes gratitude for our bodies and all of the senses that allow us to enjoy the world and people around us. These joys also include the joy of work, agency and self-determination, health, talents, self-government, pleasure and comfort. To enjoy these gifts we must actively receive, accept, and appreciate them.

In reality, joy has nothing to do with the physical gifts from God. Joy does not come from a gift, or more time in the day. Even the busiest people can have joy. Joy is a state of mind which has been influenced by the state of a person's spirit. If the heart of a person is elevated, then they will feel joy, regardless of their time restrictions or any fatigue they are experiencing.

Just as courage is something that a person already possesses before they use it to rescue someone from a deadly circumstance, joy is something a person possesses before life is continually pleasant. It is the courage that rises to meet the challenge and save the day. It is the joy which takes any day, or situation, and sees the goodness of God, and feels happy and content.

Have you ever noticed that there are some people who accomplish more than others? They seem to be busier than others, but they also seem to have joy and ease in every movement? These people seem to be living a paradox. Many people think that certainly their lives must be unbalanced and painful. They conjecture that the busy person must be painting a pretty face on bad circumstances. Where that could be the case, and might even occasionally be true, many inspiring individuals live lives filled with joy and purpose. They are happy and calm in their day-to-day living, despite their busyness.

How can busy people be joyful?

Is there anyone these days, who does not think they are busy? Busy living seems to be the plague of our times. So what is the difference between a joyful, busy person, and a grumpy or pessimistic busy person? Joyful people do two things that the regular busy person does not do.

First, they live with gratitude as was mentioned above. They see each moment as an opportunity to connect with and impact the people in their lives for good. They see each moment as a gift from God. They see endless gifts around them. And they look at time as endless and precious. The one gift we all have is twenty-four whole hours in a day. Those hours go on as long as we are here. This is a lot of time to use. What a gift!

Second, joyful people see themselves doing something useful with those twenty-four hours. They live their lives, even each moment, with purpose. They know that they were meant to do something great, and they live according to that promise of greatness each day. They find their purpose in each minute. They find the one person they were meant to connect with or the one person they were meant to serve, and they fulfill their purpose. Then, they look forward to doing it again the next day.

There is nothing more joyful than knowing you are measuring up to your potential by living the life you were meant to live and fulfilling the mission you were meant to fulfill. Living with a mission mindset is the second way joy is born. Mission is more about who you are than it is about what you do. Who does God intend you to be?

The Source Of Joy For Others

Having joy in our own lives will likely be a lifetime pursuit for most people. We will not be perfect at having joy every day at first. It takes time to elevate our vision of life. And, it takes a deliberate effort. After we are governing our own thoughts focusing on finding our own joy we will naturally focus on being a source of joy for others as well. How can we become a source of joy within our relationships?

I once received this fantastic question from a mom who had been teaching self-government with her family but was concerned: "I feel like I am not really that fun of a person. I am a bit more serious person by nature and tend to be prone to stress. I tend to get very focused on just managing each day. I know it is a weakness in me and I tend not to slow down and enjoy the family even at meal times and on vacations. Do you have any suggestions on how I can do better at being fun?"

I think this mom is not alone. We are all a little bit different in the way that we relate to life and situations and responsibilities. Some of life's circumstances can even make feeling joy difficult.

There are many reasons for these differences and sometimes how we feel, relates to chemicals in our bodies. For some women, PMS, pregnancy, postpartum hormonal changes affect the way they think and feel. However, men also have chemicals that affect mood. Disruptions in these chemicals can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions.

When addressing our desire to be a source of joy, I think it's important to keep in mind that hormones and brain chemicals are going to affect us too. So if you see somebody else having a good time and you think, 'Why am I not enjoying this?' Perhaps there is something going on chemically. It is possible that medicines can throw off your hormones and for others prescription medications help to solve such issues. Seeking to correct or improve our mental health might be a vitally important in our quest for joy. Two really basic things that can assist us, if the issue is chemical in nature, are nutrition and sleep.

- Eat healthy, eat enough. Make sure your food is nutrient and vitamin rich. Sometimes extreme diets – ones that don't provide enough energy, deplete your body of nutrients - can cause you to feel drained and unhappy. Challenge yourself to learn more about nutrition and the things required for optimal health. Adding vegetables, especially leafy green ones, will be a good place to start. It's important that we don't overeat – medicating ourselves with food, but equally important in this diet focused culture, that we eat enough. In the whirlwind of managing all of our daily responsibilities – sometimes we neglect to feed our bodies. The result for me is low energy and a fuzzy brain, I just can't think well.
- Sleep, preferably at night. While sleeping in the day can sometimes give you energy; other times a nap will suck your energy, and cause grogginess. I realize that for those whose responsibilities involve being up at night, sleeping at night may be impossible. Having interrupted sleep is a common challenge when we are caring for babies or young children. But regularly going to bed at a reasonable time is even more important during these stages. Once everyone is settled in bed, resist the urge to stay up late attempting to accomplish all the things you need or enjoy doing. Don't do it! If you don't have enough sleep you are not going to feel like you want to conquer the day never mind have energy to be cheerful and playful along the way.

Many of the principles of self-government we have already discussed in our TSG Circles relate to joy – particularly those joys that are enhanced by relationships. It is possible you are a source of joy in areas that you have never considered: When we foster familial connections, when we teach or offer correction, when we build relationships – communicating gratitude and praise often, seeking to understand, when we serve - all of these things brings joy into our own lives, and into the heart of another person. As we practice self-government our relationships will be strengthened and we will naturally become a source of joy.

How does self-government relate to joy?

All the elements of living a self-governed life end up increasing personal and familial joy. When a person learns to control themselves and choose calmness they are more confident and content in their relationships. This makes them spiritually solid. A spiritually solid person cannot be disturbed or penetrated during their progression. When each member of a family is spiritually solid and joyful, the family is completely safe from the negative impacts of influences outside of the family; the whole group has spiritual solidarity.

Below are many self-governing ways we create joy in our lives and families:

Joy in having vision and living our missions:

- sharing and service;
- individual uniqueness and purpose;
- family security, identity and pride;
- learning, imagining, of creating of deciding and of achieving goals;

Joy in Planning, communicating effectively:

- order, priorities, achieving goals;
- confidence in actions and words;

Joy in Being calm:

- confidence;
- planting and harvesting;

Joy in Seeking to understand:

- communication and relationships;
- individual uniqueness;
- problem solving and connection to others;
- realness, honesty, and open communication;

Joy in Problem Solving:

- searching and finding;
- peace and harmony

Vision:

Create a vision about what you want. Have a moment in your mind that keeps you focused on what you want to feel like within your relationships. It could be a moment you witness between two people or an experience from your own life story. What does it look like? What does it feel like? Then you've got to WANT that moment and try to recreate that feeling on a daily basis.

The moment that I often envision is an experience with my mom. My mother did daycare for lots of families in the neighborhood. I would come home from school and she would be busy - very busy, with other people's babies and children. So I would often just go into my room and play by myself. One day I was there playing and I looked up. There was my mom standing in the doorway and she said, "Can I play dolls with you?" She played with me for 15 minutes and it was beautiful. There was something that happened to me; I felt a connection to her. I felt a craving, a deep, deep craving for more of that with my mom. That childhood experience is what makes me the mom I am today in a lot of ways. I love my mom for all time and the other minutes we shared, but that moment...I want to be that mom. She wasn't giddy or silly, she just made a deep connection to me. She showed me that my life had value, I wanted that.

I recall a specific day when my daughter was playing with her toy horses and stables. She was having a great time. I was reading on the couch. Then I got this thought, "Ask her if you can play with her." I must confess, it would have been a lot easier for me to keep studying. I needed all the time I could get. But right then I realized the most important thing to do was make a memory with my daughter. So I asked her if I could play. She smiled HUGE and said, "Sure Mom!" We played for about 10 minutes. All the children crowded in and watched our playing. Then I heard my son say, "I get to play with Mom next." All the children started calling turns to play pretend with Mom. I haven't had so much fun for a long time. I played lots of castles, knights, cars, horses, and animals. It felt so great! I was able to create that moment I envisioned when I made the choice to make it happen.

To plan or not to plan:

For this questioning mom, and maybe those of you who feel task-focused, you're also probably really organized. Is it possible that your organization may be getting in the way of you having those fun moments that you really want? Perhaps you can work within your strengths. Pick one magic moment a day. Actually plan it into your schedule. Like every day at 10 O'clock I'm going to do a magic moment. What's my magic moment going to be? And then plan it out. Don't get offended if it doesn't go quite right, because sometimes they don't. But we're going to make kites and we are going to fly them. We are going to go out in the yard with our sketchbooks and we are going to draw flowers, or look for worms, or whatever it is. We're going to do stuff. Make a magic moment every day.

Go on kid dates. If you deliberately set a date you can share the joy of anticipation. In fact, this anticipation is what makes the memories last a lifetime. The child who gets the dedicated time with a parent, or aunt, or grandpa thinks about it and plans for it. They create expectations and feelings of excitement all day while dreaming of their special outing. The memories you are making with children by doing scheduled dates will start being created even before the date starts. You just need to set the date, participate in the dream, and then recall and share stories often to preserve those memories. Families who schedule time together each week are historically happier families than those who don't. Our family also does weekly family activities. We try to create as much family play time as possible. And, we try to give ourselves time to anticipate the activities so that valuable memories will be made.

But don't try to plan everything! When you go somewhere, just take someone with you. Have a fun time with your children so they know you're not always trying to run away from them, but you want to have a good time with them. Do one spontaneous thing each day. Your family will love it. Keep them guessing, 'What funny thing is she going to do next?!' You could walk into a room and sing, "Oh what a beautiful morning, oh what a beautiful day..." Start singing instructions, or make up songs about what's happening around you. The kids might be thinking, 'Okay, my mom has lost it!' But who cares, it still gives them the feeling that mom is alive, mom is happy, mom likes to make me laugh. Be spontaneous. Right in the middle of something, they've got their homework out, just all of a sudden open a pack of Oreos and ask, "Hey, you want a cookie?" Snacks don't have to be junky but it's so great when they happen unexpectedly. "Hey, let's just make a smoothie - right now!" or "Hey, I made you this." Snacks help keep people going—we eat, we talk, we connect, we recharge. It is a social time: provided you don't permit everyone to go and eat snacks in different, random, secluded rooms and places. Eat in an area where the family is, so that the eating time does become quality time. Do something you just never do, just do it. As far as my children are concerned, being spontaneous is one of my greatest virtues.

Priority – People not tasks:

When my oldest son was 16 years old, he told everyone, "My mom is the coolest person I know." I'm the coolest person he knows because of the way I live life. I always just do stuff that other people don't do. I will just drop whatever I am doing and do something else. I don't have to finish off my checklist. To me, life is about an experience, it's not about a list. If it is about a list I will always fall short but if it's about an experience, I can succeed, I can experience. So if your lives are too attached to lists, then you'll miss lots of life – of experiences. Let yourself let go of a few lists and experience more!

Let the people you care about interrupt you. I let my children interrupt me, it's one of my rules. Thoughts and needs are the most important part of my work so when they need something...again and again...I remember to smile, and to listen, and I say a quick prayer in my mind, 'Heavenly Father please help me to remember what this article is that I was about to start to write, that I didn't start yet, 'because I've got to do this.' And then I go to them and listen to what their needs are, help them, and then I come back to what I was doing.

Let them interrupt you. Tell yourself that it's okay. Don't let tasks become more important than relationships. Their needs are not getting in your way. In that moment your project is getting in the way of living your mission – the foundation of which always relates to relationships with others. Sometimes we let ourselves feel like we're suppressed in some way. That we are not happy because we are not getting enough of what we need or that our experience in life is for us alone. I get emotional about that. I feel like people need to understand that if we could just see these relationships and the 'interruptions' in our days differently, then the interruptions would make us powerful people in the world. Sometimes we have to be patient, build those relationships first and then move on to the other projects and things we feel compelled to do.

Only clean at certain times each day. If you are focused on being super-efficient you will be super-stressed. If you lived near me, you could come over and feel good about how clean your house is because I don't try to clean every single thing all the time. I feel like if that's what my days are about, then I should open a business and be a cleaning lady instead of being a mother. Because a mother is more than that! It's part of it, but it's not the biggest part. If conquering the cleaning beasts is my biggest priority, I will have a lot of anxiety living with children, and that's not how to create a happy place.

Let yourself see daily clutter as a sign of successful parenting. It is a sign of a parent that is involved with her children (hopefully it's not the sign of a parent who is on the phone, though it could be a sign of that too.) Hopefully it's a sign of a mom playing with her kids. The more you play, the more comfortable you will get. If it doesn't feel natural, give yourself a little bit more time practicing being playful. Create games, dream together, and notice the wonders of the world together. Also get the children working with you because when you're working, and they're working, then you'll talk more. You'll make more fun jokes and inside jokes, laugh about silly things that happen.

If you are married, kiss your spouse and have sex more. Your relationship with your spouse has so much to do with happiness, so much. If you are disconnected, if you are not affectionate enough it will affect how you enjoy anything in your life. You will not even be as spiritual. There are so many things that are affected by the joy in that marriage relationship, so make sure that you work on that relationship too. It's as easy as being intimate, giving kisses and hugs, and

calling each other during the day. Trust me on this one, I have had it both ways. There is a power that comes, a peace, a joy, a happiness that comes from a happy marriage relationship. Sometimes I think we get too overwhelmed with the lists and things, we put our spouses off, we need to make sure that we don't.

Value what people are doing - your children, your spouse, anybody that you come in contact with. When you are just having fun, get involved, pay attention to what people are doing. Be invested in conversations, ask questions, try to understand another person's story. This requires that you stop thinking about you and start becoming interested in them. Allow yourself to let go and connect to them. With young children, they just love to be watched, to be noticed, and to have an interested audience – be that interested observer – intentionally, wholeheartedly every day!

Creating, being, enjoying...fun!

Have a wild and crazy hobby. I do things that are weird and I do it on purpose. I fly kites, I love kites. If it is windy, I stop everything and I go get a kite. "Hey everyone, I am going to fly kites. If you want to come, come!" And that is happy time. The winds mean I cannot focus, I have to go fly a kite - I've just got to, because it might not be windy tomorrow. I've got to seize the day, right then. Another of my wild crazy hobbies is collecting bugs. I have a great bug collection of all kinds of hairy scary things and beautiful winged things. If there is a bug I have never seen before, I stop everything and I study it and I catch it because I want to have the coolest bug collection. (I probably already have the coolest bug collection in the neighborhood because I don't think anyone else collects bugs!) I started collecting bugs with my little boy, we collected some amazing things. I decided I loved the idea of having a sample of God's creatures so I could study them whenever I wanted to. I fell in love with the idea that I could have this little box of remembrances, that I could open it up and remember when we caught each one. Whatever your hobby is - you could make the biggest tin foil ball in the neighborhood. Your kids could talk about that to other friends and every time you take tin foil off dinner then you could wrap it onto your ball and get excited over it. It doesn't matter, but you need a wild and crazy hobby. It doesn't have to be something that takes a lot of time or a lot of money, just get excited, get noticeably excited about your wild and crazy hobby and put life on hold sometimes to do it. You will teach others what it means to enjoy, and find joy.

Take opportunities to learn and to teach. Teaching and learning brings me a great deal of joy. I love to have fun as I speak and create an engaging atmosphere. I bring a lot of energy and enthusiasm. But the experience of teaching in a class setting is like climbing a mountain. You are going up, up, up - and it is so fun, everyone is getting involved and excited, but there's a

point where the fun can turn into craziness – when the kids are not behaving correctly. I call it falling off the fun cliff. If that happens, I change my tone to an unemotional and quiet one, and we talk about behaviors and what is required in this setting. I reserve seriousness for when discussion of behavior is needed.

Another teacher, Lacie Jensen, left a comment on our Teaching Self-Government site relating to the importance of gratitude and praise in creating joy.

Years ago, while teaching an early morning religious class, I had a few students that would come dragging in and drag down all the efforts of the other students and me. I knew we needed to change the energy and had learned this can be done by expressing gratitude. So each day, when the dragging was really bad, all of us would take 5 or 10 minutes to write down all we were thankful for. Since this class was at my dining table and it only took a few minutes to write down the obvious blessings like, family, children, spouse (for me), etc... we would start looking around for any ideas and/or objects which would trigger gratitude. Then we would share our lists. One morning the list included being grateful for a fork, the students gave me a hard time about it and that led to a really wonderful discussion! Anyway, what I learned from this was that the more grateful you are the happier you are.

[Similarly] praising that is honest and detailed (not just "good job"), has the same effect. The energy will change for the Praise-er and the Praise-ee. You cannot be a distracted, frustrated, disinterested, sincere Praiser. Everyone needs and likes to be praised. So if you are working with someone who has a little black cloud hovering about them, find something to praise, be enthusiastic and sincere. Things will go much better.

[Lacie Jensen](#) replied on Fri, 10/18/2013 - 12:33pm

Finding your funny bone

Think about funny people you know. Think of the funny things they say and what they do when they are being funny. Many of the people we enjoy most are those who make us smile, those who can make us laugh when we least expect it. It seems like when someone is really funny, not staged put-on funny, but truly funny - that we feel more connected to them. They somehow become more real to us, more close to us. Humorous moments actually establish a connection – on both sides of the listener and speaker relationship.

Humor gives you time to touch the soul of another person – that's one reason why it is so great for our relationships when we share an emotion together. As a speaker, it feels so great when the audience laughs and has such a real expression of their emotions. Because it feels like

we have created a familiar bond with them -- a connection such that they will really listen – or that they really are listening. It is through these fun and humorous moments that we begin to see each other as people who are real and sincere and who have each other's best interest at heart. This increases trust for the speaker.

A speaker can feel when the audience switches from skeptical or critical to being receptive and appreciative. The feeling of the audience towards the speaker changes, when they are able to create a bond. These moments are really priceless for a speaker.

Humorous things can happen spontaneously and other times people will try to create funny moments and that's not a bad thing either. Young children often go through a stage of making up jokes or acting silly. They do this for a specific reason: they want to establish a connection. Everyone craves that connection and somehow inherently we know that being funny can help create a connection with another person. Their motivation could be the enjoyment they receive making others laugh, they might enjoy the attention of others, they might also want to change the feeling in the home.

Craving a laugh is healthy. Since relationships are built upon numerous connections and shared experiences, humor is a natural benefit and helps to encourage healthy happy family relationships. Our homes need to be funny places, and safe places. So often I talk about creating a home where it is safe to make a mistake, a safe place to feel and be and live. That's what homes are for – to be safe havens.

Sometimes people don't understand the balance that is required between funny and safe, and they cross over a line. It can be difficult for some families to have humor and be safe. I personally don't like potty humor, crass humor, sexual humor – I feel like that is scraping the bottom of the barrel of topics for humor. Often these kinds of things are found in children's shows and I turn them off – I feel like they are not being smart in their humor. I don't trust too many comedians because clean humored comedians are rare! I have to say, Shakespeare was a funny guy – in his banter, the quibbles and things that happen in his plays and the way he played on words. Being able to recognize homonyms – it is a high form of humor and can make an environment that is really fun. Shakespeare was really good with playing on words to create humor, so if you want some ideas on how to be funnier – read some of his stuff.

For our family we have found the best type of humor is inside jokes. They are things that our family understand that others are stumped by. I recall a situation when my oldest son came in from another room, he said "Hello" and I said, "Hello. Do you like my hat?" And immediately he knew I was quoting a favorite children's book "Go Dog Go" where these two dogs always greet each other with this little repetitive interchange. Because we shared this one silly moment my son often just walks into my room and says, "Do you like my hat?" And I make a sour

expression and say, “No, I do not like your hat.” It makes us crack up everytime. This funny little interaction is scripted, we say it all the time, it is fun. It reminds us of the book he used to love when he was a little boy and I used to read it over, and over and over again. It became our little inside joke. You can create those kinds of jokes too by quoting lines from movies - Princess Bride has lots of funny material for our family banter. You can create these moments and cause someone to start thinking in a fun direction.

Another thing we try to find humor in, is the day to day mistakes. One day, we had an event that whenever I think about it will forever come with a title: “Porter and the Super Bulbs”. He so proudly replaced the bulbs in our Christmas candlesticks all by himself. He was ecstatic as he reported back, “Mom – those new light bulbs are so bright! They are so cool! They are like fire!” I chuckled at his enthusiasm thinking, “Wow a new light bulb sure seems to make such a big impression on a 7 year old.” Next thing we know, smoke starts coming from one of the living room blinds and we panic! The blind is melting! Turns out Porter’s ‘super bulbs’ were really super high wattage chandelier bulbs and they got super hot. After the crisis was extinguished, I knew I could bemoan the gooey blob of plastic on my blind, I could be frustrated at the expense and hassle of replacing it – but I chose to laugh instead. I also decided that I am not replacing my blinds anytime soon because every time I see it I remember and get this little smile in my heart. It is memory of us laughing together with Porter, and me having another inside joke to share with our family.

You can also use funny actions – facial expression can be so great. I go out of the house looking all kinds of weird... one day with a bunch of ponytails that my daughter put in my hair. I often do funny faces, I let myself be really free and easy and the kids ask for me to do it over and over again. (with small children, funny things are funny over and over again!) Body language can be very hysterical; or it could be annoying. It really depends on your attitude. Some people are a hard sell for humor and they have a hard time appreciating humor. I used to be a dancer – I was pretty much raised on the stage, because my dad was a director. I do not have the body of a dancer any more – so it is so funny to see me in my house doing all the dance moves I learned as a child. I do it on purpose. I feel joyful when I do funny moves - even the chicken dance. The kids say things like, “Ahh mom – you’re the best.” They like that I am not so reserved that I forget to have some fun. They so appreciate it!

When I was in China I was speaking with a group of people I happened to be in my bare feet because I had just been interacting with kids and had taken off my shoes. There was a language barrier between me and the group. I wasn’t able to connect with them the way I wanted to – everything had to be translated. I felt inspired to just start doing pirouettes, right there in my bare feet. So I did! The people were so surprised they started laughing. Despite the language barrier I was able to create a connection through humor. I was intentionally being my usual funny self – using facial expression and using my body in a funny way, laughing out loud when I

was with them. We ended up with a wonderful bond.

When we have a small child lots of these funny things happen and we should maximize the effect of these funny moments. There was an funny instance in our family that will always be remembered. When Lyndon was little, she was barely talking, and she came out of the play room and said, “Look mom – purses!” But draped over her arms were not purses but two pairs of her older brother’s underwear. She was so pleased with her purses, we just had to take a picture because it was so funny! She got such a laugh from us, that she kept trying to do it again all throughout the day. These little things that happened when children are young can then be things that are funny for years and years to come. Take a picture, talk about them – make them a part of your family conversations.

Watch out for sarcasm

We need to discuss sarcastic humor. Sarcasm can be done right, but it can be one of the worst kinds of humor with the potential to be very damaging to relationships. If you are in a group and all the people in the group are emotionally tough and get equal sarcastic playtime with each other, a setting where everyone plays the game and there is an understanding within the group – it can work and you can develop bonds through sarcasm. But even then, there are times when too much emotion gets into the play and then feelings can be hurt. I can play this type of sarcastic, witty game with my brother – we both enjoy it. However, depending on who we do it in front of – there are some people who get very agitated and uncomfortable with our playful sarcasm. Sarcasm is not always a safe type of humor. Even within a group it can be difficult to determine who is uncomfortable with it and they may be participating because that is what the group does. Sarcasm is especially inappropriate for young children to be around because they simply don’t understand it. They don’t get it, it is not funny. Sarcasm can be a humorous tool in the right settings, with the right people. But if you aren’t sure, or are just getting to know people or are interacting with young children – best to avoid it.

What does joy look like in a parenting relationship?

We set aside and schedule time to have fun family activities each week. When we have regular family activities we not only create memories, we can strengthen relationships and provide a reservoir of connection that allows moments of correction to go much more smoothly. We minimize the time we spend correcting and focus always on creating that family feeling that we want in our home.

I realized when we were doing foster care how important it is to have humor in situations because we were often focused on correcting problems. For instance at home when we are

very focused on behavioural issues, a feeling of frustration, and 'humdrum' feelings can pervade our home. Sometimes family members stop enjoying each other. Sometimes children stop enjoying their parents. Humor can strengthen relationships and can help heal some of the issues, if used properly.

I once watched a father as he was doing a Rule of Three interaction with a child. He said, "Ok just now you didn't following my instruction, so you have earned a SODA." And then he said, "Hey do you like soda?" It was just a spontaneous funny comment. Then he went back into the correction. This dad kinda gets it. Sometimes we need to be light-hearted about things and if we can throw in some humor then the kids actually do better. They remember, "It's ok – this is just a moment that I need to learn something and mom and dad aren't thinking that I'm a bad person, we're still friends, it's still good. I just have to learn what I need to learn in this moment."

Often home can be a very comfortable place to get a laugh and easier place to get your message across. At home, we teach so many lessons about what it means to respect each other, to live joyfully. That respectful atmosphere is actually an important feeling to create, because then family's enjoy each other more and have fun together and want to be with each other.

When we are optimistic in the hard times and recognize blessings that come from adversity, we can help our children find joy even when they face future adversities. Make a tradition of work and character building and you'll help to make a joyful adult. we need to see ourself as raising strong adults instead of content children.

We are not making perfect children. There is no such thing. "We are making joyful adults, who know what their mission in life is, and can't wait to fight for it, and have solid relationships with God and family." (Quote from Parenting A House United)

We were created to experience joy - in abundance. We need to recognize it in the relationships we build and the opportunities we have to teach and learn. Each day we can choose the altitude of our vision. We need to recognize joy in the sunset or changing season. Notice, be grateful, develop a sense of humor and joy will follow.

References:

- Conference Call 9-21-12 Fun Mom Audio 1:08:50 – end
- Daddy Dates – Gem Article
- Article: The Simple Things <http://parentingselfgovernment.com/article/simple-things>
- Article: What is the Very Most Effective Thing You Can do as a Parent?
<https://parentingselfgovernment.com/article/what-very-most-effective-thing-you-can-d>

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Additional Resources:

- Article: Family Night Ideas- Our Ten Top Affordable Ideas:
<http://parentingselfgovernment.com/family-night-ideas-our-top-ten-affordable-activities-716>
 - Article: Way to Be- Optimism: <http://parentingselfgovernment.com/way-be-optimism-724>
 - Article on how you can show the 5 Love Language in bedtime routines
<http://parentingselfgovernment.com/children-need-sleep-getting-them-bed-happy-1320>
 - Article: Falling in Love with your Kids again and again
<http://parentingselfgovernment.com/article/falling-love-your-children-again-and-again>
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Discussion Questions:

- What do you think about the discussion of altitude (beginning of article)? Why or why not? What would you add to the discussion? Do you define altitude (as it relates to joy) in the same way?
- How is 'spirituality' defined in this article? Why? Does the level of spirituality factor into the level of joy you experience? Is this always the case? When may spirituality not factor into a persons level of joy?
- Who is the example of a joyful person in your life? How/Why do they inspire you?
- What ideas for being a source of joy do you wish were discussed in the article? What would you add?
- Does vision make a difference in how much joy you have? What do you think about the way Vision is used to 'recreate' experiences of joy? What would you add? Have you tried it? If you have used Vision to recreate moments of joy please share an experience .
- What is the greatest stumbling block for people who are pursuing joy?
- Do you think allowing interruptions is a good idea? Why or Why not?
- What are your thoughts about the list of things that bring joy --the list of how Self-Government relates to joy. What items stand out for you? Are any confusing as to how they relate? Do they all seem possible to attain? What is needed to attain these joys?

- How can you better be a source of joy to others and to yourself?
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Challenges

- Choose one joyful idea to improve upon or to incorporate into your life. Let your Circle know what it is and then share your progress the next month.
- Do you have a “Silly Hobby”? If not, choose one, and see how many times your passion for that hobby inspires laughter and connection in your relationships. Share your experience with your Circle in a month.
- Choose one of the joys listed in the “How self-government relates to Joy” section and examine it in a way that allows you to create that joy in your life this month. What does it really mean to you? What principles affect realizing this joy in your life? What actions can be taken in your life to experience more joy...regularly? Share your experience with your Circle when you meet again. (Maybe there is another Circle member wanting to examine the same source of joy as you, you could team up and add the joy of a deepening relationship to the experience.)