

How to Train your Child in Perseverance

by Marianne Vanderkolk Perseverance - persistence, endurance, stick-to-itiveness, staying power, dogged, diligence. What a list of great nouns found in Roget's Thesaurus. I chose to write about Perseverance not only as a goal that I can see I need to work at in my life, but one which is so extremely important for us to pass on to our children. If I have difficulty in persevering when I am feeling a bit down, overwhelmed, or tired and give in so easily, and I am an adult, this is obviously a life-long trait which needs to be built into our character from an early age. Our culture does not encourage perseverance. As long as you are enjoying what you are doing, you are encouraged to keep going, but if you don't like the boss you can toss in the job, drop out of a course, and avoid the difficulties you might be facing. Even in homeschooling, it is easy to give in to our children's whines:

"I don't want to play soccer anymore - it's too cold!"

"I hate music practice! I do not want to learn the piano anymore."

"Why do I have to learn spelling? It's so boring!"

And then as parents, we become confused. We hear a persuasive voice telling us to back out of our children's lives and let them decide where they are headed. Let them pursue their interests (as long or as short that may be), follow their hearts, develop the skills that they deem necessary to walk in their own way. The philosophy of today tells us that our children would be far better off, if we just left them alone. So, how do we face this all? Do we strap them to their seats in front of endless books and meaningless worksheets, hoping to develop diligence? Of course not! At times, it is a difficult line to work out. Yes, I want to develop perseverance in my child. No! I don't want them to sit purposelessly behind a desk hoping that they will learn staying power. So, how?

Firstly I need to recognize that not all their education will be "fun." I am not about to apologize for that! Struggling through a maths problem, and conquering it, can give any child an enormous sense of satisfaction. If our children never struggle, they will miss out on the unique sense of achievement and accomplishment which follows a difficulty. Have you ever felt the satisfaction of a "good days work" after hard, physical labour? Well, our children should have opportunities to experience this as well - not only physical labour (which is also crucial), but mental labour as well. Secondly, I need to take care that the work they do has purpose. Nobody likes slaving away at a meaningless task. Give your children real things to do - writing letters or lists; making a family newspaper; writing a website or web page; playing an instrument with other members in the family, in a band, in church or busking; maintaining a vegetable patch; finding out the best supermarket specials; playing a game until the end, even if they are losing; or even, being in charge of pairing socks in the household. I am not a fan of workbooks simply because I don't want to waste their time - as though we need to fill up their day! Thirdly, I need to insist that they complete what they start. If they have signed up for a season with a soccer club, they need to show commitment and a team spirit, even if they are cold, tired or sick of losing. It takes perseverance for the parents too - we brought five children to soccer every Saturday this year. If they begin a veggie patch, they need to water and weed it through the season. Of course, there are some things that are passing phases and it doesn't matter if they tinker for a while with one idea and leave it for another. But, if responsibility comes with certain hobbies, it is important that our child learns to commit through the good and the bad times. Don't you love that colloquialism: "stick-to-it-iveness." Fourthly, I need to stand by them, being their coach and cheerleader. I need to urge them to face the difficulty and to encourage and reward them with praise for their efforts. We don't want to set an impossible goal for them to reach, but we do want them to rise to challenges which are set before them. This will develop strong qualities in them. Fifthly, I need to be an example to my children. I need to show that the battle to give in, is just as real in my life. Children love to hear stories from our own experience, so we should share difficulties we have faced and how by God's grace, He has helped us, guided us and walked with us. We also need to show stick-to-it-iveness in our lives. The danger of allowing our children to make all their choices, based on their whims at all times, is the same danger that you and I face. I would not mind going out for coffee with friends when life is messy and the house is in chaos; I may even think of sending them to school at times and enjoying six or more hours of quiet and peace; I would hide away in my study and write a website about homeschooling without doing "it"; I'd have more take-away meals and moan about not having the money to employ someone to iron my clothes; I wouldn't be quick to make a meal for a friend or provide hospitality for the new visitors at church. Yes, if I could make all my own choices depending on how my day is, I would be indulging my selfish tendencies and living life exactly on my own terms, avoiding all hardships. It may sound tempting - but it's not real and it isn't the way God wants us to live. He calls us to persevere. Perseverance is a godly trait, which helps us to improve ourselves and bring benefit to others. (This article is an excerpt from [Keep-On-Track](#))

About the Author

Marianne, along with her husband, Gerald have homeschooled their six children for many years. Marianne's website [design-your-homeschool.com](#) is written as a guide to homeschooling families to explore homeschooling options and create their own unique and individual plan. Subscribe to [Keep-On-Track](#).

