

10 Building Blocks for Helping Your Kids Become Champions in Life

by Jim Burns Ph.D. and Pat Williams

What does it take to become a champion in life? Recently, I had the privilege of interviewing Pat Williams, who has worked in the sports world for four decades. Currently, Pat is the Senior Executive Vice President for the Orlando Magic, one of the teams in the National Basketball League. Both in his professional life and at home, Pat has proven over the years that he knows what it takes to build a champion. Together, we were able to discuss his new book, *Who Wants to be a Champion?*, in which Pat shares his knowledge on what it takes to become a champion in life. As parents, we can help our kids become champions as we commit to laying a solid emotional and spiritual foundation for them, and as we make the effort to believe in their potential to become all who God has designed them to become. Here are Pat's "10 Building Blocks for Helping Your Kids Become Champions in Life."

1. Encourage them to think the right kinds of thoughts. Every action – whether good or bad – begins as a simple thought. Therefore, it's vitally important that we teach our kids to exercise control over their thought life. Kids who become champions learn to think positive thoughts, correct thoughts, big thoughts, pure thoughts and unique thoughts. Train your kids to think on only things that are good and beneficial. See Philippians 4:8.

2. Encourage them to set goals. We need to help our kids set realistic, specific and attainable short-term and long-term goals. In order to be a champion in any area of life, kids must be taught that goal-setting is the way to turn their dreams into reality.

3. Encourage them to choose the right kinds of friends. To a great degree, the kinds of friends your kids choose will determine how they think, speak and act. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:33 that "bad company corrupts good character," and it's our job as parents to help steer our kids in the right direction when it comes to the friends they choose to associate with. "Coach" your kids by offering occasional words of advice, words of wisdom and words of encouragement, and you'll help them choose the right kinds of friends.

4. Encourage them to never give up. Some of the most successful businessmen and women, athletes, and leaders today are not necessarily the most talented or most gifted. Take David Eckstein of the St. Louis Cardinals for example. David is 5'7" and weighs 165 lbs., which is considered too small by today's standards in any professional sport. All his life, David was told he would never make it in baseball, but he never gave up. His persistence in the face of overwhelming odds paid off, and today he is seen as one of the premiere shortstops in the major leagues; he was an integral part of the 2002 Anaheim Angels World Series championship team. When we help our kids become the kind of people who never give up, not only will they be amazed at what they can accomplish, they will become a conduit through which God can work in mighty ways!

5. Encourage them to live by faith. In John 10:10, it's recorded that Jesus said that He came that we "may have life, and have it to the full." Without Him, it's impossible to be a true

champion in life, and this message must be communicated to our kids. They need to know – and see by our example – that living by faith is an exciting adventure, and that by giving their lives to Christ, then, and only then, will they be able to live life to the fullest.

6. Encourage them to say the right kinds of words. More than any other way, people judge us by the words we speak. Kids need to understand that, whether they like it or not, the person who speaks clearly, articulately and confidently is much more likely to become a champion in life. As parents, we can help them speak this way by encouraging them to speak words that are positive, speak the truth in love, listen before they speak and steer clear of using profanity.

7. Encourage them to take responsibility for their actions. True champions understand that they are responsible for their actions. Instead of whining and complaining about their difficulties, they strive to do their best with the hands they've been dealt. We need to help our kids take responsibility for their actions and decisions, which means we will need to let them experience and learn from failure.

8. Encourage them to turn their failures into strengths. When troubles come, we need to help our kids learn to make the most of them. We need to teach our kids how to give their failures to God and allow Him to use them for His glory and for their benefit. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:10 that he delighted “in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” When our kids are at their weakest is when God has the chance to be His strongest in their lives.

9. Encourage them to go the extra mile. Kids need to understand that hard work will help them overcome many of life's obstacles. They can have unbelievable intelligence, great connections, and have opportunities fall out of the sky, but in the end, hard work is the true enduring characteristic of a champion. We read in 1 Corinthians 10:3, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” The glory of God is what motivates true champions to go the extra mile in all areas of their lives.

10. Encourage them to remember that character counts. Kids need to understand that if they want to be champions in life, then they must be people of honesty and integrity. It's almost impossible to overestimate the importance of character. An absence of character is responsible for much of the trouble the human race has experienced. We must teach our kids that character – what they do when they know they can get away with anything – is vital not only to their success in life, but also to being useful to the Lord.

Adapted from [Who Wants to Be a Champion?](#) (2005) by Pat Williams, Howard Publishing.