

“The Secret” For Terrific Parenting

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“The Secret” is a book and movie where the authors re-introduce an ancient but powerful concept called the Law of Attraction. While many might argue with the validity of the concept, especially for events outside of one’s personal world of influence, for years I have found that as parents, we have an amazing ability to “attract” what we focus upon in our children.

But first, let’s pause to gain a bit of clarity about “The Secret.”

Too Much of Their Own Lemonade

You have heard that saying...right? When someone drinks a bit too much of their own lemonade, they start to believe everything they say or think...and never pause to test the feedback from the universe. (Personally, I value feedback because it consistently humbles me and keeps me honest. If I write about a conclusion, generally...I’ve seen it work dozens, if not hundreds of times on a consistent basis.)

Anyway, where were we? Yea...”too much lemonade.”

So...because the Law of Attraction holds water in some ways, it certainly does not mean that every claim has validity. Many of the explanations in the movie lack scientific support, and there is a tremendous tendency to substitute “scientific jargon” in place of real data. We have no evidence that successful people tried to keep the concept secret, or that particularly famous people, such as Einstein or Edison were proponents of the Law of Attraction.

There is also no real data to conclude that the universe magically conspires to bring you what you focus upon...although many believe this. If not careful, a superficial understanding of the Law of Attraction means we can “blame” others for their struggles and the impoverished or victimized ultimately only end up blaming their own thinking for getting sick, being raped, or starving in a drought-stricken Africa. This makes no sense.

However, lest we forget...the fundamental message in the movie does have value, and in fact, there is tremendous scientific evidence for the application of the law of attraction to parenting. Here’s how it works.

First, the Law of Attraction states: “What you hold in your thoughts and your emotions will be attracted to you.” Simple enough...right?

Well, if we forget the arguments about whether this is true in some magical, mystical way, let's focus upon whether it's true in your home, and how you can use the scientific data to transform your power as a parent.

Parenting Law of Attraction

Parents: we attract the behavior and emotions (in our children) that we repeatedly give our energy & attention to.

Said differently, your children are blessed with an amazing brain that is attracted to what you keep investing your energy and attention in. If you have been reading my materials over the years, or if you have worked with me as a coaching client, I have often stated, **“Where your attention repeatedly goes, their energy flows.”**

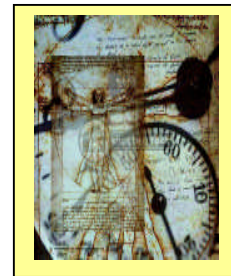
All of these descriptions are just different ways to get the same point across. And in my view, as a parent, it is the single most important concept to master.

Not because it's just another 'cute' idea, but because understanding and mastering this concept is truly “The Secret” for creating happy, healthy and responsible children who thrive in a peaceful home environment. When you understand this straightforward principle, and you apply this notion consistently, you will discover the tremendous capacity you have to shape and influence your children's behavior and their emotions.

So How Does This “Parenting Secret” Work?

Let's imagine, here's the law, “Where your attention goes, their energy flows.”

Let's further imagine that this is a hidden law that gets overlooked, because it's just so darn simple...and it's right in front of all of us. If so, then this simple idea reflects the secret formula for shaping healthy and responsible patterns of behavior and emotions.



This principle does not reflect a short term, immediate fix approach to behavior change.

Instead, this principle reflects the power of your attention and where you consistently put your energy...to shape your child's behavior.

In practical terms, this statement can be translated as follows:

What behavior or emotion you consistently give attention to...that behavior or emotion must expand over time.

- ✚ It doesn't matter whether the behavior you are engaging is healthy or unhealthy.
- ✚ It doesn't matter if the behavior is pleasant or unpleasant.
- ✚ It doesn't matter if you like it, or whether you dislike it.
- ✚ It doesn't matter if you are angry or not.
- ✚ It doesn't matter if you look upset, threatening or sad.
- ✚ It doesn't matter how important you think your words are in that moment.
- ✚ It doesn't matter even if you follow-up with a consequence.

It only matters if you consistently and repeatedly, day after day, give some part of your attention and energy to it. If you do, you are using your influence to "attract" more of that behavior into your home.

Just remember this: If I consistently engage it...IT MUST GROW!

The "Parenting Secret" Relies on the Automatic Brain

The part of your child's brain that learns from your repeated actions is unconcerned about whether your child is in a happy place or an unhappy place. That part of their brain doesn't care if you are smiling and pleasant, or whether or not you are unhappy and screaming your head off.

The automatic brain doesn't care if the particular behavior is good or bad, responsible or irresponsible, or whether it makes mom or dad happy or unhappy.

The "automatic learning" brain just doesn't care. All the brain knows is whether or not this "moment" is being noticed by you as a parent. If you keep noticing it, and giving your attention to it, that behavior must grow. IT'S THE LAW.

The more that you consistently give attention to any behavior or emotion, your children learn to put more and more of their energy into that behavior (because you do...they do!)

It Doesn't Matter.

Keep in mind: It does not matter what your words or your actions are. It only matters whether or not you give attention to the behavior. Let's leave the theory now, and talk reality:

Example #1: John is watching TV. You ask him to turn off the TV and come to dinner. No response.

You ask a second time. No response. You raise your voice a bit and remind John that it is time for dinner. You get a grunt.

You ask a third time. John is ignoring you.

You now become frustrated. You raise your voice much louder, and yell at John to cut off the TV and to come to dinner. He says he is not ready.

You are busy getting dinner on the table, and again tell John to turn off the TV, and come to the table. Nothing.

You get angry now. You walk into the room with the TV. You get upset at John and demand that he turn off the TV. He barely acknowledges you. In a fit of frustration, you yell again and threaten to remove the TV for life. John begrudgingly cuts off the TV. Enough.

Notice: What specific behavior repeatedly gets your attention in this example? What was John offering each time you give your energy to John? Desired behavior...or unwanted behavior?

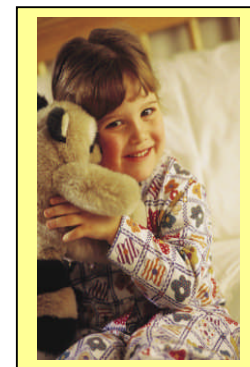
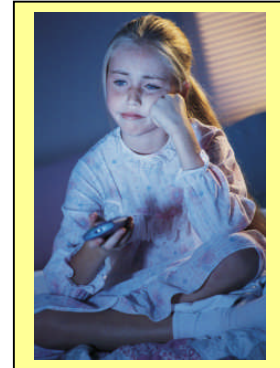
Obviously we were getting a poor response by John, and this “unwanted behavior” kept getting attention and energy. **Yet almost every one of us would fall into this trap...unless we learn about The Secret.**

If you happen to have a child like John, then you know that this daily routine just gets worse over time. Now, perhaps you understand that the problem lies not in John, but in your response to John.

Example #2: Sara (age 9) has difficulty getting ready for school in the morning. She has difficulty getting out of bed. The alarm goes off, and she lies in bed. You come and gently remind her that she needs to get to school. Little response by Sara.

You kiss her gently, and offer encouraging words about the day. You lovingly suggest that she needs to get out of bed. Again, little response.

She just turns over. You leave, and give her a few minutes. You return to find Sara in bed. This time you tug her out of bed and try to remain pleasant, as you



point her in the direction of the clothes that have already been picked out. She fights you and barely moves.

After returning from the bathroom, you find that she has pulled on her shirt, but has laid back down on the bed. Your voice starts to reflect your frustration. You tell her again that she will be late for school, and you then start to pick up her pants, and put them over one foot and begin to walk out of the room leaving her to complete the rest. She is whining...loudly and obnoxiously whining.

You return a few minutes later and Sara has not moved from the bed. Now time is critical, and you have lost your patience. You yell at Sara and tell her how she has to get ready. She looks at you with a disrespectful eye that makes you cringe. She gradually begins to move, while complaining how mean and unfair you are. She complains about not wanting to go to school, and how tired she is. You leave in order to avoid exploding.

Walking by the room a few minutes later, you find Sara is now tossing her socks around the room, and has not put on her shoes. You scream at her that she will miss the bus. She seems not to be affected, and has grown accustomed to this routine. This has been happening for a while, and seems to just get worse.

Sara “should” be growing more independent, and yet she becomes more dependent. Notice again: What behavior is consistently engaged? Do you start to see it?

Example #3: You are out to Friendly’s restaurant with your six year old. She begins to whine. She begins to complain that she is hungry and can’t wait for her food.

You have asked her to be patient, and try to distract her with discussions of school and soccer games. This works for a while. In a few moments, her voice gets louder as she complains more that she is hungry, and tired, and wants her food now. Embarrassed, you begin to ask her to remain calm, and reassure her that the food is coming. You attempt to play games with her placemat. This works for a while.

A few minutes later, she flops over in her chair. Her voice gets louder as she complains and whines again. She demands her meal, and the waitress looks annoyed. She starts to kick her brother. You beg her to stop. You threaten to take away TV. You tell her she will get no dessert. Nothing seems to help.

She continues to kick her brother, and you intervene by physically holding her legs. Her voice now increases dramatically, as she begins to scream that you are hurting her.

The waitress arrives with the food, and you sigh with deep relief. **You no longer like to go out to eat with the kids. Next time, you stay home. Bummer...big bummer!**

What's "The Secret" to Getting Back on Track?

Notice the common denominator in these situations. **In every situation, the problem behavior pulls mom and dad into the problem. The problem gets more and more attention, and thus the problem is destined to get worse over time.**

Why? Because the "Law" states that whatever you consistently engage, it has to grow... it has to expand over time. You can stop the law from working. Your kids can't stop it. It's like gravity...it's always there working to hold you accountable to where you invest your energy and attention.

These are only a few examples. I could offer you many examples where problem behaviors pull you into them, and thus you consistently end up giving your attention to what you don't want.

The result: The harder that you work at trying to change the behavior that you don't want, the worse it gets.

If you find yourself caught in a pattern of repeatedly and consistently responding to unwanted, unhealthy, negative behavior, then you have to find a way to disengage. Yes, consequences are needed in many situations. But no matter what the consequence, there is simply no easy way to change behavior once you have conditioned your kids to get your attention through such unwanted behavior.

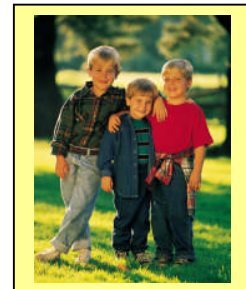
It's as if you are training them to persist in the very behavior you want to reduce.

Can you begin NOW to understand how this undermines your long-term effectiveness as a parent?

How to use the Parenting Secret to work for you!

I have offered several examples where this law has been working to actually grow negative behavior. However, positive behavior also grows by application of the same principle.

Any positive or healthy behavior that you want to nurture, you have to give your attention to it.



Well, it's even more than that. You have to repeatedly invest your attention in any developing behavior pattern that you want to nurture. The more you give your attention to it, the more your children's energy will flow in that direction.

It is important to remember that there are certain aspects of this law that are critical to understand. Here are the components that are essential:

- 1) You must consistently give attention to it.**
- 2) You must offer your attention when the behavior is present.**
- 3) High frequency, but more subtle moments are preferred.**
- 4) Repeat above. Repeat above. Repeat above.**

That's really difficult, right?

Of course it's not difficult! If you want to play a significant role in nurturing and promoting healthy, responsible behavior, you have to catch it while it is happening. You have to do that consistently and repeatedly (for say...30 - 45 days). If you do so, the behavior will increase over time.

If you want to predictably shape your child's behavior, your success will hinge on the mastery of this principle.

The Secret for Terrific Parenting Is In Your Gardening

When speaking to groups of parents, I often use the metaphor of weeds and seeds. It doesn't sound flashy, but it gets to the core truth. I explain to parents that your attention to your child is like water to a plant. If we consistently water a plant, the plant will grow. However, if we stare at the plant while watering, we do not see the direct results of the watering.

We cannot see the power of the water to sustain life. Yet, if we fail to water, we see a gradual deterioration and eventually the loss of life.

Water is essential. Even though the results are not immediate, the power of water to sustain life is not in doubt.

But remember: We don't see it right away. Yet, we have learned that water is essential. Water does not discriminate however. Water will feed the seeds, and water will feed the weeds.

Weeds: If you have weeds in your garden, it is essential to understand the importance of starving the weeds. In this metaphor, weeds are all of the unwanted behaviors that you struggle with in your home. If you want to see these weeds go away over time, you have to starve them. In other words, you

must find a way to disengage the weeds so that they get no watering (i.e., meaning the unwanted behavior gets no attention).

This must occur for extended periods of time. Once you stop watering the weed, you need to expect that the weeds will not die happily. Instead, the weed may scream and yell, and seek to get your attention in louder and more unpleasant ways. The “weed-like” behavior is accustomed to attracting your attention. Remember, do you want to attract more weeds into your home? Of course not! So, you have to keep starving the weeds if you want the unhealthy behavior to fade away. **You can't keep giving your attention to the weeds (of whining, complaining, not listening, disrespect, etc.)...if you want to STOP ATTRACTING THOSE WEEDS INTO YOUR HOME!**

Seeds: Seeds represent the untapped potential...the untapped resources that lie within your children. There are seeds of success, happiness, kindness, effort, cooperation, and so forth. We like seeds! Don't we!!!

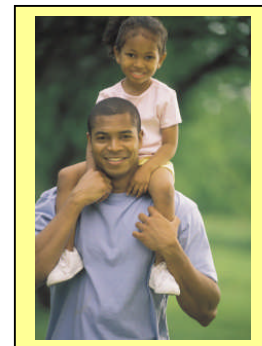
In order to help nurture and produce healthy and happy children, it is essential to be vigilant for the seeds of happiness...the seeds of health...the seeds of responsibility and success.

Whenever you notice any behavior that you value, then give it your attention. In other words, water those seeds whenever you see them! You don't need to give it your attention with lots of praise and enormous emotional reactions. Not necessary.

In fact, there are many times when such over reactions become detrimental! Instead, offer small, but frequent moments of your attention. Too much praise becomes noticed and is experienced as being insincere and excessive.

Instead, water the seeds by doing any of the following:

- Smile.
- Give a thumbs up.
- Touch them on the head.
- Rub their shoulders.
- Smile.
- Ask about their work.
- Make a comment about the ball game.
- Ask what they'd like to drink for dinner.
- See if they'd like some juice.
- Smile.
- Put a smiley face on their paper.
- Bring them a small treat.
- Wink



- Just look their way. Smile.
- Walk by and nod your head.
- Tell them you love them.
- Tell them how the weather looks.
- Tell them a joke.
- Nod.
- Smile.

You get my point here. All that you have to do is engage. However, to be effective you must engage WHILE IT'S HAPPENING. That's really the amazing secret for parents. Because it's so simple, (and initially the weeds scream louder) many parents get thrown off course, and look for complicated solutions. In every one of my programs, I include this concept because mastery must first be attained here before you can step in with consequences that really make a difference.

Let me summarize again. To be truly and consistently effective in growing healthy behavior in your home, you MUST catch the "good stuff" WHILE IT IS HAPPENING.

Three hours after the homework is done....too late. Thirty minutes after they cleaned their room....too late. Fifteen minutes after the practicing piano...too late. Five minutes after setting the table...too late. To grow that healthy stuff...you gotta catch it WHILE IT'S HAPPENING!

Fundamentally, it's all about weeds and seeds. You can have the most powerful impact upon your children by simply attending to weeds and seeds.

To nurture the seeds of happy and responsible behavior, you have got to devote time to intensely watering those initial seeds of success, happiness and responsibility.

Just as if you were seeding a lawn, you need to spend 3 - 4 weeks, at a minimum, paying an unusual amount of attention to the small seedlings of success. In other words, water frequently. Small doses, but frequent watering...of the healthy behavior and positive emotions.

As positive behavior begins to emerge, you do not need to water so often. You do not need to notice so much. Their energy will continue to flow toward those seeds of success. It's like a maturing lawn. As it grows into maturity, there is not as much need for watering. It can still be helpful, and at times necessary, but not needed as frequently. As those seeds take strong root, they tend to become self-supporting and you can continue to pull back.

But the weeds! Here is the real thorn in your side, right?

The weeds keep tugging at you. The weeds keep pulling at you. The weeds keep beckoning for your attention. But do you want to attract more weeds by giving them your attention?

NO! Of course you don't.

Even after you have read these newsletters, or perhaps attended a seminar, you find that those weeds keep pulling at you. They are right there in your face.

And yet, **in order to get the weeds out of your garden, you have got to start by starving those weeds!** So, do whatever you have to do. But disengage from those weeds. Sample weeds include:

- ➡ Mouthy
- ➡ Sassy
- ➡ Talking back
- ➡ Disrespect
- ➡ Not listening
- ➡ Burping
- ➡ Sibling squabbles
- ➡ Negotiating with you
- ➡ Complaining and complaining
- ➡ Whining
- ➡ Asking same questions over and over

Now some of these weeds need additional grooming, through the use of other strategies. But for now, just know that the "Parenting Secret" behind every one of my programs is first mastering this fundamental strategy: you have to begin starving rather than feeding these weeds, if you want your other efforts to be successful.

Disengaging is not an endorsement of the weeds. Instead, this represents a statement to your children that "your negative behavior is not worthy of my attention." When you understand the power of that message, you will not be sucked into the delusion that our response of saying, "No, that is unacceptable" has any effect upon the behavior. If it really did, there would be no need for these newsletters. I would be out of business. That's reality...right!

While the introduction of structure and consequences can increase the speed of your children's learning, this **Secret of Terrific Parenting** is the underlying basis for sustaining any long-term changes in behavior. If you would like to know how to apply this principle to your daily routines, and how to bring

consequences and structure into your home, perhaps you would want to consider my new program, [“Effortless Daily Routines.”](#) On this program, I guide you through a plan you can put in place today, and it’s so simple that you can really stick to it. You learn not only how to master the “secret” in your home, but you also get the tools that put the structure and daily habits onto auto-pilot.

Or perhaps you would enjoy the transformation in your home from my comprehensive [6 week Essential Parenting Home Study Course](#). With this program, I take no chances. You get the full package, given to you in weekly segments that mean you can really master the material...and you start to see results within 2 weeks. All of my products come with a one year unconditional guarantee, so you take no risk...except the risk for a better, brighter and more easeful future.

This is the Fundamental Secret to Terrific Parenting!

So here, in a nutshell, is the key fundamental and it’s truly a simple secret only because it’s right in front of us.

Weeds and Seeds. It’s all about learning to be a great, intentional gardener of your home. Do you want to casually, and without thinking, end up watering weeds? I don’t think so!

Remember, the part of your child’s brain that grows behavior, responds to your attention just like the weeds and seeds respond to water. If you consistently give any behavior or emotion your attention, that behavior or emotion will get more and more of your child’s energy. Just watch and see! You are the force attracting and expanding upon your child’s behavior and their emotions!

No...you did not create that ADD or that strong-willed character. That’s not what I’m saying.

Instead, know that you are the force that shapes seemingly oppositional behavior into a positive attribute (stubborn persistence on completing a problem, for example) that will serve your son or daughter...or it becomes a flaw in their personality that bleeds the chances of success from their lives. You get to shape this evolution, by either pretending that the “Secret” isn’t real...or by investing your time and attention consistently on what you value.

What will be the consequence of how you use the Law of Attraction? To grow weeds...or to grow seeds? The Secret to a better future lies in your answer to that question. If you have any questions, please return to [TerrificParenting.com](#), and search the articles and information there. You can also ask questions, and comment, on my blog at [TerrificParenting.com/blog](#).