

How to Be a Wonder Mom



Parenting tips and tricks to help you do it all faster and easier.

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Introduction

Congratulations, you're one step closer to being a bona fide superhero.

Here's a Secret

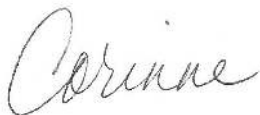
The fact that you're reading this book means you probably already are a Wonder Mom. You're investing time in learning skills to help you raise your kids into well-adjusted adults. So kudos to you! Anything else you learn in the next few pages is just a bonus.

What You Will Learn:

- Tricks to make daily life easier
- How to get your kids to do what you want
- How to keep it all together (or at least look like you are)

Like you, I have a lot of interests. And if I'm going to bother doing something, I want to do my best. It helps to have a few tricks and time-saving tips and I've picked up hundreds over the years. I hope these help you save time, enjoy life more, and feel good about yourself as a mom.

Happy Parenting!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Corinne".

7 Signs You're A Good Mom

As a general rule, I try not to judge other mothers for their choices. Just because I'm not a helicopter mom doesn't mean it's not the right choice for someone else. So, this notion of deeming someone a "good mom" might seem hypocritical. But I don't think so.

I believe there are certain standards we all agree on that we try to meet, even if we're not always successful. And I think if you can see these 10 signs in yourself, you can give yourself a pat on the back for doing a good job as a mom.

1. Your Child Gets Angry at You

You cannot be doing a good job as a mother if your child NEVER gets upset with you. Our primary role as mothers is to define boundaries of acceptable behavior. It's human nature and part of natural child development, for a child to test those boundaries. "I want candy for breakfast!" "Absolutely not." "You're mean!" is a conversation that should bring a smile to your face because you know you are being a great mom.

2. You Can't Sleep at Night

Every mother I know has had a sleepless night, or at least a hard time falling asleep, at least once (and usually far more) having guilt over the things they did wrong that day or worrying about all the things they have to do in the days to come. In my opinion, even if you screwed everything up that day and THAT'S what is keeping you up, the fact that you know you screwed up and feel bad about it, is proof that you care whether or not you are doing a good job as a mom. And I'm pretty sure we can all agree that caring is definitely a quality of a "good mom."

3. You've Suffered A Mini-Breakdown

As moms, we juggle a LOT of responsibilities. We cook, clean, nurture, organize, manage, chauffeur, volunteer, and dozens of other things. Sometimes, these obligations intersect in a perfect storm of stressors. If you were totally lazy or just didn't care about the people affected by all those things you do, then you could let that stress fall away pretty easily. However, a conscientious, responsible person (i.e. "good mom") will have a much harder time shrugging off the stress and might end up collapsing in a ball of tears or a pillow-throwing, foot-stomping tantrum.

4. You Make Food Your Kids Hate

Sometimes we get lucky and we get a child, or maybe a couple, that actually ENJOY healthy food. Your first-born probably didn't even know what a french fry was for several years. However, very few of us survive motherhood without at least one phase of picky eating. Sure, you can cave and feed your child chicken nuggets, pizza, and macaroni & cheese every night, but most of us can't bear to do that over the long-term because we want our children to be healthy. We go to great lengths to find compromises so we can "sneak" some vitamins and nutrients into our kids. And, sometimes, we believe the nutrition fairy might have visited our child in the middle of the night so we pull out the tilapia and spinach for dinner hoping for a miracle resulting in tears, tantrums, and arguments. Though your child isn't very happy, you did a good thing.

5. You're Selfish

Despite what society tells us, being a great mother doesn't require complete, selfless devotion to our family. In fact, unless you are a bona fide saint, that would be impossible. If you aren't a little selfish (e.g. stashing your favorite chocolate so that your kids who can't tell the difference between Godiva and Hershey's don't eat it or locking yourself in your room to finish the book you've been trying to read for the past month), little resentments will start to build on top of the stress of taking care of everyone BUT yourself. Great moms nurture themselves so that they have more energy and optimism to help everyone else.

6. You've Been Called Crazy or You Think Others Think You Are

Some of us experience this a lot more than others. While it might sound like I'm saying you need to have a mental disorder to be a good mom, what I really mean is that you are so passionate about something (typically it will involve your kids somehow) that your intensity will lead others to believe you are a little out there. Whether you cheer too enthusiastically at a sporting event, rush your child to the doctor at the slightest indication of illness, are a zealous member of the PTA, or you have super strict rules that you never stray from, someone has either given you an odd look or actually said to you, "You're a little bit crazy." Kudos mom! Great moms have passion and the compunction to stand up for what they believe.

7. You Think You're A Bad Mom

I truly believe that bad moms either don't know or don't care that they are bad moms. Abusive parents and negligent parents don't care enough about the lives of their children to protect them, let alone nurture them. They will never try to change their behavior because they don't register that they are doing anything wrong, or they simply don't care. If you think you're a bad mom, you've already identified something you believe you are doing wrong. Chances are, since none of us wants to be bad, you'll make an effort to improve or change the characteristic you dislike in yourself. In trying to not be a bad mom, you are being a good mom.

7 Simple Parenting Hacks

Being a parent is challenging. Some days, it feels like it takes super human strength and energy to get everything done and raise our children to be responsible, productive individuals. That's the impetus behind Wondermom Wannabe - finding ways to do it all with the limited time and abilities we have. Today I'm sharing 7 simple parenting hacks to help make your parenting life a little bit easier. I hope these **parenting tips** help you feel like a superhero mom.

1. Give Everyone Their Own Cups

Use a sharpie (or many sharpies) to let your child decorate his or her cup. Then let them know that they should only use that cup all day, rinsing it out in between uses. This will cut down on the number of dishes that need to be washed.

2. Give Everyone Their Own Towels

Assign each child a different color of towels; give them an entire set to keep in their room. They should use only these towels and get them to the laundry room on wash day (or teach them to launder their own). This will cut down on bathroom floor mess and laundry.

3. Give an Allowance

Instead of giving monetary rewards for "extras," give them an allowance for a comprehensive set of chores. For younger children, pay a small allowance and require your child(ren) to pay for any non-necessities out of this money. As kids get older, increase the allowance and by age 13 (give or take a year or two, depending on maturity) have them start paying for necessities too (e.g. clothing, school supplies, and toiletries). This will teach your child more about money than anything else as they'll be more careful about what they order and what activities they do.

4. Bed Accidents

This works for young children when you are trying to potty train, but can also work for older girls to prevent period accidents. Just put a puppy pad on the bed. They cost less, and they really work.

5. Time, Not Money

The thing children want more than anything is your time. Find ways to spend even ten minutes reading a book to them, or cuddling and watching TV, and they'll feel super special all day long.

6. Make Baby Baths Easy

Use a laundry basket in the bathtub to bathe your baby. It saves you the trouble of storing a baby tub, but still keeps baby safe. Plus, they can easily play with their toys too because they can't float away too far.

7. Get Chores Done

Be creative about chores. Make them earn the Wi-Fi password by getting a certain thing done each day. If you have multiple children, let them draw chores for the day instead of having the same thing all the time. Also, set a time limit for chores to be completed.

More Parenting Hacks

Here are a few more parenting hacks to help you deal with the most common problems we face as moms.

Keeping Kids Busy

- **Pots and Pans** – Let them play with some of the pots and pans on the kitchen table or counter, along with wooden spoons, spatulas, and whisks as you cook dinner. They'll feel helpful and they won't be in your way. Cookie sheets make a great replacement for the fridge if they like to play with magnetic letters, shapes, or toys.
- **Paint Outside**– Instead of painting inside, on nice days let your children paint on an old sheet outside. Use watercolors or tempera paints. Let them go wild and then rinse them off with a hose when it's over. Or, give them some sidewalk chalk and let them decorate the driveway.
- **Paint Inside** – Fill a zipper plastic bag with one color of paint and tape it to a window in a spot your child can reach. He or she can now finger paint without making a mess by drawing designs in the paint within the baggie.

Teaching Patience

- **Time It** – Set a timer for anything you want your children to do, from waiting a few minutes while you pay bills, to cleaning their room, to eating. Tell them the timer is set, and for how long, and that when the timer goes off they'll be done with whatever.
- **Use Hand Signals** – Teach your children easy sign language. Baby sign language is very useful and cuts down on temper fits by letting a non-verbal child communicate easier. The trick though is to always follow up. If you signal a child to be quiet while you're on the phone, as soon as you get off do something with them for a few minutes and praise them for waiting.

Getting Kids to Eat Healthy

- **Let Them Help** – Children who help prepare dinner are more likely to eat the dinner as prepared, even if that includes veggies. Little hands can do a lot more than you might think.
- **Grow Your Own** – Teach children how food grows out of the ground, and they'll be hooked for life. If they have their own little plot to care for, they'll eat a lot more veggies.

Keeping Kids Healthy

- **Remove Splinters** – Make a paste of baking soda by adding enough water to make it the consistency of glue. Spread on the area with the splinter and wait a few minutes for the splinter to rise out of the skin. Then remove splinter with tweezers.
- **Giving Medication** – For small kids, cut a hole in a binky and slip the dropper through. Kids are used to sucking on a binky so they'll accept the medicine easier. For older kids, ask the pharmacist to flavor the medication according to your child's preference.

Children are easier to please if you understand what they want. They want attention, and the more ways you can find to give them attention, while also getting peace for yourself, the better off you'll both be. Always set the example of behavior you want them to follow and make them a priority, and you can't go wrong. Hopefully these parenting hacks will not only help you get more done, but also hope you forge a stronger relationship with your children.

How To Convince Your Kids You're A Genius

When I was 5 years old, my father had me convinced he could read my mind. Each morning, I would sit in the bathroom while he shaved and hold up a card (facing me, back of the card to him) and he would guess the card right EVERY TIME! When I thought back to this **parenting trick** when I was older, I realized he could see the card reflected in the mirror behind me.

Sure, I eventually figured out his trick, but for YEARS I never told a lie to my father because I thought he would be able to read my mind and know I was lying. A little bit of parental deception can yield a bounty of leverage and influence over one's children. And hopefully, by the time they find you out, the habit of doing what you wanted them to do is so ingrained in them that it will be their fallback behavior even when you don't wield as much influence over their actions.

I unwittingly stumbled upon the tricks required to trick your children into believing you're smarter than you actually are. Hindsight being 20-20 though, I realized I could use my own experience to create a road map for other parents to follow. It's too late for me, but you still have time to convince your kids you're a genius.

Convince Your Kids You're An Idiot

I realize this seems counterintuitive, but think about how much more impressed you are by someone who pulls themselves up out of poverty to become a self-made millionaire compared to someone who attends boarding schools and attends an ivy league college. So, when your moment of brilliance occurs, you want it to really catch your kids by surprise to make a bigger impact.

If you only have one child, you might actually have to try to look like an idiot. Mothers of two or more children should have no trouble at all. All those times that you call your children by the wrong name (and occasionally by the dog's name) are finally going to work for you. Likewise, walking up and down the stairs from your bedroom to the kitchen to try and remember what it was that occurred to you when you were making your bed that you needed to do downstairs, will finally provide a benefit in addition to the inadvertent exercise you've been getting. I really started to pick up traction when I would literally lose my train of thought halfway through sentences.

Don't Confront Them When You Catch Them Doing Something Wrong

This is a hard one. When you have evidence that your child has done something he or she shouldn't have done, your instinct is to confront him or her with the evidence and give your lecture on why it was wrong and how you have higher expectations for behavior. Here's what's wrong with that approach—Instead of teaching your kids not to commit the offense again, it just teaches them that they need to be better about covering their tracks next time.

If you sit on the information though, you can pull it out when they aren't expecting it. When you casually bring up something you knew about from weeks or months ago that they thought they got away with, they become convinced that you know a lot more about what they've been up to. This belief makes them think twice about everything they do, which is really what you want because until their consciences are fully formed, the little voice in their head telling them what is right and what is wrong sounds an awful lot like you.

Learn Random Facts On A Variety of Topics

I like to read a wide variety of genres. Every once in a while, small details seep into my brain from the things I read. Usually, these are inconsequential facts and don't benefit my daily life in any meaningful way other than occasionally providing me with the answer to a crossword puzzle clue. However, on very rare occasions, I am able to throw one of these random facts into a conversation with my children and after years of convincing them I'm an idiot, the effect is mesmerizing.

Nothing stops a kid in his tracks faster than the mom who almost put a pile of the laundry in the refrigerator rattling off a bunch of facts about the Battle of the Roses with detailed opinions about the battle between the House of York and the House of Lancaster for the throne (they don't need to know this information was amassed watching "The White Queen"). Likewise, my husband likes to check out the school curriculum for the year and will study one or two units from each subject so that when the kids get to it in school, he can rattle off facts like he's known them all his life.

If this seems like too much work for you, you can rely on knowledge obtained when you were a teen because it will seem new and revolutionary to your teen daughter when you share it with her now. My daughter was captivated by my hairdressing prowess when she walked in on me blow drying my hair while it was in a bun to achieve natural-looking waves in my ponytail.

Hopefully these tips will help you convince your kids you're a genius and you can leverage the benefits for years to come, ideally with the outcome that they will end up doing the right thing even when they realize you can't read their minds and they will value your opinion after they find out you don't really know everything.

How to Help Your Child Be a Winner

If you're reading this because based on the title you think this chapter will teach you how to make sure your child gets first place all the time, I'm going to let you off the hook early. That's not what this chapter is about. When it comes to life, especially my children's lives, I take the long view. I want my kids to win in life and the surest path to long-term success isn't necessarily lined with blue ribbons and first place trophies. So, if you want **parenting advice** on how to help your child be successful in life, read on. If you want your child to get first place in this year's spelling bee, you'll have to look elsewhere.

One more caveat. This advice is based on my own parenting style and opinions. No two people are alike so you may disagree with me on some points (or maybe all of them). I hope that my advice will give you some points to consider, but if you choose not to act on all of them it doesn't make you a bad parent. In fact, carefully considering how you parent and what advice you take and implement makes you an amazing and caring parent in my opinion.

Enroll Your Child in Individual Competitive Events

Avoidance of competition will not teach your child to develop the attitude of achieving success. Likewise, team activities can be a lot of fun and build confidence in a lot of ways, but they won't test your child's character the way individual competition will. In team activities, losses are shared so one can deny responsibility for the failure. In an individual event, only one person is responsible for a loss so that person is forced to assess what went wrong.

I want my kids to develop a habit of physical fitness to carry into adulthood so I encourage them to participate in individual sports (e.g. wrestling, gymnastics, and martial arts). I also want them to be well-rounded so in addition, I encourage them to enter essay contests, art competitions, and spelling bees and run for class office. There are plenty of opportunities for kids to compete as an individual outside of sports so look for them in the areas your child shows interest.

Teach Your Child That Losing Doesn't Make You a Loser

When someone, child or adult, loses in a challenge of any sort it's natural to feel disappointed in oneself and upset over the failure to reach a goal. It's not the loss itself, but what someone does to process those feelings that defines who they are though. Think about it, do you have a better impression of someone who wins and gloats about it or someone who loses and then congratulates the winner, encourages others, and works hard to improve for the next match?

Whether your child wins or loses, address how he or she behaves AFTER the match. Losses are actually the best opportunity to help your child succeed in the long-term because they challenge the child's character more and provide actionable steps that can be taken to improve. It's harder to point out to a child who just won what he or she needs to work on to improve. For anyone though, it's helpful to focus on competing against yourself. As a runner, I don't expect to win every race I compete in, but I do try to improve my own best times.

To me, a loser is someone who lacks the drive and skills to achieve anything of worth. In my mind, it's a person who sits on the couch watching television all day while the house is in disarray, bills go unpaid, and no effort is made to better oneself or society.

Help Your Child Develop Action Plans and Goals

Kids are easily redirected, which is why it's a popular conflict management technique in classrooms. But a child needs to be redirected. This is where you can make the biggest impact on your child's attitude towards competition and approach to challenges. Once you've allowed your child some time to process the results of a win or loss, refocus him or her from the result to the next competition.

If your child was the winner, emphasize good sportsmanship, possible areas for further improvement, or a new challenge. If your child didn't win, help him or her determine the cause(s) and develop a plan to improve. Recently my daughter failed to break the board during her martial arts belt testing. Her technique was good, but she was stopping her kick at the board, rather than kicking through it. So, the next day my husband scored some boards for her so they would break more easily and to help her understand the concept of kicking through the board.

Again, set goals for your child that focus on improving his or her personal scores or results. Depending on who else shows up at the next competition, your child might perform much better but lose anyway. Prepare your child to celebrate the success of getting better by setting a goal in advance that isn't tied to where he or she places, but instead on how he or she performs.

Model the Behavior

This advice applies to all areas of parenting. No matter what you say, your kids will end up doing what you do. If you tell them that occasional losses are okay and that long-term improvement is what matters, but then completely fall apart when you slip on your diet and gain a pound or two your child won't take your advice seriously. Worse yet, your child will think you're insincere when you are giving your pep talk and it will undermine his or her confidence.

How to Get Your Kids to Eat Vegetables

Many moms struggle with how to get your kids to eat vegetables. We want our families to be **healthy** and nutrition is a major aspect of health.

I like to think I'm a healthy eater, and consequently, that my family eats healthy too. When I started keeping a food log I shocked to find out I was barely meeting the prescribed 5 servings of fruit and veggies a day. And I knew that if I was barely meeting the minimum requirement, the chances that my vegetable-reluctant kids were getting their share were pretty low.

Coincidentally, about the same time I had this realization, my friend mentioned to me how funny her kids were responding to a vegetable-eating contest she had started between them. They were gorging themselves on vegetables just to win the tally each day (tracked by a chart she kept on the fridge door). Since my whole family is CRAZY competitive, I realized this was a windfall of an idea.

As usual, I looked all over the internet for an easy, printable (and cute!) chart that would suit my needs. Below, are my favorites. Remember, if your family doesn't share my family's strange compulsion to win at all costs, you might have to incorporate a reward system. Suggestions: winner gets to choose dessert after dinner, winner gets to be in charge of the remote control for 30 minutes, winner doesn't have to help clean up after dinner.

[A Day Chart](#)

[Fruit & Veggie Eater Meter](#)

[Eat A Rainbow](#)

If you've struggled with how to get your kids to eat vegetables, hopefully one of these charts will help.

A Simple and Effective Discipline System

One of the biggest challenges for parents is finding a discipline system for kids that actually works. If you've struggled with this, I have great news. Years ago I discovered the easiest discipline system for kids and it absolutely delivers results! It's one of my very favorite [parenting tips](#) to share with other parents.

The best part is - it doesn't involve yelling, nagging, or tears. Yes, really.

The "X" Discipline System for Kids

In my house, we refer to it as the "X" system.

Rules

The first step is to sit down and come up with the rules. You want to keep the system simple and your expectations reasonable. Ideally, your list will be limited to 3-5 rules. Here's an example of what your rules might look like:

1. Put things where they belong
2. Finish daily chores before playing
3. No making fun of others

Consequences

Next, figure out the 7 things that matter most for EACH of your children. Then rank them in order with 1 being the thing on the list they care about least and 7 being the thing that matters to them most.

Examples of things that might be on your list are:

- TV
- Cell phone
- Dessert
- Playing with friends
- Staying up past bedtime on weekends
- Video games

Your children each have their own unique personalities so it's important to make a list that's unique for each of them.

Implementation

Then, print off the **weekly chart** and write each child's name next to one of the tables. Starting with the 4th box in the first row, write in an item from the list and fill in the boxes until #7 on the list is in the last box of the table. Do this for each of your children.

Laminate the sheet or place it inside a plastic page protector and place it somewhere convenient (on the refrigerator, on a bulletin board, taped inside a cabinet or closet door).

Each time a child violates a rule (e.g. forgets to hang up backpack after school), have him X off one of the boxes. Each child gets 3 free boxes. After that, they start losing privileges. Once it's marked off on the chart, they lose that privilege for the rest of the week. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Results

This system works amazingly well. You don't do any yelling. You don't have to make up consequences on the spot. It sets clear expectations for your children. This is a foolproof system in my house. We usually use it for a month or two to straighten up behavior and then put it away for awhile. You don't need to continue it forever, only when behavior starts to get sloppy again.

If this system still seems too complex, try a [Consequence Jar](#) instead.

Or, if you prefer a positive reinforcement system, you might have greater success with the [Reward Jar](#) system.

Family Meeting Planner

I am constantly struggling to find **effective ways to keep up with our lives and manage our household** despite the fact that with each passing day, there seems to be less time to do it all than the day before. One of my family's most recent successes has been a weekly family planning meeting right after Sunday dinner. Each of us grabs our calendars and schedules and we sit down at the table as soon as we've cleaned up from dinner. At our family meeting, we discuss three things: Upcoming Events, Menu for the Week, and Chores for the Week and record it all on our family meeting planner.

Upcoming Events

Each member of the family takes a turn going over their events/activities for the upcoming week. We write any new events on the family calendar and review existing entries to make sure time and location details are correct. For the purposes of staying completely in sync, we also write in practices, meetings, and events that occur on a regular basis that don't usually make it onto our big calendar (e.g. gymnastics practice, piano lessons, volunteer duty at school). Each person (except for the youngest because she doesn't have a phone or iPod yet) is responsible for also entering his or her information into **Cozi**, the app we use to coordinate our schedules, to-do lists, and shopping lists.

Menu for the Week

Each person in the family gets to select the dinner menu for one night during the week. This serves three purposes. First, it takes the pressure off of me to do all the menu planning. Second, it empowers each member so that at least one night a week, they know they will like what's being served for dinner. And third, it helps me to finalize a menu plan before my Monday grocery trip. With six members in the family, that leaves us with one night reserved for leftovers or eating out/ordering in. As we discuss the dinner menu for the week, I also accept other grocery shopping "suggestions." This is when I get feedback on what types of breakfast, lunch, and snack items the kids prefer.

Chores for the Week (To Do List)

My kids have specific duties for which they are always responsible. Each of them is expected to make their beds each day, bring down their dirty laundry, put their clean laundry away, and clean up the kitchen after dinner. In addition, each of my children has specific chores assigned to them based on age. My teen son has weed whacking duty and is responsible for taking out the kitchen garbage, my younger son is responsible for emptying all of the other garbage bins in the house, my teen daughter has litter box duty, and the youngest is responsible for feeding the dogs. These chores don't go on our list because they are assumed.

However, if the car has moved past functional family vehicle into potential science experiment, cleaning the car is assigned to a few family members. Likewise, if the house is in post-flu season, we'll add disinfecting all phones, doorknobs, and light switches to the chore list. If we have a big event coming up, shopping for supplies or gifts goes on the to-do list.

Family Meeting Planner

When we started our family meetings, I would just update our big family calendar app and our Cozi files and then scratch out the menu on a piece of paper so I could later write my grocery list. As we started tracking chores and our collective to-do list, I realized I needed a better system so I developed a family meeting planner sheet that I put on the refrigerator after we've filled it in each week. Now, we have an easy at-a-glance visual aid to keep us on track in a central location where we see it several times a day. This has put an end to countless questions about "What's for dinner?" "What time will you be home?" or "Has anyone brought up the bin of 4th of July decorations?". Click to download ==>> [Family Meeting Planner](#)

It's amazing to me how this one piece of paper can make such a big difference in how well our family runs. I hope it works for your family too!

Games You Can Play With Your Kids Instead of Exercising

The number one excuse moms give for not getting enough exercise is lack of time. Motherhood is an enormous time-sucking black hole. All that cooking, cleaning, shopping, chauffeuring and parenting uses up most of the hours and minutes in our day. The other reasons we don't work out? Guilt over taking time for ourselves (even though we know we should) and the fact that working out is work (i.e. not fun!). There's a simple solution that eliminates ALL of these excuses. Play with your kids! No, an arduous round of Wii Tennis is not what I'm talking about. Instead, try some of these games you can play with your kids instead of exercising. You'll have fun, they'll have fun, you'll feel like a super mom, and you'll get a great workout.

Dance Party

This is one of my family's favorites. You can do it no matter what the weather is like in any room large enough for you to shake your booty. Sometimes we turn it into a dance off. Other times we form a circle and have each family member take the center for a short feature. We have a playlist with all the popular line dances on it (e.g. Cha Cha Slide, Cupid Shuffle, Macarena). We also use the Kidz Bop Kids Radio station on Pandora. Simon Says

This was my go-to activity when I worked with first graders and had to keep them occupied waiting in line. Kids take this game seriously! If you let the kids be Simon, you will get a ton of exercise since they usually choose things like hopping on one foot, flapping your arms like a chicken, and spinning in circles (sometimes all at the same time!). This is another game that works easily indoors.

Tag

My daughter and I play some variation of tag every morning at the bus stop. She invented "Booger Touch" which doesn't involve any actual boogers (thank goodness!). One person tags the other and thus, gives them the "booger touch." You can ward off the booger touch by holding one finger on the tip of your nose. I have no idea what the neighbors think of me as I chase my daughter around while she holds her finger to her nose, but looking ridiculous is half the fun. We also sometimes play "Stinky Toe Touch" which requires you to touch the tip of their shoe with the tip of yours. I cannot play this with my older children since inevitably, someone stomps on someone else's foot or accidentally kicks someone. To ward off the Stinky Toe Touch, you have to stand with both hands on your knees. Don't ask me why. This is what happens when you let a 7-year old make up the rules. Here are some other variations we play (and that your kids probably already know):

- Infected (one person is "It" and if he/she tags someone else, that person is also "It" and can infect others. Game ends when only one person remains uninfected.)
 - Linked (one person is "It." When he/she tags someone else, they must link arms and try to tag others linked together. Game ends when only one person remains unlinked.)
 - Freeze Tag (one person is "It." When he/she tags someone else, they must freeze in place. Another player can unfreeze them by tagging them, but only if they get to the person before getting tagged and frozen by "it.")
- Badminton

Who knew that badminton was the great equalizer of athletic ability?

Despite the broad range of ages and physical size in my family, there is no combination of teams that grants anyone an advantage. It's always a mystery which team will win. Sometimes we don't even keep score, we just try to set a record for the number of times we can volley the birdie back and forth. If you don't have a badminton set, you can get almost the exact same workout playing with a balloon. Try to keep the balloon from touching the ground. To increase the difficulty, require that no one can touch the balloon twice in a row.

Obstacle Course

I used to set up obstacle courses for my kids to keep them busy outside during the summer when I was trying to keep them away from the television and video games. As with most things, it ended up being much more fun when I let them help design the obstacle course, which of course meant they wanted me to run it too. Here's an example of what one of our courses would include:

- Hopscotch (must make it through without making a mistake)
- Hula Hoop (usually involves a time requirement that you have to keep the hula hoop rotating)
- Scooter (must ride it from one location to the next obstacle)
- Tunnel Crawl (usually we use large cardboard boxes and form a tunnel to crawl through)
- Jump Rope (have to complete 25 jumps without messing up)
- Basketball (have to make a basket to move on)
- Frisbee (throw Frisbee and get it to land in a specific area)
- Pool Noodle Hurdles (lay noodles down in a series of rows that participants must jump over)
- Backpack (fill backpack with appropriate weight for the person carrying it, have them carry it a set distance)
- Climb (depending on what you have available, you can climb over a fence, climb a tree, or climb a rope)

If you don't want to set up your own course, you can always head to the nearest playground and set up a course using the existing equipment.

Instead of running the course at the same time, we "race" by timing each person's run. If it's perceived that age or size gives an advantage, we come up with rule for handicapping the results. Of course, you don't have to compete, but my family wouldn't understand the point since we're a little on the crazy competitive side.

Nerf War/Water War

If you don't allow play guns in your house, this isn't for you. However, if like us, you have an entire arsenal of Nerf guns and water guns, these "wars" are great fun. Despite the fact that the adults seemingly have all the advantages (we're faster, more experienced, less frightened of getting hit by styrofoam bullets or water), I seem to always lose these battles. Kids are more agile, and amazingly organized when it comes to taking down a common enemy (i.e. the adult adversary). This is one of the few games where I can be a graceful loser, mostly because I am too exhausted to pout by the end of the battle.

Mess-Free Indoor Activities For Kids

During bad weather days, millions of parents find themselves with a house full of excited kids. I LOVE having my kids home, but sometimes I need to get some work done! To be ready for those days, I've armed myself with a list of activities that keeps the kids entertained without leaving a mess and without relying on the TV or video games.

Rock Star

Do you know what's more fun than watching music videos? Making them! Depending on your family's talents, kids can do everything from making up the song and accompanying choreography to editing the video with cool visual effects. They can also just lip sync to a song and put on performances for one another. Even shy kids enjoy this activity because it's a chance to role play in a safe environment where no one will laugh cruelly at them for doing something silly.

Photo Shoot

If you follow me on Instagram, you know my teen daughter is constantly selfie bombing my phone (filling up my SD card with pictures of herself). Kids love taking pictures of themselves and others and with so many tools to take them with (cell phones, handheld gaming devices, tablets, and digital cameras), it's easy to equip them for it. Extend the length of time they spend on this activity by encouraging your kids to edit their photos when they are done taking them. There are tons of free apps and software available (many of them probably pre-loaded on your devices).

Object Hide and Seek

We are all familiar with the classic game of hide and seek. Sometimes though, when played indoors, this can be frustrating to the mom who isn't playing the game but constantly has kids running past her or trying to hide in the pile of laundry she is trying to fold or under the desk where she is working. I find it far less annoying to give the kids a stuffed animal to hide. It's smaller, so it can hide in places less annoying to me. And because the stuffed toy doesn't have to make it to "base" to be safe, there is no running around the house.

Treasure Hunt

One of my family's favorite games is treasure hunt. I make up clues that they have to figure out to lead them eventually to a treasure. You can read my post on [Treasure Hunts and Scavenger Hunts](#) for some free printables so you don't have to create your own. However, to buy yourself some extra productivity time, have the kids create their own.

Fitness Challenge

If the kids are really bouncing off the walls, I throw out a fitness challenge (this works particularly well if your family is competitive). If you need some ideas of what types of activities to throw at them, you can choose some from my [Wakeup Workout](#). Exercise may not be our idea of fun, but for some reason (probably because they're younger, with more energy and fewer achy body parts), kids still enjoy it.

Wish List

My youngest daughter is famous for declaring after every commercial, "I want that for my birthday"! Since she's so easily won over by product marketing and has the attention span of a child, her declarations are not reliable tells of what items might really be the most appreciated when her birthday finally rolls around. That's why I like to get her to tell me what she wants when she isn't watching television or just home from her friend's house (who, of course, has all the cool stuff she wants). And since kids are inherently selfish, if you tell them you'd like them to make a list of all the things they want, you only have to arm them with a pencil and a piece of paper (or two or three) and you just bought yourself half an hour.

How To Be A Great Sports Mom

Whether you're the mother of a soccer, football, baseball, volleyball, or lacrosse player (no disrespect to the dozens of other sports that children are apt to play), there's a certain art to being supportive, not overbearing, and a proud parent that isn't embarrassing to her child. You have to walk the fine line between sitting on the sideline ignorant of the game and consequently, mute and being too educated about the game, coaching your child as well as his or her teammates, not always in conjunction with the actual coach's guidance.

To help you navigate the exciting, albeit sometimes confusing, land of sports spectatorship, I'm going to share some Dos and Don'ts I've learned throughout the years (many of them through trial and error). It IS possible to be a great sports mom with a few **simple parenting tricks**.

Dress the Part

DO: Wear team colors.

DO NOT: Match anything other than your clothes to the team colors (e.g. no face paint, hair coloring, or body paint).

Be a Cheerleader

DO: Shout occasional encouragement (e.g. "Nice kick!" "Good pass!" or "Great hustle!").

DO NOT: Attempt to coach your child (unless you are the actual team coach), disparage any player or official, or single out your child for something ordinary making it sound like he or she just landed on the moon (e.g. "Woohoo Amanda! You were totally ready to stop the ball if it came your way!").

Support the WHOLE Team

DO: Learn the other players' names and use it when shouting encouragement (as suggested above).

DO NOT: Create your own nicknames for players or use nicknames that your child has used for teammates UNLESS other spectators, including the child's parents, are using the nickname.

Praise

DO: Tell your child after the game that you enjoyed watching him or her play and that you are proud of how much effort he or she put into the game (if that is true).

DO NOT: Criticize things your child did or didn't do during the game.

Stay Positive

DO: Be enthusiastic about the game.

DO NOT: Turn negative when things aren't going well on the field/court. Instead, try to stay positive and help keep the team's morale up.

Have Your Kid's Back

DO: Advocate for your child if you feel the coach isn't providing the right opportunities or training for your child.

DO NOT: Publicly criticize the coach in front of others. Save your disagreements and discussions for private conversations.

Be Social

DO: Talk to and get to know other parents so that the team parents can support the team as a group.

DO NOT: Strike up random conversations that are awkward and make it obvious that you are making conversation for the sake of conversation rather than from a genuine interest in getting to know them.

Do Your Part

DO: Chip in for your fair share of snack duty and volunteering.

DO NOT: Go overboard either by bringing a snack that is much healthier or much healthier than what the other parents bring or by volunteering for EVERYTHING and then criticizing others for not doing their share or acting like a martyr for taking on so much.

Get Comfortable

DO: Bring provisions to ensure you are comfortable at the game.

DO NOT: Set up the Taj Mahal which will only result in others gawking at you either in jealousy or disbelief.

Sports Mom Bag of Essentials

All four of my kids participate in sports. Between soccer, gymnastics, wrestling, and occasionally basketball, we have sporting events to attend all year round. These events can range from a one hour recreation league soccer game to a two-day wrestling tournament. As a result, I've developed a checklist of items that I consider essential for enjoying these events with less stress. I bring all of these things to my kids' sporting events in a duffel bag that I can easily sling over my shoulder. It fits a ton of stuff and is easy to pack and store. Here's what I put in it for our outdoor sports:

1. **Bleacher Cushions:** These are a MUST if you are going to be sitting for any length of time and are so lightweight there's no reason to go without them. For soccer season, I keep the camping chairs in my trunk all season since there are no bleachers at our soccer fields.
2. **Bug Repellent:** My younger kids are mosquito magnets. If I don't pack **bug spray**, they are covered in bites before half time.
3. **Sweat-Proof Sunscreen:** Since my entire family uses the same sunscreen, I buy the sweat proof so that it doesn't get washed away during the first few minutes of the game.
4. **Elastic Hair Bands:** The ponytail holder keeping my daughter's hair out of her face, inevitably always breaks just as the game is getting started. So, I keep several extras on our sunscreen bottle. The extra hair bands also come in handy for the days you decide to wear your hair down only to find yourself out on the windiest day of the year.
5. **Non-Comodogenic Sunscreen:** I have two teens who break out just thinking about blemishes so I buy a facial sunscreen that doesn't clog pores.
6. **Assortment of Bandages:** Major injuries during school sports are usually handled by the team medical personnel, but the minor injuries like a scratch or hangnail that gets ripped loose are easily remedied with my own supply.

7. **Anti-Itch Cream:** In case that DEET-free insect repellent fails us or, as is usually the case in my family, someone gets a mysterious rash from something in the grass.
8. **Antibiotic Cream:** Goodness knows what germs are lurking around when you have teams of sweaty children running around on a field that several people have walked their dogs on. If someone in my family gets a scratch out there, it's super easy to slather a little antibiotic ointment on it to fend off any hazardous germs.
9. **Collapsible Scissors:** These are so small and thus, easy to make room for, so I always have a pair with me. These get used for everything from snipping a stray thread from a uniform, to opening snacks whose "tear here" notch is missing.
10. **Notepad and Colored Pens:** It took me awhile to figure out that I needed these and now I can't imagine what I did without them! Primarily, this is how I keep my other kids, who I drag along as spectators, occupied (Tic-tac-toe, Hangman, wish list, pictures). Why colored pens? Somehow this makes it more fun for the kids. Go figure. Aside from keeping the kids busy, it also comes in handy when you decide to exchange numbers with another parent, or want to share a recipe or give/get directions.
11. **Bottled Water and Sports Drinks:** Hydration is super important, especially for summer sports. Make sure you have plenty of water with you. For halftime and/or post-game, sports drinks are a great way to restore electrolytes. There are a lot of sports drinks out there, but I like Body Armor because it's all natural. It's the only sports drink I've found that doesn't contain any artificial ingredients. Gluten free, caffeine free but full of electrolytes and vitamins and my kids love them!
12. **Gallon Plastic Zip Seal Bags:** I'm always worried the liquids and/or creams we bring are going to leak so I keep them in plastic bags within our sports bag. Also, since some of the fields we play at don't have garbage cans nearby, these plastic bags can be used to hold our garbage so we can dispose of it later. The zip seal storage bags have the added benefit of sealing securely so that your entire bag doesn't end up smelling like garbage. They are also great for sealing sweaty clothes until you get home.
13. **Disinfecting wipes:** If you've ever gotten a whiff of your child's gym bag, you know they aren't great about wiping down their equipment. That's why I always bring along some wipes so I can do a quick disinfect before they get zipped into the dark, damp bag where germs multiply faster than rabbits.

14. **Hand sanitizer wipes:** On-the-go snacks are almost always eaten with your hands so before my kids start stuffing their faces, we do a quick "wash" with a wet wipe. These are also great for cleaning sticky hands AFTER the half time snack.
15. **Assorted healthy snacks:** All that exercise requires a lot of fuel so I always stock our bag with a variety of snacks that are easy to eat on the go but also provide nutrients their bodies need. Typically I include some fresh fruit along with organic fruit snacks and/or squeezable fruit/veggie pouches, trail mix, and protein and/or granola bars.

BONUS: For summer sports, I also toss in a small spray bottle filled with water and a few drops of peppermint essential oil. A few spritzes of this make you feel instantly cooler.

More Parenting Resources

Check out my favorite Wonder Mom resources. These are my Wonder Mom "weapons" that help me do more in less time and with less effort.

[Get Resources](#)