



Positive Parenting: A Guide to the 9 Pillars

Sandra Kwesell, MSC, MFCT

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How Can I Stop the War with the Kids in My Life?

The best answer is the *Pillars for Success* program. The program is for everyone who provides care for children and youth regardless of their age. Each of the nine Pillars for Success will provide the rules and tools for positive change. They will help you achieve success in overcoming and reversing the arguments and defiance that are driving you crazy.

We all need to:

- Feel safe
- Know the limits of acceptable and successful behavior
- Feel that we are important and are getting attention from others in our lives
- Feel like we have some *control* in our lives and *power* over what happens to us

While age and family situations are important, no matter what relationships you now have with the children/youth in your life, this program will teach you a new way of understanding and successfully handling challenging behavior.

You'll soon stop feeling helpless and frustrated. The upset that comes from not being able to control defiance and disrespect will lessen and can even stop as interactions continue to improve. You'll understand why kids behave in certain ways and the days of, "You can't make me!" or "I won't do my homework!" or "I can't hear you/Leave me alone!" will soon end. What's even better is that you'll also learn how to help those kids make choices that work better for everyone.

The Pillars for Success program contains 9 Pillars (or main ideas) that will change your life forever! They're easy to understand, and they will result in positive behavior change. Read the summaries below and then celebrate the stories at the end. Your stories can have the same happy ending when you follow this program.



There is no hidden secret that explains why this program works well. Everything is explained clearly. You will understand how children think, which is different than how adults think. You'll learn what they need and how to help them have their needs met peacefully. As a result, those kids will be able to grow in the best way possible. You will soon be able to handle the challenges of parenting without losing sleep. Here's the recipe.

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARENTING

1 or more adults whose kids are driving them nuts

1 or more adults willing to:

1. Understand why behavior happens
2. Learn about their own role in the conflict
3. Learn how to empower children and still be in charge
4. Discover the importance of "family scripts" and how to avoid the ones that lead to arguments and conflict
5. Change their behavior to motivate the child to change his/her behavior
6. Take the extra step to learn more about the *Pillars for Success* training by buying the book *The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting* (available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com))

Some of you are probably wondering how the two words "positive" and "parenting" can go together because no matter how hard you try, parenting does not feel positive. If you have been parenting the best way possible and your kids are still driving you nuts then it's time to look for new solutions.

The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting is going to give you a whole new view of behavior and feelings and needs. Not just your child's needs, but your needs, too. You will replace thinking about "bad behavior" with viewing behavior as your child's best attempt to get his needs met. You'll also learn about your own needs and understand even more reasons for conflicts and how to avoid them.



Read the pages that follow for a review of what you will learn from the Pillars for Success program. As you read, remember that the Pillars are written so you can find success for both you and your child.



Knowledge Is Power

The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting
**is our most recent book that will teach you
how to celebrate positive power with your children**

You already know that punishing your child only causes him to misbehave more and extends the war. You have seen the different ways he tries to “get even” with you. Maybe some of you have even noticed how you sometimes try to “get even” with him. Taking things away and sending him to his room doesn’t fix anything and the war continues and often gets worse.

Answers to tough questions are never simple and will take some effort on your part. We will help you understand the feelings and the needs behind behavior. Soon you will be able to help both you and your child reverse the pattern of conflict and arguing.

Our most recent book, The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting will offer you new ways of understanding the actions and interactions between you and the kids who are driving you nuts.

Read the brief summary to follow and then visit our website,
www.pillarsforsuccess.com or go to Amazon.com
to buy your own copy of the book
The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting

Visit us at www.pillarsforsuccess.com to learn more about our parenting program and the 9 Pillars, read our [blog posts](#), and discover other learning opportunities that are unfolding.



Pillar 1.

Children Think Differently from Adults

You say, "Why do I care how kids think? How's that going to help me?"

Here's how: once you understand how kids think, you will know how to talk to them in a way that will reach them. It's like speaking a different language except you don't really have to learn a new language. You just have to know how and when to choose and use your words. The *Pillars for Success* program will help you learn how kids think differently from adults, and you will soon understand that often they're not ignoring you. It's just that what you say doesn't make sense to them. Best of all, you'll learn how to talk to them so that they DO understand. The results will seem almost magical, and the child/youth's cooperation will increase! Once you change your ways so that their needs are met, they will change their behaviors and you both will celebrate more satisfying relationships.



Pillar 2.

Emotional Age Affects Our Feelings and Behavior

A child's chronological age (how many birthdays he has celebrated) is not the biggest factor that helps you know how to handle his behavior. What matters most is his developmental level (how old the child acts and thinks). Developmental level affects how a child behaves, how he gets his needs met and how he understands and reacts to what's going on around him. And guess what? **Your** developmental level "in the moment" affects how you respond! Get ready for some eye-opening thoughts when we explore these ideas more.

Bottom line: how well you and your child handle frustrations and problems has everything to do with whether you live together in a stressful "war zone" or live in peace. There's much more to come, and the best part is that you'll learn what to say and do so that better days will be ahead!



Pillar 3.

Disruptive/Challenging Behavior Is a Way of Coping

Remember that behavior is actually the child/youth trying to satisfy a need and reduce his own stress. The behavior is the only way he/she knows how to take care of that need. The difficult behavior begins because it's the easiest way he knows to lessen the stress. In fact, challenging behavior allows kids a guaranteed way to get attention and reduce stress because their behavior is so powerful that it cannot be ignored.

What if you could identify the 3 main reasons that a child misbehaves? Yep, there are only 3 reasons. When you respond to the need(s) of the moment in ways we'll teach you, your reaction will result in less arguing and lots more cooperation. It's even better if you can see the earliest signs of a child's needs causing him discomfort and help him at that point. We'll show you that, too. The *Pillars for Success* program will give you all of those answers and will help you understand what to say and do... and why. We want you to understand the "why" so that you can do it again and again whenever it's necessary.

Our blog post, ["Is My Child's Behavior My Fault?"](#) is an easy read on understanding how to meet the needs of your child before and during a defiant moment.



Pillar 4.

How We See Things Influences Our Relationships

How you communicate affects what you communicate. In fact, how you experience events can be very different from how the child experiences the same events. How each of us understands what others say and do is important and affects how we respond. Do you set fair and clear rules and boundaries? Do you let your child know *exactly* what behavior you expect in advance? Do you realize that enforcing those boundaries lessens “testing” behaviors and boosts cooperation?

Every time you change your mind, a child will test and re-test until he/she finds the new boundaries. Remember that letting your child know that you really care about how he feels is one of the most powerful tools you can use when setting limits. We can even help you find the right words to say when you set those boundaries. Some words are used too often and make the child test you even more! Try using a word like “outcomes” instead of “consequences” or “punishment.” Try saying, “Please take 5 minutes in the quiet space,” instead of, “Go take a time out.” Calmness, soft voice, clear instructions about behavior, and your body language all increase the possibility of a positive outcome.

But this is just the beginning. Once you dig into the full book you’ll find so many ideas and answers that will be helpful.



Pillar 5.

Adult Responses Can Alter the Child's Behavior

This pillar is full of jewels like, "There can be no war if the parent doesn't show up at the 'battle line.'" This Pillar teaches you how to avoid power struggles! It teaches the genuine power you will have by offering choices and letting the child choose! This Pillar teaches how to NEVER get caught in a power struggle with your partner that can be set up by the child and might sound like, "But HE said I could do it!" or "But SHE isn't as mean as you." This Pillar helps you to remember that the problem is the child's BEHAVIOR and not the child.

For examples on how to avoid power struggles, read our blog post, ["Treat Your Child to a Choice Buffet."](#)



Pillar 6.

How We Communicate Changes Our Message

Did you know that how you feel inside tells the child more than the words you speak? In fact, our most powerful communication is non-verbal (feelings, thoughts, actions, facial expressions.) Do you realize that not talking is often better than talking? You'll learn when, how, and why to use silence as a behavior-changing tool. You'll also learn how to respond to the meaning behind what the child says or how he behaves. Then you'll understand why responding to the meaning is often much more effective than responding to the words that are being said or the behavior that you are seeing. Certainly, if physical safety or property destruction is an issue then the behavior must be dealt with directly, but there is a wide range of behavior that does not reach that level. More importantly, you may never get to that level if you deal with behavior and feelings at their earliest stages.

For more insights on communicating the message, discover the *Pillars for Success* blog post, ["I Don't Like My Kid... Oops, Did I Say That?"](#)



Pillar 7.

Win-Win Outcomes are Possible

This is a great Pillar where we review ideas like:

1. Boundaries = Freedom
2. Why it is important to show the child how he will benefit from cooperating
3. How much more successful you will be when you become an “environmental engineer” (for instance, if you can’t change the behavior then have the child change his/her location. For example, if he’s in the kitchen and won’t stop yelling, then tell him to go into his bedroom to scream)

It’s all about positive solutions and how to make them happen. In this Pillar, you’ll learn what that means and how to do it.

Many more solutions are discussed in our book, *The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting*, which is now available on www.pillarsforsuccess.com and on Amazon.com.



Pillar 8.

Success = Avoiding Arguments

This Pillar is full of new ideas to help you handle stubborn behavior. For example, if the child won't stop a behavior, then encourage him to repeat it until he refuses (meaning he's going to stop that same behavior because you told him to continue). Instead of just telling him "no," which can often result in the child arguing or refusing, try saying, "No, **but** I bet that later you will be able to _____" (you fill in the blank with something the child likes).

Here's another idea: when your kids are too noisy and won't listen, try whispering. Then give a small treat (like a piece of a gum, a piece of a cookie, or one piece of fruit loop cereal) to the first kid who is quiet (even if it is only because he/she needed to take a breath, the others will wonder why they did not get a treat and will no doubt settle down so that they can get a treat too. Then try whispering everything you say. Pretty soon everyone will be whispering!

How about using "the power of the pen?" When a youth is yelling about whatever is bothering him, let him know how important his thoughts are and ask him to wait a minute while you get a pencil and paper and write down exactly what he says. Then ask him to slow down so that you can write down everything he says! Watch how he calms down. You have showed him that what he thinks and how he feels is important enough to be written down. You haven't said whether you agree or disagree, but while he is calming down to talk, he is also regaining control. While you are writing down what he says, he feels like you are really listening.

Read our blog post ["5 Ways to Avoid Arguments with Your Children"](#) for more examples.



Pillar 9.

Honoring the Child Has Amazing Results

This last Pillar is all about celebrating successful behavior! Try thanking a child:

- For trying
- For finishing a task
- For doing part of a task
- For respectfully and calmly telling you how he felt
- For being brave enough to tell the truth (even after lying at first)
- For telling part of the truth

Try catching a youth doing the right thing, or half of the right thing, and praise him.

Try a technique called “marveling.” Here’s how that might sound when you talk to the kid:

“How did you figure that out?”

“How did you get so brave that you decided to tell the truth?”

“How did you figure out even to tell half the truth?”

Here’s another idea: next time you are doing something, try asking a child for his help.

Let’s look at how the *Pillars for Success* way of parenting might happen in your home:

Johnny is seven years old. He refuses to clean his room. He says that he is too busy. It is too hard. He doesn’t have time. He tells his mom to stop bugging him—it’s HIS room! The room is a mess. Walking through it feels like wandering through a junk yard. After attending the *Pillars for Success* training, his mother asks him if she can help.



She then gives him a choice. First, she asks him if he would like to clean up his clothes and shoes. Then she asks if he might like to start by putting away his books or his toys? She even offers to help and asks him what he would like her to do. He says he doesn't want help and isn't going to clean his room. His mom refuses to argue and tells him, "I hear you."

She then says, "After you go to school I'm cleaning the house so I'll just clean your room for you." Her son tells her to "go for it" because he thinks she's bluffing. Then she gets some bags and boxes and packs up the clutter. This includes his favorite toys, his MP3 player, and anything she decides to pack. She tapes the bags/boxes closed and puts them in her car trunk. When Johnny comes home, he is upset and asks, "What did you do with my stuff!?"

His mom lets him know with honest caring that she understands that he will miss his stuff. She says it is sad to have those items gone. She reminds him of their talk that morning and tells him that when he chose not to clean his room, she did exactly what she said she would do. When he asks for his things back, she tells him, "No." She lets him know that her back is sore from the extra cleaning in his room, and he'll have to wait a few days before she can get his toys.

She "put herself in Johnny's shoes" before saying, "This is really hard, and I know that you miss your things. But I'll bet next time, you'll figure out a way to clean your room when I ask. Then you can put everything away where *you* want it. Maybe you'll even beat me to it and just start keeping it more organized. I know you'll figure out an answer. Just remember that I don't mind cleaning it for you again if you don't want to."

But what about teenagers? It seems like they're in a group all their own, doesn't it? Here's what you want to remember: in many ways, defiant teenagers are very similar to stubborn toddlers. The difference is that teens live in a world with much bigger boundaries, scarier risks, and bigger ways to challenge your authority. However, in many ways the message is the same: "I'll do what I want and you can't stop me."



Both of you agree that they should have more independence. How does that work well for everyone? While the challenges seem tougher and the outcomes and risks are a whole lot scarier, the same parenting rules apply. Remember that in a lot of ways your teenager is fighting for freedom just like you remember he did as a toddler.

The next step is pretty clear. You tell him what you expect. You let him know what you will do if he does or does not cooperate. It will either be continued freedom or more restrictions. You reward his positive choices, and you make sure he also has outcomes for his negative choices. You inform him of the outcomes up front so he doesn't think you are unfair and sneaky if you have to "lower the boom." You let him know you appreciate his positive choices. You also let him know that you are sorry he has to deal with the outcomes for his not-so-positive choices.

Your teenager wants to be completely independent and make his own rules, doesn't he? Then remember that he can also be independently responsible for paying for things like his iPhone, his use of your car, and the gas needed for it to be driven. Let him work for those things (either by getting a job or by following a point sheet that you list with chores and tasks he can complete to earn money to pay for those extras). Your teenager may be thinking about what he wants in his life (like his iPhone). However, he still counts on you for many things that you can use as rewards for cooperation: the use of the car, payments for his personal iPhone, freedom to rent movies on TV, etc.

Let's look at one more scenario: I spoke to a teacher who attended the training because of his own parenting issues. However, he said he was always arguing with one kid in his class because the kid was constantly interrupting. The kid never raised his hand to be called upon. The teacher was worn out. Toward the end of the *Pillars for Success* training, the teacher happily told me that he NEVER has to remind the kid to raise his hand. He tells the child what he wants him to do in behavioral terms. "Johnny, when you have something to say, please raise your hand and wait until I call on you." He also learned that when Johnny feels "in charge," he will cooperate.



He told Johnny, “After you are done speaking, would you please call on the next person who has his hand up? When that person is done talking, let’s take a 5-minute break because we’re getting so much done.”

Do you see the difference? In the second story, what the teacher asked Johnny is very clear and short and gives Johnny the attention he is wanting. It also gives him clear boundaries yet puts him in control by asking him to call on the next person. Finally, all of this success is followed by a positive comment that includes a 5-minute break!

During the *Pillars for Success* course, you’ll work through your family’s real-life situations and learn peaceful, step-by-step solutions that work.

Pillars for Success does what it promises. It will help you direct children more successfully. It will help them learn how to get along in the real world where things are not given to them “on a silver platter.” It will even help others who work with children find the same effective answers (just like the teacher described above.) Most importantly, it will help both you and your child enjoy more rewarding relationships and achieve a sense of power and control at the same time!

Learn about the Pillar’s [“Point Sheet”](#) and how to use it to reduce arguments and constant reminders while increasing the child’s independence and cooperation.

One thing is clear: if you have children in your life and follow the *Pillars for Success* system, the days of struggling, arguing, and managing behavior will lessen. Those unhappy days can even come to an end. In fact, you will enjoy cooperation that you did not think was possible!

Don’t miss out on the opportunity to learn how to be an effective parent! [Contact](#) the *Pillars for Success* team to join the next set of positive parenting classes. Learning alongside other parents has an extremely positive result. Know you aren’t alone and learn how to empower your family!



Want to know more about the secret to parenting success?

Discover the book *The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting*, available for purchase at www.pillarsforsuccess.com or by going to Amazon.com.



TESTIMONIALS

For powerful video testimonials go to www.pillarsforsuccess.com

Note: The *Pillars for Success* program was formerly titled *SOS for Parents*. *Pillars for Success* is an updated version of the same program that teaches the same foundational rules and tools of the *SOS for Parents Program*.

"I was in your *Pillars for Success* class at Westside Community Center this Spring. Thank you so much for sharing yourself and all your wisdom regarding respectfully parenting our little loved ones. I feel so honored taking this course with you... you being you and in the middle of the action yourself... communicating so clearly your own compassion toward all of us parents and families. My daughter and I use the techniques and knowledge every day, and I really see a big difference. Even taking one point home from your course can change a family, in my opinion, and I have a whole battery of tools to use now that I didn't before."

Kimberly N.

"Our non-profit offered Sandi Kwesell's *Pillars for Success* program to our families because our staff took a mini-course with Sandi and was overwhelming enthusiastic about the concepts and strategies taught. The *Pillars for Success* course is a 6-week commitment of 2 hours each session. Sandi imparted a great amount of information regarding how children view their world. Avoiding power struggles by providing choices, choices, and more choices is a major tenet in the *Pillars for Success* course. Sandi helped parents understand that boundaries, positive talk, and changing the script you use can make a tremendous difference in parenting. Sandi's positive encouragement each week when parents shared their successes and problems was super – parents felt comfortable in sharing and very supported. By the close of the 6 weeks, parents demonstrated a greater confidence in using their new skills and expressed that they felt



less stress and more success in parenting their children. Make an investment in your relationship with your children through the *Pillars for Success* course – it will have a huge payoff!”

Jennie Marsh, M.A.
Director, DIAKONIA Preschool Operations

Many efforts try to meet the needs of families but do not have the outcomes; instead, the interventions are oftentimes not aligned to the motivation needs of the caregivers (or of the children). This includes the many grandparents now serving as caregivers today.

Imagine being upstream as a support to families in a culturally responsive, easily understood and dynamic training and support program that can be activated day one in the home. In my humble estimation, there is no longer a need to imagine because Sandra Kwesell and her program Pillars for Success is available now to the field of behavioral health and child welfare.

Jason DeaBueno, CRT Silver Key, President/CEO
FRM AspenPointe, VP Healthcare Services
FRM Mosaic, Executive Director



Sandra Kwesell is a force that has taken her professional expertise and woven her personal experiences and heart into each of the pillars in the *Pillars for Success* program. This program empowers parents by giving them the tools needed to transform the family system in its entirety. By providing insight on the importance of working alongside your child, each of the 9 Pillars of the training enhance the parent’s ability to communicate and understand their children in such a meaningful and supportive manner. The course provides an opportunity for families to learn, grow and heal together while promoting change without turmoil or distress. The Pillars for Success provides parents with easy-to-follow tools and promotes healthy dialogue to support families in building resilient, loving, and positive relationships. The results achieved by those who have attended this training are life changing and result in ongoing growth that contributes to positive change. This program is unique in that it empowers families to transform challenges into opportunities that allow them to celebrate new developmental milestones in their interactions and relationships.

Emily B.,
Licensed Clinical Social Worker



"Pillars for Success is a powerful workshop series that teaches parents about child behavior and helps them to understand what motivates children to behave as they do. It gives parents tools to combat misbehavior and provides techniques to avoid power struggles. This class is excellent for parents who need some tips for age-appropriate defiance or for those who have children with more severe behavior problems. The information and strategies can be used on children of any age, from toddlers to teens, and is appropriate for professionals who work with children. Sandi Kwesell has a wealth of experience, which she shares in a straightforward way with easy to apply techniques. I highly recommend this class for any parent or professional that wants to understand what drives children's behavior."

Bernie McCarron
Parenting Matters Specialist
Alliance for Kids

"Sandra did an excellent job of covering a great deal of information. I really like her perspective and insight that is based on wisdom, her extensive experience, and her work as a foster parent of children with complex behavioral challenges. She inspired me and gave me the courage and the tools to begin untangling the challenges presented by my own children. Her training is full of information and ideas, but it is presented in a way that is interesting and fun. And she has many examples she shares to help us understand."

Barbara V.

"I have never attended a class like *Pillars for Success*. Not only did I come away with so many different techniques that work successfully with my children, but I also learned the skills I may someday need to deal with future challenges. Sandra is positive, kind, a great teacher, and a funny lady who not only shares her lessons but also gifts her audience with compassion, caring, and a new way to understand behavior and the solutions that are possible. She helps us to not feel bad about the mistakes we may have made and also to remember that, as she says, 'Today is the first day of the rest of your life.'"

Kim L.



“Parenting is complicated for everyone, even under the best circumstances. For many, the pleasure of parenting is lost when conflict and challenging behaviors take over the parent child relationship and turn it into a daily struggle for power. *Pillars for Success* is a proven approach to clarifying roles and empowering children to be children and parents to be parents. The program has been transformational for families who have had the opportunity to participate and has now been adapted into a format accessible to all.

One of the most important elements of any successful program is to understand both the overarching rules of human behavior while honoring the individual needs of each person; parent and child. This program has been designed to achieve this and has been beneficial for parents facing a range of needs, from the simple desire to strengthen a parent-child relationship and reduce conflict to the overwhelming challenges of parenting children with complex needs and serious behavioral issues.

Sandra Kwesell is an educator, counselor and family advocate. She had been a foster parent for 30 years and she is active in shaping community approaches to support families and children. She has developed the Pillars For Success from a wealth of experience and compassion for families and has achieved the goal of helping parents and children thrive in their relationships.”

Terri Anderson
Program Specialist

Learn more about the *Pillars for Success* training by buying the book *The 9 Pillars of Successful Parenting* available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and directly from www.pillarsforsuccess.com