GABE SHIREY

PARENT PROMPT PLAYBOOK

Elementary Edition

SMALL MOVES FOR CHILDREN AGES 5 TO 10
THAT YOU CAN RUN TONIGHT

Gabe SHIREY

A NOTE FROM GABE

Why I made this

The first Parent Prompt Playbook gave you 100 questions. This one is shorter on purpose.

At this age, a good question is only half of it. Elementary-age children open up because Dad got down on the floor, squeezed their hand, or remembered the name of the kid who keeps cutting in line. What happens around the question matters as much as the question.

I learned that slowly. For years I'd come home to a loud kitchen and find a reason to be somewhere else. I didn't know what to do in that room, and a man who doesn't know what to do in a room tends to leave it.

Everything in here is something I run with my own kids. None of it takes more than 15 minutes. Most of it takes less than 10 seconds.

Pick one page. Run it tonight. Run it again tomorrow.

Small moves, made every day, are the ones your children will remember.

TO YOUR FAMILY'S LEGACY,

Gabe SHIREY

Get in their world

One rule: you cross into their world. You don't summon them into yours.

On the floor	If your daughter is playing with dolls or building with Legos, get on the floor with her. You'll be bad at it. That's fine.
In the driveway	If your son is shooting free throws, rebound. Don't coach and don't fix his shot. Talk about nothing, and after a while he'll talk about something.
On the screen	If your child is on the iPad, sit down next to them and ask what's happening. Then listen. The answer will be longer than you expect.
At the table	When they hold up a drawing or a Lego build for you to see, that's a serve. Return it with your eyes and a real response.

BEFORE YOU START

Phone in a drawer, not face down on the counter. A phone face down is a phone you're still managing, and your kid can tell the difference.

WHEN SOMETHING REAL COMES OUT

A friend problem, a bad grade, something they didn't have to tell you. Don't fix it, don't lecture, and don't let any alarm show. Say "Thanks for telling me," then ask 1 more question. How you take the first one decides whether there's a second.

Small signals

Children feel loved when they feel noticed. Each of these costs you nothing and takes less than a second.

Pick a secret signal	When I walk somewhere holding one of my kids' hands, I squeeze twice. It means I love you. Nobody else can see it, and all 3 of my children squeeze back without thinking. Pick your signal tonight and tell your kid what it means.
Never walk past them like furniture	A wink, a low five, a hand on the head, a "love ya" over your shoulder. Every time you pass through a room your child is in, send one.
Learn 1 new thing a week	Once a week, write 1 line per child in your notes app: something you didn't know last week. The friend who's suddenly annoying them. The song on repeat. The worry they mentioned once, sideways, at bedtime.

> *From a child's side, love is the experience of being tracked. Somebody is keeping the data. Make sure it's you.*

Say this, not that

A few phrases end the conversation you were trying to start. Here's what to say instead.

INSTEAD OF		TRY
~~"How was school?"~~	→	**"What was the most annoying thing anyone said to you today?"** Logistics get a one-word answer. A real question gets a real one. Tell them yours first.
~~"Calm down."~~	→	**"You're really frustrated."** Name the feeling before you deal with the behavior. "Calm down" has never once calmed a kid down.
~~"Why did you do that?"~~	→	**"Help me understand."** "Why did you do that?" is an accusation wearing a question mark. Say the 3 words, then stop talking.
~~"Great job."~~	→	**"You didn't give up on that math problem, even when it was hard."** Kids have heard "great job" 10,000 times. Specific praise is the praise they believe.

After school and car rides

Ask 1 question per car ride or after-school moment, not a string of them. Go first and answer it yourself, because children match the depth you show them. Then wait. The pause will feel long. Don't fill it.

1 What was the most annoying thing anyone said to you today?

2 Who did you sit with at lunch?

3 What was the loudest part of your day?

4 Did anything happen today that didn't feel fair?

5 What game did you play at recess, and who made up the rules?

6 If you were the teacher tomorrow, what would you change?

7 What's something you're good at that grown-ups don't know about?

8 If you could trade places with anyone in your class for a day, who would it be?

9 What's the hardest part about being your age?

10 What's one thing your teacher said today that you still remember?

Dinner and bedtime

Bedtime is the last conversation of the day. The lights are off, defenses are down, and the real content of the day finally comes out.

11 What made you laugh the hardest today?

12 What's a rule in our house you'd change, and why?

13 Who at school could use a friend right now?

14 If you could invent anything, what would it be?

15 What's something you were brave about this week?

16 Is anything bothering you that you haven't told me yet?

17 What's one thing from today you'd like to forget?

18 What's one thing from today you want to remember forever?

19 What do you wish I knew about you?

20 What should the 2 of us do together this weekend?

If you get "I don't know," treat it as a stall, not a refusal. It usually means "I don't know if it's safe to say yet." Ask again tomorrow.

KEEP THIS ONE

Your tonight list

SCREENSHOT THIS PAGE AND KEEP IT ON YOUR PHONE.

Tonight

- ☐ Phone in a drawer before you walk in
- ☐ Pick 1 question from this guide
- ☐ 15 minutes in their world, on their terms
- ☐ Tell them your secret signal
- ☐ Write down 1 new thing you learned

Get in their world

Floor: play their game, badly

Driveway: rebound, don't coach

Screen: ask what's happening, then listen

Table: a drawing held up is a serve. Return it.

Say this, not that

"How was school?" → "What was the most annoying thing anyone said to you today?"

"Calm down." → "You're really frustrated."

"Why did you do that?" → "Help me understand."

"Great job." → Name exactly what they did.

When something real comes out

Don't fix, lecture, or show alarm

Say "Thanks for telling me"

Ask 1 more question

"I don't know" means not yet. Ask tomorrow.

Want the system behind this? The Dad Dashboard, the 5-step routine I run with my kids every night, is in The Driven Dad Code.

Every tool in this guide comes from my book.

THE BOOK

THE DRIVEN DAD CODE

THE UNTAUGHT PLAYBOOK FOR HIGH-PERFORMING FATHERS TO BUILD REAL CONNECTION AT HOME

JOIN THE WAITLIST AT GABESHIREY.COM

THE LEGACY BLUEPRINT

Want to go deeper? Work with me 1:1 through *The Legacy Blueprint*, my private coaching for fathers. Sign up at GabeShirey.com

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THE DRIVEN DAD ON SUBSTACK

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