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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Preparing Children for Success in School and Life*.

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CORWIN

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL AND LIFE

Second Edition

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INTRODUCTION

What if the following advertisement appeared in your local paper?

WANTED: PARENT

Must have the skills of a doctor, lawyer, nurse, teacher, counselor, and referee

Must maintain a sense of humor even in the most stressful times

Must be able to operate a taxi service to and from all important events

No pay, lots of overtime

In fact, on call 24 hours a day

No sick days allowed

Lifetime commitment

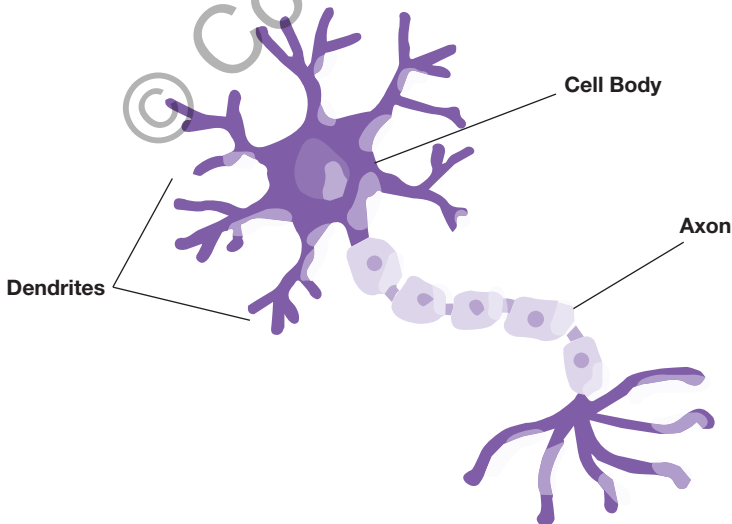
(Tate, 2007, p. 121)

If this ad recruiting people to become parents appeared in the paper, would anyone ever apply? Yet parents are asked

to fulfill these responsibilities and many more each and every day. More than 40 years of being a wife and mother to three children and nine grandchildren have taught me one thing: being a good parent is one of the hardest jobs one can undertake. With negative role models abounding, violence and negativity in the media increasing, and our face-to-face communication diminishing, the job of a parent appears to be getting more difficult each year. Yet it is one of the most important and rewarding jobs one can have, and it is absolutely crucial that it be done well!

PARENTS AS DENDRITE GROWERS

A baby is born with about 100 billion neurons, or memory cells. In fact, in utero, each fetus has more than 100 billion neurons, but some are pruned away, or discarded, prior to birth. At the end of every neuron are connections called dendrites. Every time the human brain learns something new, it grows a new dendrite. Messages are passed from one neuron to another as those messages travel from the cell body, down the axon, across the synapse, or space between the two neurons, and into the dendrite of the next neuron. (See the diagram below.)



SOURCE: iStock.com/katoten

Many parents have the attitude that it is the school's responsibility to be the primary educator of their children while they play a minor, although important, supporting role (Glasgow & Whitney, 2009). Actually, we know that the most rapid period of growth for cells in the human brain is 0 to 4 years of age. That would make a parent a child's first and best teacher. Parents, as well as teachers, are *dendrite growers*, since every time they enable their children to learn something new, they help them grow new dendrites and increase their brain power.

During my 48 years in education, I have seen numerous examples of children whose parents implemented the practices in this book and who, regardless of race, religion, or socioeconomic status, produced children who were equipped for success not only in school but in life. Yet many other parents simply don't know what to do, nor are they familiar with the practices essential for raising successful offspring. Am I a perfect parent? Not by any stretch of the imagination. But I have managed to raise three well-adjusted and respectful children who, I am proud to say, have become wonderful adults and great parents themselves.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This book is divided into two major parts. The first part deals with what parents should be doing from birth to prepare their children to lead successful lives. It is a compilation of what we are learning about brain research and selected practices from several different programs designed to make one an effective person as well as an effective parent. The second major part is arranged in grade-level bands, shares brain-compatible strategies for increasing the academic achievement of your children, and designates ways you can prepare your children to be successful in school and, ultimately, in whatever career path they choose.

The format of this book is similar to that of the eight best sellers I have written in the Worksheets Don't Grow Dendrites series. The first part of each chapter (*What Does That Mean?*) defines the recommended practice in a simple and

brain-friendly way and shares current research from the fields of psychology and education regarding the rationale for using the practice. The second part of each chapter (*How Can I Make It Happen?*) provides numerous examples of ways you and your child can apply the practice. The last page in each chapter is an *action plan*, which summarizes the practices delineated in the chapter and asks that you reflect on the ones you are already using and the additional ones you desire to implement. You are also provided with a box for taking notes and setting specific goals. Remember that it takes at least 21 days or 28 times to make a behavior a habit. So the action steps you identify should be practiced continuously. It is my hope that by the time you complete this book, you not only will know more about what to do and how to do it but will also have developed an action plan of specific steps for improving your individual parenting skills. Our children deserve no less!

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