



Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. ~1 Corinthians

Dear Parents,

Let's talk about love—a word that is thrown around easily and often. We say in the same breath, “I love those shoes!” Or, “I love my child more than anything in the world.” Both can be true, but obviously one is a simple and perhaps fleeting affection; the other is a sacrificial and lifelong commitment.

Love is not just a feeling; for love to matter and make a difference, it must translate into life-giving action, not remain a mere sentiment. And the goal of love is to *make a difference*. When we love another person, that love produces good things: security, confidence, joy, freedom.

We can all (hopefully) point to a handful of people in our lives who have made a difference by loving us well. And of course, as parents, we want to love our children well! We want our love to be a strong foundation upon which they build their identities and lives. But it sure is hard at times. And we fail often.

When I read the verses above, I see specific language that tells me what love looks like. I'm given a way to measure my actions and attitudes. Am I patient? Do I speak kindly to and about my children and others? Am I thankful, and content with what I have? Am I selfish? Do I lose my temper often? Can I forgive when someone wrongs me or when my children blow it? Do I keep loving, hoping, trusting, and persevering, even when things are really hard?

None of us can love perfectly! But all of us can love *better*.

Sometimes what I find helpful is to take stock in *how* I'm loving my children and my family. I focus on one behavior, one habit, and work on just that. It's much more manageable to work with *one thing*. When we take stock, it's not about feeling bad about ourselves or striving for perfection. It's really about wanting to keep growing, to keep loving better. And one action or attitude at a time can really make a difference.

Here's a simple list of things we can consider working on. I'm sure you can come up with a few of your own. The idea is to pick **one area**, think about it, evaluate it, and make a goal about how to work on it. And then commit!

1. When my child shares deep feelings with me, I commit to listening without judgment.
2. When I feel impatient with my tween/teen, I will remind myself of their age and stage and how overwhelmed they generally feel.

3. When my child breaks my trust or violates a rule, I will seek to repair and forgive and not keep bringing it up; I will start fresh.
4. When my child comes into a room I'm in, I will put my devices down and be present and open.
5. If my child is struggling, I will seek wisdom to support them; I will not lose hope that they can overcome this current struggle.
6. If I have a quick temper, I commit to work on channeling my anger elsewhere and not exploding at home.
7. I commit to not talking behind others' backs or gossiping in my home.
8. I commit to not comparing my children to others—siblings, cousins, friends.
9. I commit to a peaceful morning voice - no yelling or threats.
10. I commit to sharing time with my tween or teen, on their terms - watching their show, driving them to a friend's, cooking/baking together.

As always, feel free to [contact me](#) with any questions or concerns about your child. You can also refer to the [Mental Health Resources page](#) on our website for helpful resources.

Warmly and prayerfully,

Erin Torr, MFT