ADULTS SAVING KIDS
founded Alvin Erickson

Introduction

Six Skills Every Child Needs to Grow Wise and Protected

A foundation for the Practical Parenting Skills Series

My interest in these skills began through watching what happened to my sister Debra. She befriended a classmate who had been kicked out of her home and wanted to help her. One thing led to another, and this friend introduced Debra to people who drew her into increasingly dangerous situations. She was raped and deeply traumatized. The trauma left her increasingly vulnerable to further exploitation, and eventually she was trafficked.

Debra's story taught me something I would never forget: dangerous situations do not always begin with obvious warning signs. Sometimes they develop gradually through relationships, manipulation, and circumstances that a young person is not equipped to recognize or manage. What began with Debra's desire to help someone eventually exposed her to people who took advantage of her compassion and vulnerability.

When I became a parent, I knew that my children would eventually enter their teenage years and face difficult decisions, complicated relationships, and influences beyond my control. I did not want to wait until those challenges arrived to begin preparing them. **From the time they were very young, I was intentional about teaching the six skills presented in this course.** I wanted them to develop the wisdom, discernment, confidence, and judgment they would need to navigate life's challenges, especially when I was not there to guide them.

As children grow toward adolescence, they naturally become more independent. The foundation for that independence needs to be laid early, while communication, trust, and connection are being established.

— Paula Bergs

A Practical Parenting Framework for Real Life

Parenting today is harder than ever.

Children face pressures, exposure, and manipulation at ages previous generations never imagined. Many parents feel overwhelmed, unsure where to focus, or stretched thin by unrealistic advice that requires more time, energy, and expertise than real families have.

This framework was created for **busy parents who want to protect their children without raising them in fear**.

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These six skills are not theory but practical skills shaped by lived experience. Together, they form a **protective foundation** that helps children grow into wise, resilient adults.

Why This Framework Exists

Harm rarely happens all at once.

It happens gradually—through broken boundaries, silence, confusion, misplaced trust, and unfiltered exposure. Most families do not realize what is happening until damage has already been done.

These six skills are designed to intervene **early**, while the stakes are still low, and to equip children with internal tools they can carry into adulthood.

> *This is not about controlling children.*
> ***It is about preparing them.***

The Six Skills That Work Together

Each course builds on the others. None stands alone.

1
Communication

A home where hard things can be talked about is a safer home. Open communication keeps children from isolation and secrecy—the environments where harm grows. A conversation involves both talking and listening. A child's responses, questions, and observations help parents understand how they are interpreting the world around them.

2
Boundaries

Children need permission to protect their bodies, time, and space. Boundaries teach children that safety matters more than politeness or approval.

3
Discernment

Not all kindness is safe. Discernment teaches children to recognize hidden agendas and evaluate relationships, opportunities, and influence.

4
Intuition

Children must learn to trust their inner warning system. Intuition helps them pause, resist pressure, and leave unsafe situations—even when they can't explain why.

5
Consequences

Children must learn cause and effect while the cost is still small. Clear, calm consequences teach responsibility and prepare children for real-world accountability.

6
Media & Cultural Exposure

The digital world shapes children long before parents realize it. Guided exposure and ongoing conversation protect developing minds and identities.

Why These Skills Matter Together

When these six skills are taught together:

- children are less easily manipulated
- parents remain the primary influence
- problems surface earlier
- children are less isolated
- trust remains intact

These skills do not eliminate risk—but they dramatically reduce vulnerability.

What This Framework Is—and Is Not

This framework is	This framework is not
• practical	• fear-based
• realistic	• academic
• doable for busy parents	• time-consuming
• grounded in real-life experience	• dependent on perfection

> *You do not need to do everything at once.*
> ***You need to begin intentionally.***

A Word to Parents

You do not have to be an expert. You need to be present, attentive, and willing to lead. Children do not need flawless parents—they need parents who are engaged, observant, and willing to have hard conversations.

Every child has a need to belong. Children want to be known, valued, and connected. When those needs are met in healthy ways through family, faith, friendships, and community, children are less likely to seek belonging in unhealthy places.

WHERE TO BEGIN

These six skills give you a place to start.