

The Parenting Game



To earn Baby Bucks for Pamphlets:

- Read the pamphlet and write a reflection.
- Reflections **must be handwritten on school size paper (8 1/2" x 11")**.
- **Reflections must be in your own words** (not copied from the pamphlet).
You may summarize the information (tell what you found helpful or what you agreed with or disagreed with, etc.) and include your own personal experience.
- Each line must be filled to the right-hand side of the page.
- Do not skip lines or leave large spaces between words.

Reflections that do not meet these requirements or are less than the required length are not eligible for this program. Baby Bucks will not be given for them.

To earn 1 Baby Buck:
Handwrite a report that fills one side of a notebook page.



My Baby Is Better Than Your Baby

A competitive parent's struggle to stop the comparison game

by Audra Charlebois

Ever since my daughter was born, I've referred to her as my "dream baby." From day one, she ate when she was supposed to eat, burped when she was supposed to burp and slept when she was supposed to sleep. By 6 weeks old, she was already sleeping through the night. I was so proud.

One day I met another child, five months older than mine, who was still waking several times each night. "I'm glad I don't have that baby," I said. "His parents must be delirious from lack of sleep."

Shortly afterward, however, I spent time with another family whose baby was already crawling. He was nearly two months younger than my daughter. *I wonder why my baby isn't crawling yet, I thought. Is she slow in developing? Is something wrong?*

Pride vs. proving

It's normal for parents to be proud of their child's smallest accomplishments. Even during pregnancy, I beamed with pride when the doctor said my child was healthy and strong. But as a first-time parent, I also felt unsure of myself and began to look at other families to see if I was doing things correctly.

Before long I noticed my daughter was healthier than other children. She was pleasant-natured and fussed much less than others. I also found that although she slept well, she didn't sleep as long as her cousin. And I was slightly disappointed that she didn't crawl as early as my friend's baby.

Soon, my observations evolved into a passive-aggressive competition. I began constantly comparing my daughter — her clothing, diet, how much she drooled — to the kids around us. Nothing escaped my attention. The very accomplishments on which I prided myself began to eat away at my thoughts, morphing into endless comparisons. I no longer simply adored my child; I had to prove why she was adorable.

The harm in comparing

I'm not the first parent to experience this impulse. Even Isaac and Rebekah compared their twin boys, Jacob and Esau. Each preferred one over the other — a competition that led to deceit and bitter strife. Similarly,

when Jacob had children, his preference for Joseph made his other sons jealous, spawning hatred, lies and plans for murder.

Comparison pits child against child, parent against child, and parent against parent. If my child sees me comparing her to others, she'll probably learn to do it herself. I dread the thought of my daughter treating others with contempt because she thinks she's better than they are. I've seen teens grow up to live double lives, desperately avoiding the scrutiny of a parent to whom they could never measure up. I've witnessed the destruction that petty competition can inflict on friendships, families and marriages.

Incomparable God

At times I feel I am fighting a hopeless battle. Even though I cry out for God to rid my heart of this ugly habit, I still catch myself making comparisons. But God has helped me understand something that gives me hope: I am not perfect, nor can my children ever be perfect, but Jesus is. Ironically, this comparison between Christ's perfection and my inadequacy doesn't make me feel miserable. Instead, the more time I spend looking at Him, the more I become like Him. I feel secure knowing that He loves me in spite of my faults and never criticizes me when I fall short.

My hope is that as I grow more into His image, I can relay that security to my daughter. I want her value to come from Him, not from tallying her accomplishments next to someone else's. I want her to rejoice in who she is, not stress over who she isn't.

Old habits die hard, and I may struggle with the urge to compare for the rest of my life. I just need to remember that my job as a parent goes beyond shuttling my daughter through a set of developmental milestones. Parenting success does not come by comparing my child's achievements, but by introducing her to an incomparable God.

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