

# #POWER KIDS

TWEET

**Raising Independent,  
Conscientious, Well-Adjusted,  
Responsible Young Adults**

**RUDY MUI and SHIRLEY WOO**

FOREWORD BY HARRY V. MCKAY, JR.

An Actionable Parenting Journal

A THiNKaha® BOOK

Book 01

#POWER KIDS  
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Raising Independent, Conscientious, Well-Adjusted,  
Responsible Young Adults

**By Rudy Mui and Shirley Woo**

**Foreword by Harry V. McKay, Jr.**



**An Actionable Parenting Journal**

E-mail: [info@thinkaha.com](mailto:info@thinkaha.com)  
20660 Stevens Creek Blvd., Suite 210  
Cupertino, CA 95014

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Raising Independent, Conscientious, Well-Adjusted, Responsible Young Adults



## Foreword by Harry V. McKay, Jr.

I'm a proud parent of a wonderful 30-year-old daughter and I've been a private school headmaster for over 30 years. One reality about parenting is abundantly clear to me: it's one of the most complicated and challenging jobs that adults will ever take on, and it's the one role we're least prepared for in any formal way. It's not that there's any scarcity of resources. Indeed, there's a plethora of print and online books and articles on the subject; a quick look on the websites of almost any elementary or middle school will most likely reveal an upcoming seminar on some aspect of parenting, usually featuring either a local psychologist or family therapist, or a national expert whose latest book on "parenting in the digital age" is currently making the rounds.

I've led five prestigious independent schools over the past years and the goal of raising the best children possible is always at the top of every parent's priority list. We all want children who are responsible, caring, character- and values-driven, resilient, confident, lifelong learners, successful, happy, motivated, etc., and we're always watching other people's children and hoping that they don't quite measure up to our own on some level. It's the only way we can feel reassured that we're doing the right thing along the way because we know there's no magic formula for success.

Unfortunately, we really aren't able to know if we're making all of the right decisions at any given moment in time because that isn't how it works. We won't know the results of our parenting efforts until our kids are at least in their twenties and we see and experience the people we have raised. All we can do along the way is try our very best to make decisions that we hope will pay off in the long run.

So, just like our own parents, we continue to learn about parenting by observing, reading, listening, and modeling some of the behaviors that we've experienced from our own parents and grandparents that seem to "fit the bill" in a given situation. Yes, somewhere along the line we do realize that our elders tried their best too, and they most likely made some pretty good decisions that have informed our current knowledge and repertoire of parenting skills.



## Foreword by Harry V. McKay, Jr.

Ultimately, when we're pleased with how our own children have turned out, many of us are motivated to pass on what we've learned and done, which is the case for Rudy Mui and Shirley Woo. They could not be more pleased with their own three children, Kyle, Amanda, and Ryan, and since I've personally known all three of them for many years I can authentically attest that they are the kind of young adults who give me great confidence that our future is in very good hands! They truly fulfill Rudy and Shirley's original goal, which was to raise independent, conscientious, well-adjusted, responsible young adults.

*#POWER KIDS tweet* is a thoughtful and practical parenting guide for busy parents who embrace our digital world and savor information that comes in a Twitter format that suits 21st-century learning. It's a quick and fun read and it can easily be digitally stored for quick reference at a moment's notice. Their advice is rock-solid and filled with wise "ahas" like:

*#6: Provide a stimulating environment but let your kids choose what they play with.*

*#32: Model the money behavior you want your kids to emulate. They will do as you do and not as you say.*

*#44: Encourage the effort, not the result.*

*#46: Encourage your kids to play a team sport.*

*#122: Failure is a necessary path to success.*

This book is a creative compilation of poignant "bites" that will serve you very well on your own parenting journey!

## Harry McKay

Headmaster

St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Saratoga, California



Section I: So You Want to Have Kids



## Section I

### So You Want to Have Kids

Few new parents can anticipate the significant life change that occurs with the birth of their first child. We certainly didn't. There is also no life experience up until that point to prepare you for it, nor can anyone with kids adequately explain the all-consuming and continuous nature of the responsibility. Yet, once you are in it, relax and enjoy the experience of parenthood. It will unfortunately be over before you know it and, if you are successful, your baby will be a happy, independent, and self-sufficient adult.

To begin with, prepare a stimulating environment, be guided by what your baby is interested in doing and look forward to one of the most exhilarating and rewarding experiences of a lifetime. More a marathon than a sprint, settle into a routine and just be cognizant that beyond keeping your children safe, your job is to give them the technical and interpersonal life skills they need to be successful in the world.

Before our eldest son Kyle was born, we were very spontaneous. If we wanted to go to a show or dinner, we went. If we wanted to take a trip, we went. There was no need to fuss with strollers, diaper bags, formula, bottles, wipes, and the assorted equipment necessary to provide life support to an infant in the 21st century. Kyle taught us to be cognizant of his sleeping and feeding schedules, as we didn't want to be out too late or driving when he needed to be fed. The restrictions on your schedule and mobility is why having a child changes your life. Soon, it was just easier to spend time at home and order carry-out.

Perhaps the most important lesson for your child at this age is to limit how often you distract him or her. As Kyle was the first grandchild, and first baby in over two decades in our family, there was a natural tendency for everyone to want to distract him. He could be playing with one toy and someone would entice him with another or just call to get his attention. It would happen dozens of times a day. Fight that! I'm sure that Kyle would have even better concentration skills and sleep habits had we just left him alone and let him discover the world on his own.

# 1

Be careful what you wish for, because it's never what you think. Having a child is a lifelong commitment, even after he/she has left home.

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# 2

The first child is a life-changing event, whether it's an accident, a deliberate plan, or a medically supported miracle.

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# 3

Your first child changes your interaction  
with everything you did before. You no  
longer have control of your time, schedule,  
or friends.

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# 4

A new child becomes the most important  
person in your life. You'll babble about the  
most trivial things (to the chagrin of your  
friends).

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## Section II: Teaching Your Toddler to Make Decisions



## Section II

### Teaching Your Toddler to Make Decisions

Decision-making is a fundamental life skill. Allowing your toddler to make decisions about what pajamas to wear, the color of their toothbrush, the foods they eat, the clothes they wear—i.e., decisions for which you are indifferent to their choice—will encourage their self-esteem, foster their sense of independence, and minimize unnecessary tests of will. The only caveats are to offer choices you are comfortable with giving and not allowing the kids to change their minds (at least for the day) once they have made their decision. We discovered in hindsight that more than anything, this practice helped make our kids the independent, self-confident adults they are today because it gave them not only a sense of early control over their environment, but also responsibility for the decisions they made.

Offering our kids choices was a big part of our daily interaction with them. We purchased assorted breads, meats, and lunch items and offered them the choice of what to pack for lunch, or not. As most parents packed too much lunch for their kids, invariably, our boys decided it was often easier to get their friends' castoffs than to spend the time packing their own lunch. Usually this meant the sandwich and the fruit, since most kids preferred the chips, soda, and cookie and threw away the sandwich and fruit anyway.

We offered our children a choice to have a big party for their birthday with their friends or a hundred dollars to spend however they wanted. We even offered them the choice of which middle school and high school they wanted to attend. With constant practice, our kids learned to be expert decision-makers at an early age.



# 14

Decision-making is a life skill. Nothing is more empowering than having control over your own life. Kids are no different. Start early.

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# 15

Encourage your kids to make decisions as soon as they can interact with you, *before* they can talk. Respect their choice or don't offer it.

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# 16

Delegating some control means fewer tantrums. But, with freedom comes responsibility and they must own their decisions for at least the day.

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# 17

Let your kids choose within your acceptable limits, such as whether they wear red or green pajamas or use the blue or yellow toothbrush.

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Section IV: Teaching Advocacy



## Section IV

### Teaching Advocacy

As your kids get older, it is important to ground them in values and principles over which you would like them to lead their lives. Learning to fight for the things your kids believe in is key in them adopting these principles as their own. Two examples come to mind.

When Kyle was eight, we were at the play set at the local McDonald's when an older boy grabbed the front of Kyle's shirt up and detained him at the top of the play structure. Kyle had been taking martial arts for two years at this point and we were helplessly watching from below to see what he would do. He did nothing. He didn't knock the kid's hands off, nor did he cry. He just relaxed and looked at him. When he came down, we asked him why he didn't do one of the many things he knew how to do. He simply said, "I could tell he wasn't going to hurt me and I knew he would let go. If I fought him, one of us would get hurt." What maturity for an eight-year-old when confronted by a bully. Kyle was comfortable defending himself and knew that if he didn't elicit the response the bigger kid expected, he would earn his respect and the whole incident would end peacefully.

Ever since middle school and a trip to Europe with People to People Ambassador Programs (a student organization set up by the late Dwight Eisenhower, which we highly recommend), our daughter, Amanda, had the travel bug. Upon returning, we encouraged her to research different student travel programs, write us a proposal about what she wanted to do, how much it would cost, apply, and interview; we would interview if we needed to and work with her to figure out how to pay for the trip. In March of eighth grade, Amanda was informed that she was selected to join a one-hundred-student research vessel to Antarctica that December. So, the first semester of high school, she let her teachers know that she had to take semester exams early because she was going to study penguins in Antarctica for three weeks in December and early January. In November, the academic dean objected, saying that it created extra work for teachers (to prepare a second exam, as a safeguard against cheating) and he couldn't allow the

## Section IV: Teaching Advocacy

precedent of students taking exams early because parents would be encouraged to take their kids out early for Christmas vacation. After the initial impasse, the dean relented, allowed Amanda to take exams early, and she had a wonderful trip with other student travelers that she is still friends with today. More than anything, Amanda realized that with persistence and logic, she could overcome the immovable, and that is only possible by fighting for what you believe in. “No” didn’t mean “no,” just “not now.”

# 35

Use stories to teach your kids the values  
you live by and how you expect them to  
live their lives.

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# 36

Keep your kids a little hungry. Give them  
what they need, not all of what they want,  
but offer positive alternatives to earn it.

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# 37

Always answer your kids' questions, especially "Why"/"How come." One of the biggest tragedies is adults who lose their curiosity.

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# 38

Encourage your kids to write you a proposal explaining why they want to participate in a special activity. They will appreciate it more.

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# 39

Don't let them take "no" from an adult, including you, without a well-reasoned explanation. "No" often just means "Not now."

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Section VIII: Delegating Responsibility



## Section VIII

### Delegating Responsibility

As the goal is to give your children the life skills necessary to take care of themselves when they leave the house, it's also necessary to start delegating responsibilities to them. Remember, as toddlers, we already had them picking their pajamas and, as kindergarteners, deciding how to spend their allowance.

Many parents fuss over their kids' homework assignments, making their lunch, doing their laundry, and generally getting them to where they need to be on time. We rarely did, except to drive them around before they could take their scooter, their bike, or drive themselves.

We never worried about their homework, unless they asked for help. They were responsible for their own lunch (if they chose to make it), and responsible first for sorting their laundry into the community hamper, then eventually doing their own laundry. If they didn't take care of it, they would suffer the natural consequences of poor grades, begging for food, or wearing smelly clothes. Natural consequences are far worse than any arbitrary penalties we could impose.

One summer before Kyle could drive, we dropped him off with his bike for summer school. He would ride the 10 miles home for lunch, then back to school for football practice, then back home after practice. Needless to say, he was in great shape for football season, riding 30 miles a day with his books, then his football gear. Ryan did the same. If they didn't ride their bikes, they couldn't be on the team, as there was no one to drive them.

In fact, Ryan was worried that we would stop taking him to school for two weeks because his driving test was scheduled two weeks after he turned 16. We had set the expectation that he would need to find his own way to school after turning 16, but relented as it was the first appointment he could get.

With alcohol, too, we let them dip their fingers to taste wine and beer when they were young and a little more when they got older with holiday dinner. Alcohol doesn't need to be a big deal when they go to college if you introduce it to them early and demonstrate responsibility.

## Section VIII: Delegating Responsibility

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With alcohol, too, we let them dip their fingers to taste wine and beer when they were young and a little more when they got older with holiday dinner. Alcohol doesn't need to be a big deal when they go to college if you introduce it to them early and demonstrate responsibility.

Remember that eventually, your kids need to be responsible for themselves. So, the sooner you can begin delegating this responsibility to them, the better.

# 73

As early as possible, make your kids responsible for their tasks & personal schedules. There is no better teacher than natural consequences.

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# 74

Kids learn to do what is expected of them. Be clear. Be consistent. Start small and go from there. Reward good behavior with praise.

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# 75

Get your kids to rinse their plate, fork, and cup and put them into the dishwasher.  
Get them to put their dirty clothes in the hamper.

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# 76

Start your kids separating their clothes, then doing their own laundry. Few things are more motivating than pink white socks and tee shirts.

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77

Start your kids boiling water, making  
toast, cooking eggs, microwaving  
vegetables & baking pizzas. Learning to  
cook starts with the basics.

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Section XIV: What Happens If You Are Successful?



## Section XIV

### What Happens If You Are Successful?

If you have gotten to this point, congratulations! You are a proud parent of a Power Kid. Time and freedom are now yours. Make good use of them, as the best way to keep your kids engaged with you is to be interesting and exciting yourself.

So, do the things you wished you could have done in your 20s and early 30s. It's your time now. Congratulations on raising a Power Kid!



# 130

Be proud! Your kids are a reflection of YOU. They will always thank you for one of the BIGGEST gifts you could have offered them.

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# 131

Once you create Power Kids, don't expect them to be home. They will be out doing something interesting and exciting.

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# 132

Your kids still need you, but plan to visit them where they are, not the other way around. You might even enjoy the adventure.

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# 133

Continue to encourage your kids. Continue to listen. They still want you to be a sounding board for their ideas and dreams.

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# About the Authors



**The Mui Family (L-R): Kyle, Rudy, Amanda, Shirley, Ryan**



Rudy Mui is a serial entrepreneur, currently working in his sixth early-stage company.

He has made over forty conference presentations/publications and is a board member and the newsletter editor for the U.S. Naval Academy's Northern California Parents' Association, board member for West Bay Opera, member of the University of Michigan Entrepreneurial Mentor Network, senior member of the IEEE, and former chairman of the Silicon Valley Chapter of the IEEE Engineering Management Society.

Rudy received his BS in computer engineering and BA in economics from the University of Michigan. He also received an MBA and MS in electrical engineering from Santa Clara University.



Shirley Woo is a software engineer and working mother of three children. She has worked for many well-known companies in Silicon Valley, including ROLM, IBM, Centigram, Sun Microsystems, Yahoo!, and Barnes & Noble Nook Media.

She has a BS in computer engineering from the University of Michigan and an MBA from Santa Clara University. Shirley is married to Rudy and currently lives in Los Gatos, California.

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# #POWER KIDS TWEET BOOK 01

Technical & Interpersonal Life Skills  
for a Modern, Competitive World

"It's always been said kids don't come with handbooks. Well, now they do! This is a wonderfully insightful guide to raising well-rounded, independent, and unique children. Easy to read, concise, and leaves little room for error! I would highly recommend this read to every family at any stage of parenting."  
Dr. Megan Yee, MD, Family Medicine Physician, Spectrum Health, Grand Rapids, MI

"As both a parent and a mental health professional, I really liked this book. It is easy to read and full of great advice. And a lot of the great advice applies not just to being a better parent, but it also applies to living our own lives as adults in a more fulfilling way."  
Dr. Patrick Fitzsimmons, MD, Psychiatrist, Los Gatos, CA

"Wow, another book on parenting. What's special about this one? Everything!"  
Carol Spears, Christian Children's Ministry Teacher, San Diego, CA



*Rudy Mui* is a serial entrepreneur, currently working in his sixth early-stage company. He is a board member and the newsletter editor for the U.S. Naval Academy's Northern California Parents' Association, member of the University of Michigan Entrepreneurial Mentor Network, and former chairman of the Silicon Valley Chapter of the IEEE Engineering Management Society.



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