

INTRODUCTION  
For PARENTS

## Teaching the Joy of Confidence

Confidence is the belief that someone can rely on someone or something. This unit covers four principles that influence one's confidence in themselves and in others: obedience, making good decisions, trust, and trying.

This unit is the combination of two previously separate units, The Joy of Obedience and Decision Making and the Joy of Trust and Confidence. When you think about how and why these units were combined, we hope that you will also grasp the importance of this unit and the principles that will be taught.

### Concept

With this unit, we move into the "set" of joys referred to in Teaching Your Children Joy as "**emotional joys**."

Several times, in Joy School meetings and in podcasts, we have discussed the fact that love alone is not enough, that no matter how much we love our children, we have no guarantees unless our love is intelligently applied. When we love blindly, without any objectives or intelligent applications, our love can spoil our children or manipulate them. Love is the most important element of parenting, but it must be applied intelligently through well thought out objectives.

Our feeling is that the two objectives of parental love should be: 1. To build within a child a **firm confidence** in himself/herself as a unique and worthwhile individual, and 2. To give him/her the **security** of being an **integral part of a strong, unified family** institution.

These two qualities are two of the "**emotional joys**" of Teaching Your Children Joy.

### Obedience

First of all, the lesson plans approach the principle of obedience. I think most parents of preschoolers would agree that a completely obedient child would make their life much easier! But remembering that we are raising future adults, not raising just raising children, contemplate what it would do for a person to *understand* the true *joy* that comes from being obedient to laws and rules. For many children, and maybe even more teenagers and adults, obedience is linked in their mind with limitations and restrictions. However, laws and rules govern us to be safe and to help others be safe, they lead us to be more helpful and to treat others kindly, and ultimately, they increase our freedom by helping us avoid dangerous

actions and faulty situations that would limit our choices. As children find immediate joy in obedience, they also eventually joy in the results of their obedience, which is freedom from bad consequences and the confidence to continue on a path where the potential pitfalls are clearly marked.

There is true joy in simple, voluntary obedience. There is tremendous joy and satisfaction in learning that things are governed by laws. Psychologists tell us that small children usually believe that their desires control circumstances and cause things to happen. The time when a three- or four-year-old realizes that this is not the case, that things happen independently of his wants, can be a very traumatic time. Or, if he is being taught about laws in a positive, constructive way, it can be a time of real awakening joy.

### **Good Decisions**

Similarly, there is a deep reaching joy in the process of making good decisions. As children learn the difference between rules and decisions, they will more fully take ownership of their decisions and learn to weigh consequences. As children make more and more good decisions, and experience positive outcomes from those decisions, they will build their self confidence.

### **Trust and Trying**

With the confidence built from understanding the outcomes of obedience and decisions, children can then experience the joys of trust and trying. These are joys to preserve. Children are born with a basic trust level. They don't lose it until someone takes it. Little children develop fears and inhibitions. They are not born with them. The only natural fear of an infant is the fear of falling. Fears that affect their desire to try new things, meet new people, etc. come later. This unit is designed to prevent those fears from coming.

Our objective here, as parents, is not so much a question of what we give children but one of what we keep them from getting, namely fears. Properly taught it can do more than improve the basic confidence and trust of your children, it can help yours, too!

Keep in mind, as you teach, that fear is the enemy. Fear takes away freedom and joy. Most fear is unnecessary and is a product of ignorance. In the Bible it says, "Perfect love casteth out fear." The love and encouragement children feel from you can keep inhibitions from developing and preserve in children a basic trust and confidence to try.

And so, we are dealing with two basic objectives in the second half of the unit. One is to **help children feel the thrill of trying**, and to dissolve any tendencies that may be developing in the areas of fear. The other objective is to begin the very constructive process of **building self esteem**.

Some types of fear, of course, are necessary and helpful. But the fear to try, the fear of other's disapproval, the fear of looking foolish, these fears of inhibition should never be allowed to get a toehold on our children. This unit attempts to dissolve and push away that type of fear and to open children to the joy of trying and to the inner peace of basic confidence and self-esteem.

One thing we have always admired about Rose Kennedy (the matriarch of the Massachusetts Kennedy family) is the confidence she instilled in her family (whatever agreements or disagreements you have with their politics, most would agree they have confidence). Her basic approach was to **let them try things**, to **encourage and praise physical and mental experiments** by little children. Her belief was that an occasional broken arm is better than a broken or shackled spirit. Threads of that philosophy occur in this unit. As we encourage children to try and praise the try more than the result, we will preserve in them the great and natural joy that is the subject of this unit.

## Tips and Reminders

1. Be sure you have read the Joy School Introductory Manual.
2. Read the corresponding chapters in *Teaching Your Children Joy* by Richard and Linda Eyre, so you will better understand the joy you are trying to teach. (Free copies can be found at [eyresfreebooks.com](http://eyresfreebooks.com)). The chapters you will want to read in preparation for this unit are **chapters 6 and 8**.
3. At home, help children really notice the differences between laws/rules and decisions (situations where there is no law/rule, such as which color of socks to wear). Praise them for their obedience and for their good decisions, and help them repent for disobedience.
4. Your child may want to start helping more around the house with different tasks. Encourage this. Even though things may take a lot longer with a child helping, this is when their habits of trying things that are hard begin. Help them to feel confident by giving them lots of praise for helping and **trying**.
5. Never force a child to try something (unless it is absolutely imperative in that moment to their safety and well being) even though you know it is good for them. Encouragement is usually all a child needs. They will learn to trust your reassurance as they question whether to try something new or not.
6. Remember to read the "Notes to Parents" to the children each day before they go

home. Then staple or paper clip them on their art/craft project.

7. You may choose, as a group, to use the supplementary Valentine's Day Activities if you are using this unit in February.

## Lesson Overviews

### The Joy of Obedience and Decisions

#### Lesson 6.1 Rules Keep Us Safe

The first lesson is on laws. There are many kinds of laws (country laws, school laws, family laws, moral laws). Laws are good and can make us happy if we keep them. The **objective** is to help children feel the joy of keeping laws and of repenting if they have broken a law.

#### Lesson 6.2 Decisions

This lesson helps distinguish that when there are no laws, **we can choose**. This lesson helps children see that there isn't a law for everything: that most things in life are **choices**. This lesson also helps them to tell the difference between the two types of situations. The **objective** is to help children feel the joy of understanding the difference between a law and a choice. We also reinforce the keeping of laws and introduce the idea and notion of decisions.

#### Lesson 6.3 Choices and Feelings

The third lesson is designed to help children understand decisions or choices, and to let them experience the making of simple decisions. The **objective** is to help them feel the joy of independently making a right or a good decision.

#### Lesson 6.4 Decisions and Confidence

The fourth lesson is practice in deciding if a situation has a law that we can obey or if it is a situation requiring a decision. The **objective** is to help children feel the joy of being confident in their knowledge of which is which and to reinforce their understanding that there is joy in laws kept and in good decisions made, and to also help them see that repenting can "correct" a broken law and that changing is possible from a bad decision to a good one.

### The Joy of Trust and Trying

#### Lesson 6.5 It's Fun to Try

Children will learn that some things are hard but they can do them if they keep "**trying**". These lessons will be learned and put to the test by some great stories and trying to make

sandwiches, trying new foods and also trying a new game.

### **Lesson 6.6 It's Good to Trust**

A basic level of trust will be introduced by discussions and songs on "Trusting Nature", and the children will be able to try peeling carrots and apples for their snack.

### **Lesson 6.7 Trying Gives Me Confidence**

The children will learn there are some things they can try by themselves that they used to not be able to. Gaining a little more independence will give them confidence. They will also learn a great song to help them remember to try when something is hard and they will try and do some fun things (tumbling and making kites) to experience the Joy of Trying.

### **Lesson 6.8 I Have Confidence**

This lesson is a review of the concept of trying our best and trying new things. They will learn a new song, "If I Try My Best", and have a go at painting impressionistic still life.

## **By the End of This Unit...**

By the end of this unit, the children should be more interested in the positive consequences of obedience and good decision making, and should be experiencing the joy of the confidence that this will bring in their life. Children should be able to feel more independent and more capable to try things they didn't originally think possible.

They will also be able to learn that those around them who love and care for them want to help teach them new things so they can learn and grow. If a parent is encouraging them to try something new they will have a level of trust that the parent would only get them to try something that was okay.

Children will be able to feel that it's okay if they're not the best at something, but that they will feel joy in their actions if they try their best.

And ultimately, you, the parents, will be armed with parenting tools to help you to continue the foundations introduced in this until and works towards consistently helping your children build confidence through these joys.

## Book List

Books with a specific lesson number are the recommended book for that lesson. Other books have their theme indicated in the synopsis column and could be used for any of the lessons that approach that theme.

	Title	Author(s)	Synopsis or Theme
6.1	<i>Franklin is Lost</i>	Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark	Franklin the turtle has a scary experience after breaking an important rule.
6.4	<i>Edie Changes Her Mind</i>	J. Johnston	Edie thinks it would be fun to have no bedtime... but after she tries it, she changes her mind.
6.5	<i>The Little Engine That Could</i>	Loren Long and Watty Piper	The classic story about the train engine that gives it his all.
6.7	<i>Green Eggs and Ham</i>	Dr. Seuss	Try new things... you might like it!
6.7	<i>Gilberto and the Wind</i>	Mary Hall Ets	Gilberto interacts with the wind and the natural world around him.
	<i>Poky Little Puppy</i>	Janette Sebring Lowrey	This book is a classic for good reason: a delightfully written story about a puppy who doesn't bother to do as he's told.
	<i>Curious George books</i>	Margaret and H.A. Rey	The plucky little monkey George has an insatiable curiosity and willingness to try.
	<i>Little Pea, Little Hoot, and Little Oink</i>	Amy Krouse Rosenthal	All about RULES, but with a twist. Three books in the series.
	<i>Two Bad Ants</i>	Chris Van Allsburg	A great book about following rules.
	<i>Five Little Monkeys</i>	Various Authors	Five little monkeys learn the consequences of not following momma's rule.
	<i>How Do Dinosaurs Stay Safe?</i>	Jane Yolen	Following rules for safety's sake.

	<i>Don't Push the Button</i> by Bill Cotter.	Bill Cotter	What happens when you decide to push the button? Funny consequences arise... A fun, interactive book.
	<i>David Gets in Trouble</i>	David Shannon	Little David makes some poor decisions, but learns to repent.
	<i>Listen Buddy</i>	Helen Lester	Buddy the Rabbit is not very good at listening.. or is he?
	<i>Lily's Purple Plastic Purse</i>	Kevin Henkes	Lilly learns about the difference between rules and decisions, as well as the consequences of both.
	<i>When the Earth Wakes</i>	Ani Rucki	A book about trusting nature and the onset of spring.
	<i>The Berenstain Bears: Four Seasons</i>	Stan and Jan Berenstain	A Berenstain Bears story about trusting nature and the reliability of the changing seasons.
	<i>The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree</i>	Gail Gibbons	The apple tree demonstrates the changing seasons.
	<i>Spring is Here</i>	Taro Gomi	Another book about trusting nature and the onset of spring.
	<i>Millicent and the Wind</i>	Robert Munsch and Suzanne Duranceau	Millicent makes friends with the wind.
	<i>Little Critter: All By Myself</i>	Mercer Mayer	Little Critter learns that trying leads to confidence and the ability to do things all by himself.