

5 INITIATIONS YOUR KIDS NEED FROM YOU

When we hear the word “initiation,” we might think of college fraternities, the military, and difficult physical challenges, but most simply, the act of initiation is to invite someone into a new way of living that will affect his or her future. Parents can actively create moments of initiation that will lead their children towards healthy growth and development.

1 An Initiation Into Adventure

In our hearts is a desire for action and adventure. When my boys were younger, they would grab sticks at the park and have epic sword fights. By encouraging a healthy sense of exploration and tolerance for risk-taking in our children, we can help set them on a path to lead fulfilling, purposeful lives as adults. When we include our children in our adventures, and help them discover and pursue their own, we are inviting them into a life of excitement and fulfillment.

What does adventure look like for your family?

2 An Initiation Into Love

Initiating kids into a life of loving others is critical for their emotional health as adults. A desire to raise tough and resilient kids can mean overlooking teaching them about loving others well. Chances are, if your parents didn't express love well, you may struggle in similar ways. Initiating your kids into romantic love and friendship starts when you recognize that they have the capacity to understand what love is. This initiation is founded on open and honest conversations and setting an example of how you, as parents, love each other, friends, and kids well.

What did love look like in your home while you grew up? How did your parents show and express love? How has your experience impacted the ways you express love to your children?

3 An Initiation Into Learning

Leaders are learners, and I want my kids to have a heart for learning. They may not love school, but I want them to be curious about the world and find ways to learn new things as they grow. To initiate my son into learning, I took him to Home Depot for a class on installing tile. In the middle of this class he asked, "Dad, do you already know how to do this?" I answered, "No." His eyes lit up—he realized we were learning something new together.

How do you model continuous learning in your life? What are three things you would like to teach your kids this school year?

4 An Initiation Into Leadership

As adults, I hope my kids will become men and women who others look to as leaders in their homes, careers, and communities. During a snowstorm, several of our neighbors had burst pipes and water damage. As we were cleaning out carpet and sheetrock, I had a group of boys with me. In each room we cleared, I made one of the boys the leader of that room. As they worked, they took pride in the rooms they led. In order to initiate our kids into leadership, we have to give them leadership opportunities.

Is there a leadership opportunity that you can give your child?

5 An Initiation Into Service

We can teach our children important lessons about loving others through service. During the COVID pandemic, our elderly neighbor needed some supplies and groceries. I pulled my oldest son into the conversation and asked what he thought we should do. As he began to think of what to do, he started to make a shopping list. I then told him that he was running point on this, and I was there to help him pull it off. When we dropped off the supplies on the neighbor's front porch, my son asked me who else he could help. At this point, I affirmed, "Son, we are Cooleys, and when someone needs help, we help them."

Write down two ways you can serve as a family this month.
