

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Have you made your Bubble List?



BY KIM DeMARCHI

We talk about having a Bucket List... a list of things we must do before we kick the bucket. So, what is a Bubble List? A Bubble List is a list of things we want our children to

learn to do before they leave our bubble... our deliberately chosen, safe, encapsulated bubble of our home and our protection. Just like most people, my husband and I chose our bubble; we chose a certain city, neighborhood, and school to raise our children in and to have them feel safe and protected.

So, why do we need to have a Bubble List? In the most simplistic terms: competence and confidence! I want my children to have the necessary skills to be independent and competent when they leave our bubble in four years AND I want them to feel confident and capable in themselves. Leaving our bubble in four years is a compelling argument to help me figure out what types of strengths and capabilities I want them to have. I need to provide experiences for them to develop these skills. They need to do things more than once, too, so that some things become easier or automatic. For example, my kids making smoothies - they've done it so many times that they can do it 100 ways with different fruit, different flavors, different yogurts, more or less ice, thick or thin, different liquids, etc... They are competent and confident in their smoothie making skills!

I'm not just talking about setting the table, sorting laundry, unloading the dishwasher and those day to day tasks that feel like chores.

Of course those things are important to help out and to contribute to the family, but the Bubble List is taking it to another level.

Here's an example of what is on MY Bubble List for my kids:

- Read a map
- Make doctor appts, check in, pay, fill out the intake forms
- Change a tire, check the oil, call AAA
- Make plans with friends, get the details, arrange rides, confirm
- Money - bill paying, use an ATM, write a check, book keeping, balance checkbook, look through bills, budget, prepare taxes
- Plan, prep, cook and clean up a meal
- Make travel arrangements, navigate airport, plan a trip, deal with cancelled flight, pack a suitcase, go through security/customs
- Get a taxi, ride a city bus, take a subway
- File documents systematically, organization
- Make dinner reservations, tip properly
- Build a fire
- Use tools, ie: drill
- Mow a lawn
- Sew a button, mend
- BBQ
- RSVP for events
- Use a calendar, time management
- Write proper thank you letter, address envelope
- Self prescribe over the counter meds
- Plunge a toilet, change a lightbulb, change a fuse
- Buy things, return purchase, use coupons
- Remove stains, iron, laundry

Everyone's list will not look the same. It depends on where you live, your lifestyle, and what you value and think is important. My kids don't need to know how to pick the perfect polo pony, but that might be on someone else's list. We live in the suburbs and our kids probably don't have to know

how to catch the subway, however, I want them to know how, in case they go to college somewhere in a big city, or they vacation where there are subways. Some people may not have access to a car, so maybe changing a tire isn't a priority to teach their child.

Come up with your own Bubble List. Think hard about what your kids need to know when they are out on their own. Think about what you wish you had known. Sit with your partner and brainstorm. Ask your kids to brainstorm with you, or have them write a list. A few things my kids came up with that I didn't have on my list: negotiate a car purchase, perform self defense, and know how to read medicine bottles and amounts. I better get on those things!

I want to be clear that this is not just a bunch more things to put on your already too long "to-do" list? No! We are already too busy, scattered, overly scheduled and busy! If I put them on my "to-do" list, it will feel like huge projects to undertake and they won't get done! Have them happen organically. Have it be a collaborative effort as part of the family. For example, if you need new windshield wiper blades, instead of running to the store while your kid is at sports practice, wait until you are driving together, stop at the auto store together on your way home, look in the catalog together to find the proper blades for your model car, locate them in the store, purchase them, go home and install them together! Doing it myself is robbing my child of the opportunity and experience to learn AND I'm not allowing my child to contribute to the family in a meaningful way.

My family recently took a three week trip to Italy, so we decided to use that experience to teach our children how to pack light and carry their own suitcase the whole time, check in at the airport, find the gate, go through security

and customs, sit by themselves on the airplane, buy train and bus tickets, tip at restaurants, pay in Euros, try a new language, read a map, and navigate around the cities for sightseeing.

This was a great opportunity to bond with our children while teaching them valuable skills. I'm constantly trying to build in times for connection with my teens. If I do the above with the windshield wipers or the trip to Italy, there it is! It all happens in the course of things I need to do or choose to do. This isn't about adding more things to my list; it's about sharing the load, connecting, and building competencies all at the same time. The more intention we have about looking for opportunities for these things to happen in our household, the more skills our children will learn. I feel like I've missed out on plenty of teachable moments, and sometimes feel overwhelmed by the length of my Bubble List. But, it is our job as parents to create and capitalize on these moments to prepare our children to go out into this world feeling competent and confident.



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