

HOW TO BE THE PERFECT PARENT

By Lauren D. Yee

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[CLASS] Hello and welcome to “Loving Your Child Is Not Enough.” In this seminar, we will learn what a perfect parent is. How many of you out there are perfect parents? **(waits, laughs)** Well, that’s exactly why we’re here. Now what makes a perfect parent? Stunning looks? Expensive clothes? Lots of money? Yes, these are all definite signs of a perfect parent. **(laughs)** Just kidding. But before we continue, meet Olivia. While some dream of fortune and fame, Olivia dreams of being the perfect parent, only to discover that she is pregnant. So sit back and listen to Olivia’s own tale of parenthood.

[OLIVIA] I’ll never forget the day I found out I was going to have a baby. I was shocked. I mean, *me*, a *mother*? I decided right away that I would raise the perfect child. And my child would go to Stanford and become a doctor and... I knew if I tried hard enough, I could *be* the perfect parent, right? But after I got home from the hospital, I realized that I’d forgotten two things: one, I had absolutely no idea how to be a parent, and two, going through parenthood was a lot harder than just dreaming of it. **(thinks)** I’d also forgotten how much babies can cry. **(stop, gasp)** No, Emily! Don’t cry. Please, not again. What’s wrong? Diapers? Milk? I don’t have any right now, but if you wait a while... Okay, read the book. “Step one: when the baby is upset, hold it.” So far, so good. “Step two: rock it gently.” Okay. I can do that. **(rocks furiously, stops)** Oh, stop crying, Emily. Shh... Okay, step three. **(looks)** There is no step three! Now what? Oh, think. Think, Olivia... when I was little, what did my mom do when I cried? Ummm... she... she sang to me. Let’s see now. What did she sing? Oh yeah... Somewhere over the rainbow / Skies are blue / And the dreams that you dare to dream / Really do come true. (Arlen) There now. **(turns)** Okay, so the first couple months weren’t *exactly* perfect. But who knew night feeding meant staying up the whole night? And when that finally ended, then came teething. And potty training. I was almost relieved when Emily started preschool. At least until my first parent-teacher conference.

[TEACHER] Welcome to Trunford Academic Preschool, Mrs. Wong. Have a seat. I’ll explain the challenges your little Emily’s been having.

[OLIVIA] Challenges? Like *problems*?

[TEACHER] Well, at Trunford, we try not to call them *problems*, per se—*challenges* is so much more positive, wouldn't you agree? The word *problem* would imply that there was something wrong with Emily.

[OLIVIA] Something's wrong with Emily?

[TEACHER] Well, now that you mention it, the teachers have noticed Emily's fallen behind. It seems Emily isn't interested in our lessons in basic calculus and conceptual physics. During recess she likes to **(pause)** paint.

[OLIVIA] She paints?

[TEACHER] And *draws... pictures*. Absolutely no interest in memorizing dates and numbers like the other children. Shocking, I know. Now I'm not saying that you should blame yourself, but it's proven that nine out of 10 times the parent is entirely responsible for their child's mistakes in life.

[OLIVIA] Well, I really don't see any of these "challenges" you claim Emily's having! She's only four! So what if she likes to draw? She's *my* daughter.

[TEACHER] I'm sorry, but I would have expected a *good* parent to be concerned—but you! **(huff)** Well! I've said all I could. Good day, Mrs. Wong.

[OLIVIA] You can expect that I never went to another parent-teacher conference again. At least not with that woman. And communicating with teachers was the least of my worries, at least compared to communicating with my daughter, especially during her teen years. Suddenly, she was becoming sly, secretive—in other words, a regular teenager. And trying to talk to her was about as easy as pulling teeth. **(pause, turns)** Wassup, Emily? How was your day, honey?

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