Practical Parenting – Heart Lessons – by Marcy Lytle

We sign our kids up for piano lessons, tennis lesson, soccer teams, theater workshops and so many more activities so that they can expand their talents and knowledge – so fun! But what about heart lessons? Sure, life hands us those whether we want them or not. But if we focus on heart lessons with our kids that we've taught, maybe the hard ones that occur won't be so devastating. Heart lessons include sharing from the heart the things we've learned and know…telling them to the next generation.

1. Share over dinner a disappointment you had as a kid and what helped you through. It could be the divorce of a parent, a friend that moved away, or even making a really bad grade on a test.
2. Before bed, grab a piece of construction paper and you and your child can fold it and tear out a heart. Write "Jesus" on the heart and each of you sleep with that heart under your pillow, entrusting Him to care for every emotion and need you may have.
3. Next time your child lies or cheats or is hateful, grab them close and talk about the wandering heart and how Jesus forgives us always (Matthew 9). Teach them how repentance is a good thing and so healthy for the heart.
4. Take a family walk, a brisk one, in a park on a trail. Skip, move your arms, and pick up the pace. Add some talks about how a healthy heart is one that's pumping well and strong.
5. Share some conversation hearts from a Valentine's box and talk about the sayings on each, how to guard your heart and keep your heart reserved for Jesus until marriage.
6. II Corinthians 3 talks about our hearts being tablets. What is written in the hearts of your kids? Consider making hearts, writing affirmations of love from the Father, and hanging them in their rooms.
7. Has your child lost a grandparent or heard of people dying from disease, or begun to realize the sadness of death? Tell them that the heart that belongs to Jesus never dies!
8. A hard heart is one that stays angry a long time, and that makes for an unhealthy heart. Talk freely with your kids about anger issues among the siblings and friends, and pray with them.
9. Ephesians 5 talks about making music in your heart to the Lord. Sing songs of praise as a family before turning out the lights at night.
10. A cheerful heart is the best kind of heart when it comes to giving. Demonstrate to your kids the kind of giving to one another that expects nothing in return, except the joy that comes from blessing another.

Heart lessons – these can be taught and experienced over and over again with our kids while we still hold their hearts close to us at home. They're even more important than all the other lessons they learn on the field, at the workshops or seated behind an instrument. And they produce everlasting joy!