

Home Aura

You probably didn't think about your most recent breath. No problem. As long as you are surrounded by a safe, healthy atmosphere, you can dedicate your mind to other more important tasks.

Imagine if you had to concentrate on every breath. Do you smell toxins? Are the oxygen levels too high? What is the humidity level? Any pollutants? Dust? The atmosphere in which you exist is critical, but, ideally, you shouldn't have to spend any time thinking about it. The atmosphere is invisible and easy to ignore, and that's a good thing.

When I grew up, I spent virtually no time thinking about the atmosphere in our home. I would argue, sing, meditate, converse, or complain without much thought. But Dad and Mom shaped the atmosphere.

A family friend once reflected on the interactions that he witnessed in our home. He saw much more than I did. I threw myself into conversations with no thought about how it would affect the home aura. He saw my father patiently and purposefully molding the home atmosphere.

Now I'm a father with young children all around. I understand my enormous influence over my children's emotions and outlook. Parents should carefully shape the home's atmosphere so that children never need to think about it. It's easy for parents to enter the children's atmosphere as an equal and simply react to the stimuli around them.

Lethargic parents that simply "go with the flow" will soon find that the aura quickly bends towards negativity. Conversely, if you stay above the noise and intentionally set the tone, your home can thrive.

This is tricky and takes wisdom. It's good to commiserate when your child bumps his head but as soon as the pain subsides, a wise parent will pivot to a toy or a game. It's good to correct your child when he errs, but soon you will want to resume your cheerful conversation. It's wonderful to enjoy family moments around the supper table but when dessert is finished, a wise parent sets an evening agenda before things evolve into the wild and silly.

Parents often shape their home atmosphere with very simple things. A few cheerful words from Dad in the morning go a long way towards a relaxed and safe environment. A few realistic words from Mom can nip the complaining before it becomes an entrenched mindset. Your next few sounds could set the tone in your home for the next hour. Will it be a few bars of song? Or will you growl about a setback?

This brings up a much more fundamental ingredient of the atmosphere in your home. Are you stressed out? Irritated? Blue? If so, will you let it show? Parents were meant to carry burdens. Your children should see little indication that you are under a load. It's time for you to grow up and manage your emotions—from anger to despondency to complaints, or any other negative emotions.

Another core part of the aura in your home is the expectations that parents create. Children thrive in well-defined boundaries. Parents should set up simple rules, provide ample teaching, and enforce the rules consistently. The goal here should be structure and the long-term good of the children. This is never about a parent's happiness. Rather, this structure should be centered around Jesus. Children should be taught His

values and expected to match them. Christ our Creator set up reality, so He knows the best values for interacting with it. If you want a beautiful home atmosphere, Jesus' wisdom and teachings are the answer.

Also, wise parents set up realistic schedules and wholesome traditions. For example, when my young children wake up, they love to spend their first ten minutes on my lap. A quiet morning with Dad gives them the stability they need to start the day right. Obviously, each home will be different. But parents should be alert to problems in the schedule. If children are regularly out of sorts, then it could point to a problem with the schedule. Is it too chaotic? Inconsistent? Are they going to bed on time? Many of these questions seem simple, but they are powerful antidotes to a healthy home aura. We could spend a lot more time here. Maybe we will explore this more later.

I have plenty of flat spots. One area I think about often comes from a verse written by the Apostle Paul in a moment of obvious inspiration. *"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4). We don't have any indication that Paul was a father. But his writing is poignant. I can certainly relate. I love my children beyond description. But I struggle to relate to them properly. They irritate me when they trot behind me all day. I tire of their stories. I would rather finish my project than fix their bicycle. Sometimes I lose my temper and talk to them like, well, a child.

But I know better. I see the hurt in their eyes, and I know my responsibility. They can't help that they are undeveloped. It's not their fault that they are children! So I must check my selfish desires, apologize, and make them happy. That means playing with my children when I would rather relax. It means laughing at their stories and adding my own when I would rather ignore them. It means that when they suffer the consequences of a stupid mistake, I commiserate with them rather than scold them. Or, I should say, that's what I try to do. Our home atmosphere is far from perfect because I have a lot to learn.

Children grow. Good parents strive to create an atmosphere that promotes the health and wellbeing of their children as they grow. If children are given a wholesome atmosphere by thoughtful parents, the home flourishes. A flourishing home provides the launch pad for healthy children that are ready to go out and spread the gospel of Christ that this world needs. Parents, your next small choice could set the tone in your home and make all the difference. What will it be?

~Caleb Martin