

# Elizabeth A. Brady

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## Accomplishment Statement

I was nineteen years old and headed for the other side of the country on my own. I had six months until I started classes at Brigham Young University—Idaho and yearned for a little adventure. Adventure took the form of accepting a job as a live-in nanny for a family in Connecticut who contacted me through the internet. What met me on the East Coast was a far cry from what I had anticipated.

The family I nannied for consisted of two parents and two little girls, ages five and three. Within a few hours of meeting them I knew they had a different mindset about parenting than anyone else I had ever known. By the end of my first day on the job I knew this family needed my help. This was before the days of ABC's *Super Nanny*, yet I could sense the need for a total family makeover.

The parents' lives lacked any structure—they were both from extremely wealthy families and therefore didn't have jobs or responsibilities. They hung around the house and existed for entertainment. Their view of their children vacillated between pets, possessions, or problems. The girls, therefore, existed in an environment of instability and emotional dysfunction.

I immediately took steps to improve the developmental atmosphere for Vivien and Christina. The first change I made was to implement a nap and bedtime schedule to not only provide a reliable structure for the girls' daily activities, but to enable them to enjoy the benefits of a well-rested, growing body. Once the sleep schedule was underway, the girls went from an average of seven hours of sleep per day to an average of twelve hours per day, which is consistent with the recommended amount of sleep for their age range.

The next change I made was to provide and participate in meaningful activities to foster improvements in cognitive development. Soon the girls' favorite activities went from watching movies to collecting leaves, drawing pictures, writing stories, reading books, learning songs, and making movies with my camera. Instead of staying cooped up indoors, we explored their acreage, canoed across their lake, ate picnic lunches in a meadow, learned to climb trees, and raced each other to the edge of the pasture. We visited libraries, museums, and historical sites. We had *fun*.

These improvements were not free from opposition. Transition is commonly hard to deal with for children, so there was a period of adjustment accompanied by tantrums, tears, and defiance. While I was able to provide positive activities for the girls, I also knew establishing discipline was necessary for their overall quality of life as well. The girls gradually grew more comfortable and confident within the rules we established, but their parents gradually grew more uncooperative. They were unwilling to adhere to the sleep schedule and would not collaborate to uphold the consequences of our pre-established rules for the girls. Therefore, I frequently gave up my day off to maintain a consistent schedule for the girls.

The result of my efforts in the Mark family was that Vivien and Christina were happier, more confident, more obedient, more loving, and more trusting. This result was confirmed two months ago when I was contacted to aid in a custody battle for the girls. Had the custody battle gone on longer, I made myself available to have the girls in my care once again. The Mark family remembered me as a trustworthy nanny who influenced the lives of their girls for good.