

11 QUESTIONS FOR ...

Chris Rock's mom

Funny how he turned out

Chris Rock isn't the only member of his family with something to say. Meet Rose Rock, Chris' mom and author, with Valerie Graham, of the book "Mama Rock's Rules: Ten Secrets for Raising a Houseful of Successful Children," released by HarperCollins this past week.

Tell me about your mom credentials.

I've had seven birth children, I've raised 10. I've had about 17 foster kids, and I also taught preschool and special ed.

Was Chris a handful when he was small?

Not really. Everyone thinks that when they see his personality onstage, but Chris was the shyest one. Did not talk!

Where did his sense of humor come from?

Everything about raising that many kids, you have to look for the humor in it, so there were some fun times. One of his defense mechanisms was comedy, because he was so tiny. He was always the smallest one, so that's what he used. That deflected anything around him. If anyone said something negative, he'd come up with something funny and everyone would start laughing.

What did you think he'd do when he grew up?

I always thought he might be a writer. My husband was a driver for the Daily News for many years. Chris worked at the Daily News, too — he used to load papers. He made a lot of Christmas money doing that.

Is it true you still FedExed him your home cooking after he moved to Hollywood?

Yes, I did. Fried chicken, homemade biscuits and fried peanuts.

Are there a few secret recipes we should know about?

Well, the biggest hit at home was smothered chicken and biscuits. I don't know what the secret was, but that was his favorite.

Do you think people are bringing up their kids very differently these days?

Oh, yeah. Now parents want to be friends, and the other thing is they would rather give kids a toy or a video game than take the time with their kids. I always tell parents that hugs are worth more than penicillin.

Is that why you wanted to write the book?

Absolutely. Because I watch things on TV that just irritate me. Parents crying because they're afraid of their children, or talking about how their daughter dresses, and I'm like, "Lady, you're the one that buys the clothes."

When kids find out that I'm Chris and Tony's mom, the first thing they always ask me is, what kind of car do you drive? I always try to get them away from that. I tell them that I worked in order to buy clothes to go to school. It's important to let children know life's a journey and that where you come from does not predict where you will be.

I noticed that even Tupac gets a little credit in your book. Where did he fit in?

My youngest son, Jordan, is an avid reader. When he was 12, he said, "I've got to buy this book, 'The Prince' by Machiavelli." He told me that was a book that Tupac was really into. I had thought Tupac was a thug, and it wasn't until I read a book about him that I realized how much depth he had. It taught me not to judge people, because you never quite know.

Does Chris subscribe to Mama Rock's rules now that he has his own family?

Yes, and I'm amazed, because they're so hands-on. [Chris and nonprofit exec Malaak Compton-Rock have been married since 1996 and have two daughters.] They get up in the morning, they cook the meals, drive them to school. It's really great to see that being passed on.

So, is a good parent born or made?

I think they're made. I picked up a lot from my own parents and just wanting to do the right thing. Who knew I had a book in me?

Eloise Parker

**Rose Rock****AGE:** 63**JOB:** Mom, teacher and author**HOURS PER WEEK:** 24/7, and a little extra thrown in**TIME ON THE JOB:** 42 years

MATTHEW ROBERTS



Chris gets his H'wood Walk of Fame star in '03, and Mama Rock is there. Photo by Getty

Mama Rock's top five rules**1. I'M YOUR MAMA, NOT YOUR FRIEND.**

"That's my biggest rule. I didn't even like my mother until I was 40 years old. Did I love her? Yes. I also respected her. Sure, when I was growing up I resented her when she was right about things — and believe me, she always was."

2. THERE'S NOTHING YOU CANNOT DO.

"Create confident, resilient children with encouragement and praise. Kids with self-worth have more self-control over the choices offered to them."

3. CREATE GOOD MEMORIES.

"When my husband died, that's the only thing that got me through. Now, hearing my children talk about their memories, it makes me feel so good that I gave them all these memories."

4. FEED THEM AND THEY WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING.

"When you make family meals a tradition, it brings out everything in children. They know they can talk and get out their feelings and somebody's going to listen."

5. DON'T LIE DOWN WITH ANYTHING YOU DON'T WANT TO LIVE WITH FOREVER.

"If you have a relationship and there are children scattered around, it's the children that get hurt. When you have those sex-ed talks, you've got to be honest, even if you have to leave the room to regroup and come back."