



Resource 2

Ten Tips for Successful Parenting

Parenting is the most important job you will ever have. It is also one of the most challenging. Your job of parenting changes as your children grow and mature requiring you to adjust to the needs and ages of your children. Use the following tips to help guide your parenting in healthy and positive ways.

1. Celebrate the Positive

Recognizing children for their effort is as important as the actual effort. For example, if your child has just folded the laundry, celebrate that effort and accomplishment even though it may not be folded exactly the way you might have done it.

2. Take Time to Talk and Really Listen

Encourage children to talk openly and let them know that talking through their feelings is a healthy way of expressing themselves. Provide children with the words and be a role model by talking about your own feelings.

3. Use Discipline, Not Punishment

“Discipline” is a method of teaching children life-long responsibility and acceptable behaviors. Punishment, on the other hand, tends to force children to behave a certain way and does not allow for children to be responsible for their own behavior. The use of natural and logical consequences when children make mistakes or misbehave allows for discipline that teaches responsibility and life-long learning.

4. Teach Responsibility Constructively

Teach responsibility by giving children frequent opportunities to practice making decisions about what he or she needs to do in a given situation. For example, instead of saying “You made a mess, you left your dishes on the table and you need to take them to the sink and rinse them.” Try saying, “The table is a mess, what do you need to do to get it cleaned up?”

5. Separate the Child from the Behavior

Never tell a child that he or she is bad. This really hurts a child’s self-esteem. Communicate to your child that it isn’t that you do not like him or her, but it is the behavior that you are unwilling to tolerate. For example, instead of saying, “You are acting like a baby,” try saying, “I know you are upset but I can understand you better if talk to me in your regular voice.” Your child must know that your love is unconditional and although you may be upset with his or her behavior, it does not affect your love for him or her.

6. Actions Speak Louder than Words

If you find that your child has stopped listening, it is because, on average, we give our children over 2000 commands per day! They stop listening when they feel we are nagging or yelling. Instead of telling your child a third or fourth time, think about what action you could take. For example, if your child continues to throw his towel on the bathroom floor rather than hang it up, instead of doing it for him or yelling at him one more time, simply remove the towel or leave it in a heap on the floor. It will either be gone or still damp the next time and will better deliver the message of why it is important to hang it up.

7. Use Natural and Logical Consequences

Think about what would happen in a situation if you do not interfere. When we interfere unnecessarily, we rob children of the chance to learn from the consequences of their actions. By letting the natural consequence take place, we avoid nagging. If your child forgets his PE shoes one day, instead of taking them to school or to the game, let the child suffer the consequence of not playing that day. When natural consequences are not safe or not practical, be sure the consequence is logical. A consequence must be logically related to the behavior to be effective. For example, he forgets to return his video to the rental store where a daily late fee will add up, return the video, but deduct the late charge from his allowance or let him pay it off over time if it is already several days overdue. This allows your child to see the logic to the discipline.

8. Spend Quality Time with Your Child and Leave the Stress of Work at Work

We all lead busy lives and often we are thinking about all we have to do rather than spending 100% of our attention being with and listening to our children. We sometimes pretend to listen or unintentionally ignore what our children are saying. If we don't give our children 100% attention, they will start to misbehave. In a child's mind, negative attention is better than no attention at all. Remember that your child's feelings are important to recognize. If your child says, "Mom you never play with me", (even though you just finished playing with her) she is expressing what she really feels. It is important to validate her feelings by saying, "Yeah, I bet it does feel like we haven't played in a long time." Parents are all busy, but it is important to remember not to take your job home with you. When parents bring job related stress home with them, they are less tolerant and more prone to argue with their children.

9. Give Children Input into the Decisions that Affect Them and Hold Family Meetings

Ask your child's advice when it is appropriate to do so. This can help a child feel powerful and valuable. Give your child choices, let him/her help you and have input into simple daily decisions. It may seem like it is sometimes easier to do a simple task ourselves rather than waiting for the child to complete it, but this does not allow the child to make choices and feel important. Many families find that having a regular family meeting time is helpful. Family meetings allow time for everyone in the family to bring issues to the table and discuss them.

10. Be Kind Although Firm and Consistent

If you set a limit with your child and it comes time to act on it, act with reason and firmness and do not allow your child to get into a power struggle with you. For example, suppose that you have told your child that the toys must be picked up by the time the timer goes off or the remaining toys will be put away for a while. When the timer goes off simply pick up the remaining toys and put them out of sight without any more nagging or extension of time. Do not give in to pleas, tears, pouting or promises. Your child will learn to respect you more if she or he learns that you mean what you say.

Adapted from positiveparenting.com's Ten Keys to Successful Parenting and the National Mental Health Association's Strengthening Families Fact Sheet.