

How to Be a Good Parent

Parenthood is the hardest, yet most important job in the world. Here are some tips to help you raise your children with love, wisdom, and patience.

Steps

1. Make rules. What rules should any person live by in order to lead a happy, healthy life? Be clear and balanced in communicating these to your kids. Being too quiet or beating it into their heads every day are both unhealthy extremes.
2. Follow through. If a child does something hurtful and unhealthy, strongly pursue a complete excellent and just healing and restoration. Be consistent - don't let your child manipulate you into making exceptions because you feel bad. When enforcing consequences don't act in anger, but justly and lovingly do what is best for the long-term for the child. Children hunger for boundaries, and when you violate them by not doing what you and the child both know to be right, it removes their sense of safety and security. It damages their ability to trust you, and it damages their integrity both in the present and the future.
3. Take interest. Be involved. Try to understand who your child is, and what makes him or her an individual. Ask questions. What do they want to do? What do they think about this or that? How do they feel?
4. Respect boundaries. Don't be *too* involved. That is, as your child grows, give him or her more responsibility, and at the same time give him or her more privacy and more decision-making power. Pay responsibility back with trust. Your job is to prepare the child to be a healthy, functional, adult mentally, emotionally, and relationally by the time they are a functional adult physically.
5. Be a role model. Live by the rules you set. Don't be one of those "Do as I say, not as I do" parents. Don't do anything you wouldn't want your child to do, even when they're not around (they're bound to catch you doing it, or find out about it, when you're not looking, and they'll get the message that it's okay to do things behind someone's back). Always demonstrate the right method instead of preaching it. Be a role model that you want your child to be.
6. Show and tell them that you love them, even when they seem to hate you, or when they are being punished. If you have followed all the steps above, it will be easier for your children to understand that you are trying to do what's best for them, because you love them. They might still not believe you in the heat of the moment, but they will eventually look back and understand.
7. Never compare your children with others or even with siblings. Each child is unique, and invalidating them and destroying their uniqueness is not a building-up, but a tearing-down of the kid. Shame and invalidation is a dysfunctional incentive.
8. Never shame or embarrass your children in front of other people. If you wouldn't want your boss to publicly reprimand you, then you shouldn't expect your child to want you to publicly reprimand them. They are more valuable than an employee.
9. Schedule some time exclusively for your family. Regularly find some time to talk to your kids and thus encourage the mutual sharing of experiences. This will help them to communicate better not only with you, but with the whole world. Best practice: 10 hours of dedicated one-on-one time per week per child is a very rich relationship.

10. Never frighten the children nor nip their buds of creativity. They need to understand consequence, but not for your fears sake. Give them an understanding enough to independently come to the same conclusion as you.
11. Adults should not fight in front of children. Some adults don't even know the excellent and constructive ways to fight, and most children simply aren't equipped to handle seeing it. It very strongly damages the parents authority and the child's sense of security. It is shown that children who live in happy, positive families are more intelligent, emotionally stable and secure.
12. Never take sides when your your kids are quarrelling, they need to experience justice, and not favoritism. Allow them to settle the differences by their own if they are able to. Children should learn to resolve issues by their own, in order to become functional adults. They cannot expect mentors or mediators all through their lives.
13. Always let children know what is going to happen next, thus helping them to develop a sense of foresight and making them more proactive and prudent. Ask questions. Encourage though.
14. Allow the kids to know about the basic realities of life... in a rather softened way. Never allow them to live in an utopian dream world. If you aren't honest with them they don't learn to value honesty or integrity.
15. Never accuse others for your failures. Explore the mistakes which caused such failures and share them with your children. This will encourage their own introspection when they taste failures later in their life.
16. Keep giving positive strokes. A gentle cuddle, a little encouragement, appreciation, approval or even a smile can go a long way to boost the confidence and well-being of your children. Give them in abundance, else they may wander in search of substitute negative strokes.
17. Encourage your children to stand up and act for themselves. Perhaps, that may be the most precious lesson you can give to your children. Also, tell your children not to follow the crowd, tell them to make their own decisions based on what they feel, and not be persuaded to do anything by anyone.

Tips

- Remember that your child is not an extension of yourself. Your child is an individual under your care, not a chance for you to relive your life through them. For example, if you never became a doctor, don't make your child feel like he or she should become a doctor.
- If you did something when you were their age that you don't want your children to do, and they hold it against you by saying "Hey, you did XYZ but you turned out okay," explain to them why you regret doing what you did; how it could have turned out much worse, and you took an unnecessary risk, and they might not be so lucky.
- Sometimes that "I'm disappointed" look will do the trick.
- Hug your kids. It is the easiest way to give positive strokes. It makes children understand that they are loved.
- Show your kids love, respect, and trust. They need to know that they are important and worthy individuals. Your kids should be very familiar with the consequences of their actions. You shouldn't be a controlling parent, and with certain kids you don't even need to make rules explicit, but the kids always need to know their bounds, and know that you support their decisions as long as you're confident that your child is

taking a calculated risk. That builds trust and understanding that is so valuable in the long run.

Warnings

- Be very careful not to confuse 'consequence' with 'punishment'. While helping your child to understand that every action has a consequence, whether positive or negative, avoid falling into the 'crime and punishment' mentality. This sort of system has the potential to reinforce negative behavior. A strict rule set limits the potential for growth in regards to responsibility, and may become the very limits that your child tests in time. The testing of limits is, after all, the essential nature of childhood. Don't talk to your children, talk with them, and give them better limits to test... like how many people can they get a smile from in a single day.
- You aren't going to be a perfect parent. Do your best, and know when you haven't been doing your best, but don't be hard on yourself should you happen to fail to follow some of these guidelines. You're human; just make sure your child knows that too. Admit your mistakes. Your child will follow in your footsteps.
- If your child is upset that he or she is not allowed to do something explain to them why they can't do anything they want to do.