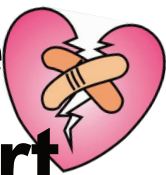


# Healing the Family Heart



*Can these five parenting tools really make a difference for your child?*

By B. Bry an Post

(NC)—Parenting is much like gardening. Parents must prepare the soil, plant the seeds of a peaceful home, and lovingly care for and cultivate their children. There are five components of the parent-child relationship that are absolutely necessary to raising healthy children. The five components are acceptance, understanding, empathy, patience and love.

### Acceptance

To accept someone means to provide for them a sense that they belong – to a group, a society, a church, or a family. Acceptance distinguishes between behavior and the person. Acceptance is the unspoken agreement between parent and child that the love between them is unshakeable, and that they are welcome and valued, now and forever.

### Understanding

Understanding between children and parents is often elusive, particularly when one or the other is frequently distracted by the demands of a busy world. Children misbehave when they are stressed and fearful. If the parent is self-aware and can recognize that the anger expressed by the child is truly misdirected fear, the parent can set aside their own fear and choose to respond in a loving and understanding manner.

### Empathy

Empathy is a skill that must be practiced, as putting oneself “in another’s shoes”, so to speak, is not always our first impulse. Being a self-aware parent requires us not only to practice an empathetic approach, but to identify with the feelings of our children as they experience them, not as we do. Empathizing with our misbehaving children challenges us as parents to behave with understanding and acceptance, even in the face of misbehavior and fear.



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### Patience

Being patient is a process that arises from a sense of calm and well-being. When stressed, it is easy for responses to be sharp-edged. It is important for parents to be aware of their own emotional state and to be sensitive to the times when stress may be driving interactions. The practice of empathy, understanding and acceptance together can provide a basis for patience.

### Love

Love combines empathy, understanding, acceptance and patience together to bring about a fulfilled and fulfilling

presence. However, simply saying “I love you” to a child is not enough. Love is not merely an emotion, but a long chain of behaviors and actions that, taken together, represent devotion to another. As such, love takes effort and a degree of honesty with ourselves and with others that brooks no diversion or deception. “Love never fails.” 1 Corinthians 13:8

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## Family dinner table talk tips



*Here are a few tips to make dinner conversation with your kids more enjoyable.*

(NC) Anyone who has kids knows how hard it can be to get everyone to put down their phones, enjoy each other’s company and have a good conversation with a meal. Fortunately, there are a few tricks parents can try to help

their children ditch the “ums” and “I don’t knows” and spark an engaging chat.

### Talk about yourself

This may sound counterintuitive, but like most other behaviours you want your child to adopt, you have to walk the talk. Or in this case, talk the talk. So be a good role model and avoid putting them on the spot by sharing something about your day, a weekend activity you’re looking forward to or a funny thing your co-worker said. Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable - this will encourage little ones to be too.

### Make it a game

Turning the conversation into a game is a great way to break the ice, especially on a night when no one is feeling too chatty. The glad-sad-mad game is a great for kids (and adults) of all ages, where everyone shares one thing that made them glad, sad and mad that day. Another good one is “would you rather?” Younger kids will love questions like “would you rather be a T-rex or a raptor?” and older ones will enjoy ones that are a bit deeper, like “would you rather go on vacation to the rainforest or a snowy destination?”

### Look to the food

You’d be surprised how many conversation starters are right on your table – you can talk about where the food came from, what’s in season and even new recipe ideas everyone would like to try. If your kids show interest in how food gets onto our plates, encourage them to learn more about the science of agriculture.

Food starts with research, and scientists use game-changing technology to help farmers improve and protect crops and produce food in an environmentally friendly way.

Kids can meet Canadian scientists, discover their work and see how their research impacts us at [agriculture.canada.ca/fields-science](http://agriculture.canada.ca/fields-science).