

Tips for More Effective Parenting

Raising children is one of the toughest and most fulfilling jobs in the world - and the one for which you may feel the least prepared. Here are nine ways to tackle child-rearing responsibilities that can help you feel more fulfilled as a parent - and enjoy your child more, too.



Nurture your child's self-esteem.

Your words and actions affect your child's self-esteem more than anything else does. Praising their accomplishments will make them feel proud. Belittling comments will make them feel worthless. Choose words carefully and be compassionate. Let your child know that everyone makes mistakes and that you still love them, even when you don't love their behavior.



Catch your child being good.

Have you ever stopped to think about how many times you react negatively to your child in a given day? The more effective approach is to catch them doing something right. Positive statements will do more to encourage good behavior over the long run than repeated scolding. Find something to praise every day.



Set limits and be consistent with your discipline.

Discipline is necessary. The goal is to help children choose acceptable behaviors and learn self-control. A common mistake parents make is failure to follow through with consequences when rules are broken. You can't discipline a child for talking back one day and ignore it the next. Being consistent teaches your child what you expect.



Make time for your children.

With so many demands on your time, it's often difficult for parents and children to spend quality time together, but there is probably nothing your child would like more. Many parents find it rewarding to have prescheduled time with their child on a regular basis. It is the little things you do with your child that they will remember.



Be a good role model.

Young children learn a great deal about how to act by watching you. Model the traits you want in your child. Do things for other people without expecting a reward. Express thanks and offer compliments. Treat your children the way you expect other people to treat you.



Make communication a priority.

You can't expect children to do everything just because you "say so." Children want and deserve explanations as much as adults. If we don't take time to explain, they will begin to wonder about our values and motives and whether they have any basis. Parents who reason with their children allow them to understand and learn in a nonjudgmental way.



Be flexible and willing to adjust your parenting style.

As your child changes, you will gradually have to change your parenting style. Chances are, what works with your child now won't work in a year or two.



Show that your love is unconditional.

You are responsible for correcting and guiding your child. Make sure they know that although you expect better next time, your love is there no matter what.



Be aware of your own needs and limitations as a parent.

Face it, you aren't perfect. Recognize your strengths. Work on your weaknesses. Try to have realistic expectations for yourself, your spouse, and your children. Focusing on your needs does not make you selfish. It simply means you care about your own well-being, which is another important value to model for your children.



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