

GENERAL PARENTING CONCEPTS

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The mutual goal of all parents is to raise happy, healthy independent children. Sounds easy enough, but this comes with a tremendous amount of work. Parenting is not an easy task; however by following these simple guidelines below, parents can avoid the many pitfalls they encounter along the journey. This brochure highlights concepts that can be implemented by parents to effectively nurture children into adulthood.

INDEPENDENCE

It should be the overriding goal of all parents to create children that can be independent and self-sufficient by the time they reach adulthood. In a home environment where parents consider their own needs as well as the child's needs, children grow up learning that they are not always the center of the family. This helps children to mature and take into account the needs to other people. Do not overindulge children. Children have, like all of us, unlimited wants. It's easy to give into children and give them things rather than helping them to understand that there are constraints in life. When parents do not overindulge their children, it helps the child to learn there are limits and as the child matures they are able to understand the concept of limitations.

CHOICES

A second general principle has to do with giving children choices that are age-appropriate and holding them responsible for their actions. It is important that consequences be attached to children's behavior, so the children learn that there are consequences in the real world.

RESPECT

The more positive the home environment, the greater the likelihood that children will grow up feeling good about themselves. That is, children need to feel respected and have a sense of dignity. This sense of dignity can be promoted by creating an atmosphere in which children feel they can do, rather than they can't do.

VALIDATION

Validating children's feelings is an important part of parenting. Reinforce a loving environment. One of the ways to do this is to tell your children, how much you love them, and by physically giving them hugs. In addition, talking to them honestly about life situations also gives them a feeling of trust and love and validates their feelings. For example, when your child tells you that they are sad because a friend won't play with them, it's first important to first tell the child that you can understand how sad it is that their friend won't play with them. After you can then begin to deal with the real issue at hand, in this case, a child's feeling of loneliness.

OWNERSHIP

Many parents confuse the concept of problem solving with parenting. It's important to identify early on, "Whose problem is it?" Far too many times, parents assume the need to solve problems for their children. It's important to acknowledge a child's feelings and then ask yourself, is this a problem I need to solve or should I allow the child to deal with it on their own?

It's always better to let a child try to resolve their problems than a parent stepping in and imposing solutions which puts the parents in the role of providing answers & ultimately assuming the blame if it goes wrong.

COMMUNICATION

When you talk to your children, try to use the "I" messages format. That is, try to phrase your statements in the form of "I feel _____ when you do _____." Parents should never criticize the child, you criticize behavior. Sarcasm should never be used with children. It is an adult form of communication that is not understood by children and leads to resentment by the child towards the parent.

DISCIPLINE

The concept of discipline is to set realistic limits and enforce those limits so the child learns the concept of ownership of their behavior. In addition, when you set rules and stick to the rules a child will feel more secure, because the parents are in control. Listed below are several concepts dealing with the notion of disciplining children.

A positive relationship with children is a cornerstone of disciplining. That is, create in your parenting plan the time to have fun with your children so when you need to be firm you'll have a good relationship to fall back upon, as well as activities that you can restrict or eliminate.

It is important that you be believable. Therefore do not make exaggerated claims or impose punishments, you do not believe in or intend carry out. Be consistent, if you give a punishment, make sure that you carry it out and do not renegotiate it simply because the child's behavior has improved.

The word "no" should be an absolute. Think carefully before you use the word no, but once you use it make sure that you enforce it and do not allow the child to argue until you change the no to a yes.

Be consistent in your disciplining. That is try to create as much structure as you can in your daily life, which allows you to be more consistent. An example would be a chore chart, which would be posted and all children would know what the expectations are. When two parents are involved in the parenting of children, both parents, prior to letting the children know the decision, should agree upon any decisions. Do not renegotiate punishments. It's important that your word means something, and therefore, if you give a punishment, it is not a good idea to retract it or modify it even though the child's behavior radically improved.

TECHNIQUES

A good method of setting limits is to use the "rule of three".

The first step is for the parent to ask nicely and listen for the response. Then the parent and child agree on a time and standard for the activity to be completed.

The second step is; if the task is not accomplished in the time and to your satisfaction you tell the child to stop what they're doing immediately and complete the task properly.

The third step is, if the child refuses to complete the task or there is a problem, than a punishment should be imposed. The younger the child the quicker and a short punishment should be imposed.

Another technique that can be used is the "Five time rule". In this case you have the child who repeatedly forgets to do certain tasks repeat that task five times. An example would be if a child always dropped their coat in the middle of the living room and forgets to put it away, you'd have the child take their coat and hang it up in the closet and then bring it up to the living room and do that five times. If that fails to work, then the child can do at 10 times.

With young children parents can use a more subtle form of discipline. When conflict arises parents can intervene by asking if the child can behave appropriately or if they need a "timeout"? By doing this, you are letting the child know that they are acting in a poor manner and if they don't control themselves they will need to go to their room. At first, the children will need to be put in their room as a consequence for failing to control themselves. By repeating this process the child begins to understand that they must control their behavior or the parent will institute additional timeouts. So that in the future the word "timeout" will help a child to understand if they don't control their behavior the parent will.

Foreshadowing Behavior

This technique helps children prepare for upcoming events. Before a particular event or activity a parent carefully describes what will happen and what is expected of the children in terms of their behavior at the event or activity. In this way children will know what the parents expect it will be less likely to create problems. An example would be going out to dinner and explaining to do children that they will have a half-hour wait before they are even seated.

The 10 warning signs of possible problems in children:

1. Mood shift; a sudden lack of interest in life and or an isolation from friends and family, or a change in grades across the entire report card.
2. Secretive behavior and lack of eye contact
3. A major change in eating or sleeping patterns
4. A change in friends or no friends
5. Not wanting to take any risks at all

6. Disruptive behavior at home or school
7. Constantly lying
8. Bed-wetting
9. A preoccupation, food, sex or fire
10. Excessive worries and fears

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