

Helpful Hints for Healthy Parenting

Are you a hurried parent who could benefit from hints on how to enhance communication with your kids, tips on getting along better, guidelines on how to improve your relationship with your children? Please read on. The parenting tips that follow provide a fresh perspective, an opportunity to build on your own positive parenting skills so that when difficult issues arise, you already have a strong foundation to build on.

BUILD CONFIDENCE

Be positive.

- Look for ways to give compliments.
- Give hugs.
- Remember to laugh with your child.

Emphasize your child's strong points.

- Praise special, unique traits in your child.
- Help your child understand that nobody's perfect and that's okay.
- Help your child understand that everyone is good at something and not so good at other things.

Give your time.

As parents, you are all probably short on time and may often feel overwhelmed with all your responsibilities. However, it's important for you to know that the best gift is to give your child regular, undivided attention.

- If you're experiencing guilt, you need to work through that and work on specific times to be with your children. You could begin by scheduling monthly "dates" together.

Say "I love you".

- Give this message in different ways.
- Try non-verbal as well as verbal.

STAY CONNECTED

Listen.

- Give you full attention. Keep good eye contact, nod, even touch your child.
Listen for feelings. There are no wrong feelings. Acknowledge your child's feelings, then reflect those feelings back. (Don't interpret; either repeat their words or use similar words to reflect your child's feelings.)
- Keep your talk to a minimum. Simply saying you understand and care may be enough. Being there for them is the most important.

Take time to be with your child.

- Read a book or watch TV together. Talk about the book or program. Use this time to give your full attention to your child.
- If you're a working parent, call your child from work just to say "hello" - not to remind him or her about chores or homework.
- Make time for regular heart-to-heart talks with your child. Keep conversations free and open.

USE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

Set rules.

- Determine what rules are important. Set limits and boundaries. Make sure everybody understands the rules and consequences.
- Apply rules consistently. If you make an exception, make sure your child understands that it's a special treat (i.e., staying out later than usual).
- Rules are flexible in that they're appropriate to the age of the child.
- Physical discipline is almost never effective.

Addressing a problem.

- Respond to the problem as soon as possible.
- Be firm. You're the parent. Do not underestimate your parenting ability.
- Keep calm; use your anger in a positive way.
- Address the problem, discuss the consequence, follow-through. Don't blow up!

Criticize the behaviour only.

- Choose your words carefully. Address the behaviour, not the person. For example, you could say, "I'm upset that you **hit your friend**", instead of "You're a bad boy for hitting".

HELP IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

Define the problem.

- Try to help your child solve the problem, don't solve it for them. Teach your child how to problem-solve.
- Ask your child what exactly the problem is. What are their feelings about it?

Brainstorm about ways to solve the problem.

- Talk about every possible solution with your child. List them out. Discuss and weigh the outcomes of each potential solution.

Pick the best solution.

- Talk about, and role-play if necessary, the way you or your child will implement the solution.

Discuss the outcome.

- Did the solution work? Why or why not.
- If not, talk with your child about trying another solution.