

Excellence in Parenting

*Parenting Tips For
Healthy, Effective Parenting*



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Introduction

The child-parent relationship has a major influence on most aspects of child development. When optimal, parenting skills and behaviors have a positive impact on children's self-esteem, school achievement, cognitive development and behavior.

Parents differ in the degree to which they *respond* to children's signals and control their behaviors. High quality care giving, characterized by a sensitive, cognitively stimulating, and moderately controlling approach, is crucial for children's development and safety. Indeed, many of the skills children acquire during the early years are fundamentally dependent on the quality of their interactions with their parents.

For instance, parents play an important role in fostering children's early learning (e.g., language and problem-solving abilities) and in shaping their social-emotional skills (e.g., emotion regulation, reactivity to stress, and self-esteem). Furthermore, parents have an influence on the development, maintenance, or cessation of children's positive and/or negative behaviors. The quality of parenting children receive during the early years affects three

key determinants of later success in school: their cognitive potential, their social skills, and their behavioral functioning. Considering the fact that parenting skills can be acquired and passed on from one generation to another, continuous efforts to improve the quality of care giving are important.

From encouraging schoolwork and sports to modeling values as a child grows (remember, they do as you do, not as you say!) parents exert enormous influence over their children's lives. They are, however, not the only on-the-ground influencers—especially after children enter school and begin interacting with the world at large.

Most parents work to give children the best start possible, but it's also important for parents to recognize that kids come into the world with their own temperaments, personalities, and goals. While parents may want to push their child down a certain path, a parents' job is to provide an interface with the world that ultimately prepares a child for complete independence and the ability to pursue whatever path *they* choose.

In a rapidly changing world, parenting can be subject to fads and changing styles, and parenting in some privileged circles has become a competitive sport. But the needs of child development as delineated by science remain relatively stable: safety, structure, support, and love.

Basic Parenting Styles

Parenting is something that usually comes naturally to people. There are no hard fast how to manuals or rules to parenting. People generally just learn as they go. Most things are just second nature, like feeding, clothing and generally caring for a child. However, as a child grows and other children are born, parenting becomes more then simply handling the child's everyday needs. Sometimes parents feel they need some help in deciding the best way to parent their children.



There have been many people who have spoken out about parenting and offered advice and assistance to parents in need. Parenting styles are an example

of something a parent can do to help them with their parenting. A parenting style is basically a way to describe how a parent parents their child or children. There are 3 basic types of parenting styles.

Some authorities on the subject of parenting will argue that there are many different variations of parenting styles, but they all go back to the three basic parenting styles. Those three styles are authoritarian, permissive and democratic.

The **authoritarian parenting style** is based on control. With this style of parenting the parent retains complete control at all times. Under this style of parenting there are strict rules and schedules. The parents rule the children with an iron fist. There is no exception to the rules and punishment is given in a very orderly and prompt fashion when it is needed. The down side to an authoritarian parenting style is that it usually does not allow for a lot of affection or warmth. Since children raised with this parenting style are usually not allowed to think freely or make decisions on their own they often grow up to have problems with thinking for themselves.

The **permissive parenting style** is the opposite of the authoritarian parenting style. The permissive parent lets the child have control. There are usually not a lot of rules and the rules that are made are often very lax. Broken rules often are not even recognized or even enforced. Parents that use this

parenting style feel that their children need to be free thinkers and be able to explore the world and learn for themselves without being held down by rules and strict structure. There is often a lot of affection and warmth with this parenting styles. The downside though, is that children do not learn that rules are sometimes necessary. They learn that no matter what they do - right or wrong- that they will not be punished. This can lead to a life long rebellion against any type of rule or structure.

The **democratic parenting style** is a mixture of the authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. A democratic parent will set rules that are necessary and enforce them, but they will also take each situation as it comes. Punishment is usually discussed with the child. Democratic parents are most interested in making sure their children understands why rules are in place and why some behavior is unacceptable. Democratic parenting is about letting children know when they do good and when they do bad making sure they understand why it is wrong. It is a style of parenting where everyone - parents and children- work together. Children will usually grow up to respect their parents and to be able to handle conflicts and problems in a reasonable manner.

Each parenting style has its pros and cons. Obviously, with the authoritarian parenting style the children are going to be very respectful and very

well behaved. The parents will have very little chaos and they will have a low stress level. With the permissive parenting style the parent is free to do whatever they want because they are not constantly policing the children. The family simply does their own thing, which can often lead to a lot of separation over time as everyone develops their own life apart from the family. The democratic parent in style requires a lot of work. Parents must constantly be talking with and dealing with their children in order to keep everyone involved in the family.

Nobody ever claimed parenting was easy. There really is no right or wrong to parent as long as children are cared for, happy and healthy. Parents can choose for themselves how they want to parent their children. Some parents simply fall into a parenting style that seems to fit their own life and their own beliefs. Others make a conscious effort to maintain a parenting style. However, a parent chooses their parent style, it is fine as long as it works for them and their children are taken care of.

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How To Be An Amazing Parent

No matter what your amazing life is right now or will become later you will encounter children. Even though you may decide not to have children yourself, I'm certain you have met children and thought to yourself, how did that happen.

I met a woman who made me smile when she told me, "Patrick I do love children, I just can't eat a whole one"

Many parents I meet have made the biggest mistake in their lives by placing more importance on the pursuit of money than on their children. Parents work long hours and children suffer. Never put money before children or your spouse, not if you want a loving relationship and an amazing life.

Some people ask how the art of lovemaking can make a child that has turned out to be such a monster. Well instead of you having to go out and purchase a book on parenting, I've included how to become an amazing parent here for you.

If you are currently struggling to work out how to love and guide your children, then this chapter will give you the answers. While you are absorbing this I

may smash a few myths about parenting along the way. So just read the principles and then you will understand when children become completely lost we can rescue them.

Every day I attend my office I find myself face to face with a parent. 90% of the time it will be a mother. She will explain to me in great detail what she thinks (guesses) is wrong with her child. Then will ask me if I would like to talk to the child to see if I can fix "it". She then walks outside and brings the child in to sit in my office while she goes outside and waits.



The expectation then of course is that the child who just walked in won't be the same child when it walks out again. Somehow I am going to "fix" this child, because obviously it's broken. Well at least that's what the mothers told me, and I have about twenty minutes to accomplish this.

So the first thing I do is remember all my training over all these years and then that little Mexican man named Cesar Millan (the dog whisperer). You can't imagine this famous television dog trainer training the dog and not the owner can you? Well in my office when it comes to training children, it involves the parents much more than the child. Just like my friend Cesar, he knows that the dog has been trained to behave in a certain way and he needs to retrain the dog owner. I need to retrain the parent as well as the child. That shouldn't be a surprise at all. Not many parents have been on training programs on how to raise a child.

In these following examples I am talking about children from the age of 8 years upwards. With the young ones ranging from 8 to 15 I can still get away with the trusted story of bank building. This is where I tell the children that no matter what they want in life, whether it's right now, at the weekend or next year, the only way the parents will say yes is if they have built enough good bankable currency to get a yes.

The Amazing Bank Technique

Here's how easy and profound it is. Children as we would agree need both discipline and praise. By the way I use praise 90% of the time, it's easier to look for and works 100% more for the child. Most parents I meet never understand praise and what it does for the child. They are too busy looking and expecting all the wrong things to happen. Yet again as I have been saying throughout this book, it is a trick of the mind, this time by the parent.

I first set up the child to understand that they need to do things around the house for free. This means jobs, any jobs they can handle. This teaches a child to contribute to the family and the household. Then once the chores are done I want the child to look for ways to build a bank of currency by way of more jobs but this time they will use the extra jobs they do as currency.

Here's how it works:

I was asked to help a 14 year old girl who didn't get this at all. She wanted no part of my plan at all, until I said, "I'm the only person on earth who can get your parents off your back". This got her attention. From there I explained how she would need to work very hard to reinstate herself in the family so she could be trusted by both parents again.

She had a history of running out of school, not doing homework, bad grades and using bad language. All of which remember had been trained. I managed to find the missing part of this little girls puzzle by listening to her, something she told me her parents never did. She would tell me that every time she attempted to tell her parents how she felt, they simply shouted at her and told her to go to her room.

So now motivated and looking forward to the next two weeks of hard work and looking for opportunities to do even more tasks for her parents this young child left happy. I didn't say a word to the mother.

Two weeks later the mother arrived back with her daughter and began to tell me how much the child had changed. The mother went on to tell me that her daughter had begun to work around the house, was being nice to her brother and sister and staying at school. When it was the daughters turn to come in she was angry and upset. She told me she had done all I had suggested but that her parents had not said well done or anything.

This is typical of many parents who don't even know how to give praise, let alone see times when the child needs praise. I spent most time with the mother explaining my idea of her daughter building a bank of jobs and good behavior in exchange for special treats like having a friend over to stay the

night. The mother went away and began to praise her child even more. They were both very happy the last time they came in all because we retrained both of them to look at life differently.

Change What Doesn't Work

Jack was an 8 year-old boy out of control (mothers description) who attended my practice for anger issues. The story was that the mother had lost control and Jack was winning and loving every minute of it. When I asked the mother if Jack misbehaved in front of his dad, the answer was no.

This is a very popular situation and often can cause big trouble in the marriage or partnership. The child's view of his father is very different from the view he has of his mother.

Little Jack had his mother running scared, the mother forgot who was the adult. She spent most of her day running after him, literally. If she was trying to get him to school on time he would be too quick for her and run around the house with her chasing and yelling at him.

However if dad was home little Jack was an angel. Do you get what's happening in this household? Yes Jack is in charge and mum is not.

My work had to begin with mum. I found out that mum did most of the parenting while dad was at

work. However dad was fed up with mum because she couldn't control the child, so the parents were in crisis.

The simple difference here was one parent represented fear to young Jack while the other parent didn't. The dad would just have to look at the child and Jack did what he was told. Mum however had to scream, chase and often smack Jack to get him to behave.

Of course like all mums do she would attempt to sit Jack down and talk to him about why he should have behaved. This technique of talking to a young child using adult language like the word respect does not work. She did this all the time and all the time it didn't work, she kept doing it.

Please remember this as long as you live your amazing life. When it comes to children and behavior fear is a greater motivator of than pain.

The dad produced fear in Jack and the mother produced pain. In screaming, chasing and smacking Jack all mum produced was short-term pain that only slowed Jack down.

It also trained Jack to never look for any other attention other than pain. He became used to the smacks and the screams.

I always ask every parent this question. "Did you treat your parents with this much disrespect when you were that age"?

Don't allow your child to be disrespectful

It still amazes me that while a mother is in the midst of telling me how disgustingly rude and disrespectful her child is she still doesn't get it. I have interrupted literally thousands of parents and asked that question and the parent will almost always say, "No way". When I ask the parent why they didn't abuse their own parents they normally tell me they were TOO AFRAID. So of course I can't help myself and I just have to ask the obvious question. So WHY do you continue to let the little child do it then?

The most common answer I hear is! "I don't know why".



The real answer was they became afraid themselves as parents. That's why they teach bad manners to their children. The parents become so afraid that in their mind it would be easier to let the child misbehave than have to tackle it head on.

A child needs your love yes, but you need to train that child. The problem is it's the other way around.

Let me explain...

I had two parents of a wild 15 year-old girl arrive at my office in tears. Monica by their account was without a doubt totally in control of both parents. She had obviously had similar training at an early age just like young Jack. Both parents had run out of ideas. Here is what they had told me they had done so far to change the girl's behavior.

1 Taken away her mobile phone

Why does a 15 year-old child need a mobile phone I hear you say to yourself?

2 Grounded her, which means not going out other than school

3 Stopped her from going on the computer and internet

So that was it, that was all they had done and they sat in my office, the mother with tears rolling down

her cheeks and the father the same. I had them understand that here they were sat in my office with the weight of the world on their shoulders and their daughter was running their lives and loving it.

I didn't even have to see the child. It was the parents that needed more help, so here is what I told them to do. Now I already knew how they would react to what I was about to suggest in the way of new strategies, but I also knew that from years of doing it this way, it would give us the correct outcome.

I began by telling them that her bedroom door needed to be removed then all of her clothes had to go. Then any trinkets, other furniture and makeup, all had to go. They were to empty the child's room until all that was left was a mattress on the floor and her school uniform. They had to make sure all the rest was taken to another place.

While I was outlining this strategy the two parents were looking even more afraid than when they walked in. Then I told them to telephone all of their daughter's friend's parents and let them know that under no circumstances were they to allow their daughter in to their house if she was to run away again.

As I continued with my plan the mother couldn't cope any longer and had to interrupt. I was waiting for her. Imagine this, here is me jumping out of my chair and writing on the big whiteboard all the

things we were going to do to their precious little baby!!!

The mother didn't disappoint me. Just like others before her she made attempts to let me know why they couldn't do what I was asking them to do. Even the father jumped in and said he thought the whole door thing was a little tough.

Now this happens every day in my office so you will have to forgive me for sounding a little tough here, but this always delivers the state of mind in the parents so I need to help them further.

I began to scream and shout at the top of my lungs at both of them. How dare you both tell me what you can and cannot do, what sort of parents are you anyway? Are you bad parents then, is that is? Do you hit her all the time? Do you give up on her because you can't get past your own feelings? Is that it? Are you hiding behind your own poor me attitude?

As I continued my rant I was in fact helping them get into a state of extreme fear and panic. Remember humans make up thoughts and emotions that produce behavior. These parents with the help of Monica had created an entire state of chaos and through perceived fear couldn't parent the child.

Both parents began to defend and make excuses saying I was taking it too far and that the

punishment didn't fit the crime. I was even more incensed than before. Now they were telling me that Monica, a 15 year-old girl who swears and abuses her family and drinks and smokes and stays out all night doesn't deserve any punishment. I hadn't even called it punishment, they did and the reason they called it punishment was because they couldn't bring themselves to do anything about it.

Now that the three of us were in the middle of a heated debate and both parents were in a state of fear and dread I wanted to make sure they knew I was serious about sorting this mess out. So I finished off by telling them that if they didn't do as they were told I'd make sure the authorities found out from my report that they were both terrible parents.

The reaction was the same as all the rest, they stopped, looked pale and their breathing became intense, just like a panic attack. Now was the moment that would change their lives forever.

Unknown to them during our little heated debate the mother kept putting her left arm onto her chest and breathing shallow every time I suggested things she should be doing. The father was similar as his tummy was busy moving in and out at the thought of removing his daughter's bedroom door.

So I had the mother sit in my big black "magic chair". I call it magic because that's where the magic

of change often happens. I had her tell me where she felt the dread and fear inside her and as expected it was in her chest. I had her close her eyes, see the image that helped her become afraid. Then I had her shrink that image smaller and smaller until it was the size of a "postage stamp", then blow it away. As she was doing that I had her rub her chest side ways across with her hand.

When she opened her eyes the fear had gone completely. I then did the same with the father and his result was the same, his fear had gone. Now I had sat in my office two parents with no fear at all. I have to do the same technique with every parent that brings in a child that has become out of control.

This I might add was the start of their change of view. Now with two parents who were not afraid anymore the task at hand became more manageable. They both listened to all the careful instructions and plans I had laid out for them both to do and they were to come back a week later.

Now you can see why I needed to have these parents truly feel and experience the pain they were going through at that moment. I cannot cure a phobia of spiders unless I have a spider to use to make sure the person really feels the emotion, even though you now know we make all these fears up by ourselves. I can't help someone overcome a fear of heights unless they make an attempt to be up high with me.

These parents began their conversation believing that Monica at 15 years of age was out of control and they didn't know how to stop it. It all became very painful emotionally and overcome with these made up emotions, the parents couldn't cope. Now they could understand their contribution to what didn't work before.

By having the parents reach a height of panic and anxiety that was as real as they could feel, it had a much more powerful affect when the fear is removed so quickly. I was then able to dismantle that feeling in a heartbeat.

It is so rewarding to see parents after this first session, which I fondly call "Imposing Sanctions". I have my brother in-law Keith to thank for that one by the way. This particular couple were even more joy to work with because they truly loved not only their daughter, but each other. Sometimes I'm faced with a couple that have lost the love they once had for each other, so then they communicate differently with the children, which can cause all sorts of problems. If a couple are not together on this it is very difficult to accomplish a complete turn around of bad behaviour by parents and children alike.

When they arrived back they had smiles on their faces which is always a good sign for me. They told me the child had reacted exactly as I had predicted. She had screamed loudly, thrown things around the house and ran away to her best friends place.

However the best friends mum had done as Monica's parents asked and not allowed her to stay in their home. Once again I see these techniques bring success to parents.

Now a point here...

There is almost always one person, normally a female (sorry no disrespect meant) who for personal reasons feels the need to become mother Teresa the second. You know the one I mean. She is normally a single mother (nothing wrong with them by the way) who is in desperate need of love and attention herself.

She will be the one who no matter what a parent might tell her, knows best and will no matter what you tell her she can't do, will take your child in for the night. She gets off on it. She craves this feeling she gets when a child runs away from home only to find refuge in her house. It is real and there are women who believe they should do this.

I had warned this couple that if they had one of these in their community then their daughter would know who she was and go there. Sure enough their daughter knew about this woman and tried to enter but this couple had taken notes and remembered. Cleverly the parents had asked a close friend to go and see this woman that night, so you can imagine the feeling this 15 year-old girl had when she had exhausted all other places to go, only to discover her

mothers best friend was there and demanded she leave at once. This woman was also able to explain to Mother Teresa the second that everything was going according to plan and there was no need for her to worry. Poor dear!!

The couple attended to every detail, they locked up their home like a fortress, turned off all the lights and went to bed. Sure they sat there worried, but they had each other to talk to and reassure that what they were doing was for the good of their child.

Now please remember this was a kid who knew her way around the streets, she was no angel of innocence. For the past two years she had broken away, put fear into her parents and walked the streets. However I was changing her little game. I had done this with hundreds of parents and when the parents carried out the plan to the letter it always worked. Always.

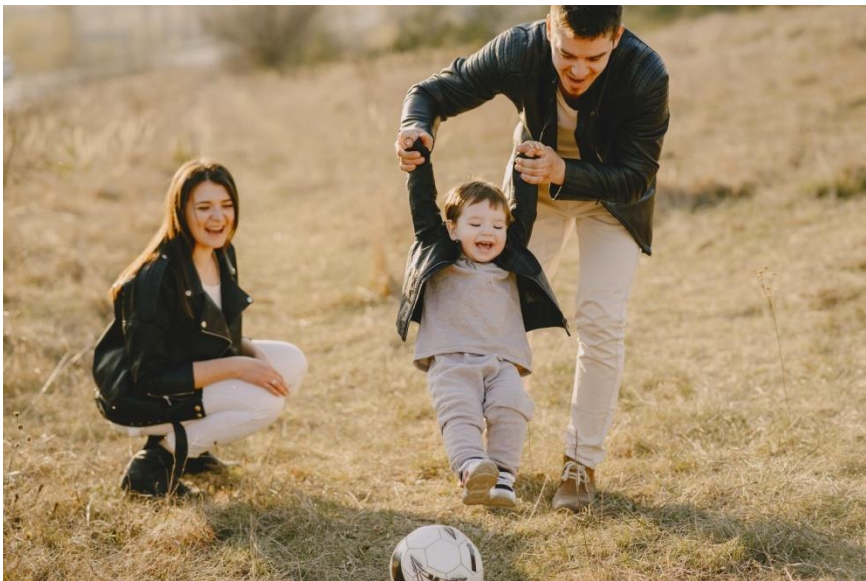
They told me just on 1.30am in the early morning they heard a knock on the back door and it was her. They remembered what to do. Both went to the door and didn't open it, but asked who was there. The daughter answered and the parent's job was to listen to her voice and make sure they heard something other than anger.

I didn't want them to see her, just listen to her voice first. The daughter was weeping, she had walked everywhere she could to seek shelter and friends but

found no one. It was in the middle of winter and the child had run out in a fit of anger and didn't take any warm clothing. Well her parents go rid of everything remember!

How different was that to the times she had ran away and gloated to her friends about how she could do what she wanted to?

The parents said they were convinced that their daughter was genuine in her tears and upon that they went about their next part. I use the house door as a symbol, I wanted the child to really understand and feel what it was like to have no where to go and that if she was smart she would return home a different child.



Before opening the door the parents outlined what her life would be like this time around. They had their list of requests and "must haves" in order to let her back into the house and back into the family.

If she agreed to these then they would open the door and they would all start with a clean sheet, no nagging and bringing up old issues. If she didn't agree then they would turn the light off and go back to sleep, leaving her on her own.

No wonder they were smiling, I was by then, they had been brilliant. However to my surprise the father moved to the door of my office and opened it and in walked this 15 year-old daughter of theirs. I was totally surprised and wondering if I was about to get a yelling at from her when she walked over and gave me a hug and said, "Mum and Dad told me you put our family back together for us, thank you so much". Well I can honestly tell you there wasn't a dry eye in the office after that, even the parents hadn't thought she would say that.

This family in crisis felt the same emotional pain millions of other families do across our planet. My hope in telling you about this family is to let you know there is such a thing as a happy family and if your family is in crisis the number one thing to remember is:

Don't trick your mind into thinking the child will do terrible things if you don't let them have what they

want. Children have to grow, they have to test and understand emotions. I've heard just about all the threats a child can offer to a parent and to me.

The child can and does attempt to convince their parents that these idle threats will be carried out. Once you give in to these "so called" threats, you have just trained that child to use them against you.

If for any reason you are dealing with your child and you suddenly feel anxious or fearful, instantly remove the feeling before you continue the conversation. I'VE SHOWN YOU HOW TO DO THAT. If you don't you will believe the child will harm itself and then YOU will become a parent afraid to discipline the child or give it a wonderful loving childhood, because you are coming from a view of fear and what if. Don't get fooled by threats of a child, these threats are really cries for help and they need their parents to take massive action to change things.

For example, an 11 to 16 year old wants to know if they fit in with others. This becomes their primary important priority in their life at this age. So communicate with them on this topic often so you can reassure them that they do in fact fit in.

Remember once children go to school

YOU ARE NO LONGER THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN THEIR LIFE ANYMORE.

I realize that this may come as a shock to some parents but please understand. Your love as a parent has to be a love of allowing, allowing them to fall, so they may get back up, a love of allowing them to fail, so they alone can work out how to succeed. Only then have you prepared your child for adulthood effectively.



All parents want so much more for their children and sometimes that love can blind them. Parents often use the phrase, "I just want to give my children what I never had". In saying this though I believe we should be teaching them how to be happy for no reason rather than attempting to run a comparison on how our own childhood was. It

should have no meaning to your own child's life, but we know it does. The best way to teach your children to live an amazing life, is to live one yourself. Teach by doing not by saying.

If you over compensate in order to rid yourself of the guilt and shame you still feel because of your own childhood, your child will suffer.

Over protective parents can ruin a young life before it has a chance to blossom. Love your children yes, but give them the freedom to learn from their actions and to take responsibility for their actions.

I used to read to my four sons when they were young and when I could I would always bring in a new book but make up the story rather than read the book. As my sons grew up I would tell them stories about what it was like when their great, great grandfather was alive, then about my life as a young boy their age.

They heard stories about how people would have to stand in a line all day in the pouring rain just to buy sugar. Times like that in our planets evolution that should teach lessons to future generations.

Today my sons are fathers and they often mention that those stories really grounded them and made them feel grateful and appreciate what they had and to understand what others didn't have.

My sons today as father's battle the minefields of mobile phones, internet and social network websites with their own children. I remind them to let their children know that once we could all walk down the high street shopping and if anyone was thirsty we would stop at one of the many drink fountains scattered along the street for a drink of FREE water. Today they build massive complexes and round you up in concrete shopping malls where the only place you can get water is out of a plastic bottle that costs you a fortune.

Here's the real issue. As the world continues to change so too should your skills as a parent.

Amazing Love Of A Child

TODAY it's the parents who NEED the love of the child because the parent isn't living an amazing life. Many of the parents I see have shattered relationships and marriages and highly stressful lives. So in order to have love the parent craves for the love of their child at any cost. Then when it's time to say no to the child and mean no the parent can't. Now we have a guilty parent and an out of control child being trained by the unwitting parent.

I can't remember how many smart little children have sat in my office and told me about how useless their parents are. They tell me things like "Patrick, my parents take my IPOD from me for being

naughty. They say it's gone for a week, but I know I'll have it back in two days, Mum always gives in".

This is the type of parenting that confuses a child and trains them that the parent doesn't mean what is said and therefore they can do anything they want.

Parents live in fear of many things today. You don't need to believe that trick. Stop, don't buy the myth of the child's threat. Instead be that honest reliable parent. This rubbish and politically correct phrase that the child has rights has been well over used.

No one has ever stopped me from filming or taking pictures of my children or grandchild. Plenty have tried but I told them to go away or else.

Managing Your Parenting Time

Managing the schedules of families living under the same roof can be a challenge given the current work demands and social activities of parents, coupled with the schooling and activities of their children. Things get more difficult for divorced or separated parents who may not get along and who may find it difficult to communicate about even simple matters. If these parents move on to second families with their own stresses, schedules and time demands, an explosive time management nightmare can result. Most of us are not in a position to hire a personal secretary to manage our time. So what can be done?

The single most effective step can be to document parenting time on a calendar shared by the parents. I recommend taking one day each year to construct a calendar documenting the parenting time for the coming year. After the calendar is constructed it can be given to the other parent for review and after any mistakes are corrected, it can be blessed and shared as the common agreed-upon schedule. It also can be shared with other interested parties such as grandparents and even the children themselves.

One may argue that their parenting time is flexible and fluid and that there is no need for such rigid

accounting of their schedule. Yes, co-parenting of non-cohabitating parents works best if each parent is open to accommodating the needs and schedules of the other parent. But the existence of a calendar does not mean it cannot be changed as needs arise. However, even if parents are flexible, each parent should do their best to arrange their lives around their parenting schedule and only swap days when absolutely necessary and when doing so will have minimal impact on the other parent's schedule.

There are many advantages to having a relatively predictable parenting plan and documenting that plan with a shared calendar. One of the most important advantages is that it allows for long-term planning of time away from your children, perhaps with a new spouse. It's nice to be able to look months in advance and plan alone-time.

Another advantage is to remind each parent when they are responsible for picking up their child. Eventually everyone makes a mistake. In the many years I have been co-parenting, I twice picked up my daughter on the wrong day and once failed to pick her up on a day that was my responsibility. My 22-year-old daughter still occasionally reminds me about the time I "abandoned" her at the day care 14 years ago. A shared calendar may be especially important in turbulent cases where the two parents find it difficult to communicate. Once a calendar is

constructed and shared, each parent can reference it independently.

Even your children can use the calendar to plan their activities. For example they may want to get together to work on a homework project with a friend who lives near their mother when they are scheduled to be with their mother, or plan a sleepover with a friend who lives near their father when they are with their father. Other advantages may involve third parties such as grandparents. They may want to plan a birthday celebration or just a visit when they know their grandchildren are around.

Another advantage to creating a calendar is that it forces you to interpret the court ordered parenting plan in advance before the scheduled parenting days occur. As with any written document there may be differing interpretations. It is better to implement the schedule in advance, to work out any disagreements. This may avoid surprises and conflicts that could arise when children are picked up or dropped off.

Constructing your calendar for the entire year requires a fair amount of work. You will of course need your divorce agreement. You probably need school schedules, a list of holidays, and whatever other data is required to create the calendar. Parenting plans usually specify parenting time in a prioritized fashion. For example holiday parenting

time normally overrides normal weekend and weekday parenting time. Vacation time also usually overrides normal weekend and weekday parenting time.

In the old days I would use a giant erasable wall calendar. First I would write in my weekday and weekend parenting time. Then I would look for holidays specified in the parenting plan and replace (physically erase) anything already written in those time slots. Then I would figure out when the school vacations were and replace anything already written with school vacation week parenting time, then summer vacation time, etc. At the end of this process I would then transfer everything on my wall calendar to a paper calendar and give it to my ex-wife for review. After a few iterations the calendar was deemed acceptable. Then the last step was to transfer the edited paper back to my wall calendar. It was a bit of work, but well worth it. For the entire year the agreed schedule was in place.

When Google calendar came along the process became easier. I got rid of my giant wall calendar. Instead I did the calculations directly on a paper calendar. Then I input the contents of my paper calendar to an electronic Google calendar. When that process was done I shared the electronic copy with my ex-wife for review. After review and after correcting any mistakes we were essentially done. Once in Google the calendar can be printed, easily

transmitted to other scheduling software, and even downloaded to your phone. In Google you can also simultaneously display your parenting calendar overlaid by other calendars. For example you might want to avoid scheduling a work meeting late in the day if you are also scheduled to pick up your children on that day. You can also set up notification to automatically notify you of parenting time via email, or phone. If days need to be swapped, it can be triggered by an email that can result in a calendar change that is then immediately available for all those who share the calendar. Things got a lot better.



Cultivating Good Parenting Skills

Good parenting skills, simply put, is the application of a series of clear-cut result-oriented approach in the rearing of children. In other words, this form of parenting goes way beyond the traditional form of parenting. And it is not so difficult to cultivate. It is within the reach of every responsible parents. This article therefore shows how good parenting skills can easily be cultivated.

As a matter of fact, it is a series of processes often involving the application of psychology as well as natural parenting instincts, which arises as a result of the fact that rearing children in our modern world has taken a whole new dimension. Children are growing up so fast nowadays that parents are finding it pretty difficult to catch up with their upbringing before they become young adults.

Thus, a rhetorical question arising as a result of this trend is this: "is it the children that have evolved to become superkids or the parents that have become less equipped to adequately take care of their natural role as parents?" Well, whichever it is, it is not the objective of this write-up to insinuate that parents have failed in their responsibility of rearing children. Far from it!

On the other hand, the fact remains that in order for parents to successfully carry out their parental functions they need to apply good parenting skills as well as love and logic parenting.

The Traditional Form of Parenting

Certainly, it is not enough for parents to be able to provide their children with food, shelter, clothing and good education. That is the traditional form of parenting.

Let us reason on this matter for a while. Is it really sufficient that you are able to provide your children with good and balanced diet? Well-built accommodation? Expensive clothes? And taking them to the most expensive school in the neighborhood?

What about their mental and psychological needs? Their emotional needs for love and affection? Who provides these for your children? Nannies? Babysitters? Is that what good parenting is all about? Certainly no! YES, No sir! That is the traditional form of parenting. Good parenting goes way beyond that.

Indeed, good parenting involves the satisfaction of the physical needs of your children, as well as their mental, psychological and emotional needs as well. And that does not even require that you be rich for you to be able to provide them for your children.

Remember, **love does not cost a thing**. And that is what every human being alive has plenty and a fully-loaded reservoir of. If you are not well-to-do, or barely attempting to make ends meet, take full advantage of this to the fullest! Yes, in many instances, it simply requires that you be there for your children when they need you the most.

And that, my good friend, is where many wealthy people miss the mark in the upbringing of their children. They replace their children's needs for love and attention with expensive toys, television sets, computer games and still more expensive toys. And, to make matters worse, they leave them at the mercy of nannies and babysitters to take care of. They are never there for their children **when they need them the most**.

Yes, money can buy a lot of expensive gifts for your children. But, money cannot buy them the love and attention that they need in order for them to develop into a well-rounded, confident and self-assured adult in their later years in life.

Applying Good Parenting Skills

A fundamental part of good parenting skills is love. As a parent, you need to realize that when you have children you come into a relationship with them very much like any other. Hence, you should know that as with any other relationship, love is the basis

and foundation of a lasting relationship with your children.

It is a course of love therefore for you to apply the following proven good parenting skills.



1. Understand Why Children Behave the way they Behave

The first place to start is for parents to understand the psychology of their children. After all, as the next closest person to them, after their spouse, parents need to understand the way their children think and reason and why they behave in a certain way. This is the most fundamental of all the good parenting skills there is.

So, why do children behave in the way they behave? Children behave the way they behave for the following reasons:

- Children lack any valuable experience to guide their behavior.
- Children are naive and behave stupidly sometimes.
- Children even tend to be outright rebellious sometimes.
- Children are a shade smarter nowadays due to advancement in technology than in the days of their parents.
- Children are very sensitive and cotton quickly to atmosphere and they can easily sense an insincere smile or false words.
- Children's behavior are often a reflection of the behavior of their close community, especially that of their parents - as they view these ones as their role model and see the world around them through their parents' eyes.

2. Love Your Children No Matter How Badly They Behave!

It is a smart parenting skill for you to love your children no matter how badly they may behave! Use the "rod" to discipline your child when you need to. But, do not fail to teach the child a vital lesson in the process. Never apply discipline to your child as if you are repaying a debt - that is, "tooth for tooth",

"eye for eye", sort of. Apply "discipline to the proper degree" while keeping the child at a loving distance to you.

And, remember, do not discipline a child repeatedly for the same offence through berating the child with your hurtful remarks. Once a child has been corrected for a bad behavior, **never make reference to that behavior ever again!** After the child has been disciplined, simply forgive the child and forget all about the bad behavior. If a child misbehaves again, discipline the child for that particular offence only and not in addition to a previous offence.

The trick here is to know what the "proper degree" is when it comes to disciplining an erring child, especially when the child has caused a great distress to the family - e.g. fighting in school or engaging in one mischief or the other within the neighborhood.

What you need to bear in mind while disciplining the child, however, is not to repay the child back in his or her own coin for the pain the child has caused the family. But, the objective should be to correct the child and keep the child back on the right track of responsible behavior. Hence, love the child and make the child understand that you love him or her and desire for him or her to make you proud by behaving well. That is how good parents behave!

To this end, accept your children under any circumstance and express genuine love and affection for them irrespective of their behaviour. Remember that children often see through any pretence and insincerity. Hence, you need to show this parental love sincerely from your heart and very often both in words and actions - e.g. with frequent touching, hugging and words like "I love you, sweetie" while looking into the child's eyes.

That is what being good parents is all about. This provides your children with a level of self-worth and keeps their self-esteem very high. Thus, your children feel loved and develop a sense of security and see the home as a true haven for them. So, the end result is that your children run home with their problems, rather than run away from it.

And that is why when a girl says to her dad: "I love you daddy. You are the best dad in the whole wide world!", she actually means it sincerely and genuinely - without any reservations whatsoever. Additionally, she is a reflection of the treatment she has received over time and is giving back what she has received unselfishly.

3. Praise Your Children!

Like everyone else, children need praise too for good behavior. They feel appreciated and wanted. And you should not be miser about it too. Praise the child lavishly when he or she is of good behaviour.

Use words like: "I'm so proud of you, honey", "You're the best, sweetheart".

After all, if you do not hesitate to discipline your child when the child behaves badly, why should it be difficult to praise him or her for behaving well?

Do not forget that children are in the learning process. So help the process along by teaching them proper behavior from improper ones by disciplining them for behaving badly while remembering to show appreciation for their good behavior. As you appreciate their good behavior frequently, their behavior will be more in line with what you want and expect of them.

The most powerful drive towards good behavior in children is in being appreciated. When a child does well at something, express your appreciation for them. When they do something nice for you, show your appreciation for that. Everyone likes to be appreciated, and children are especially sensitive to this.

According to one reputable online reference resource: "Praise your child often when they perform a good deed or accomplish a new task. Set simple, clear and consistent rules so your child knows exactly what is expected and the consequences of misbehaving or breaking the rules. Appreciation also helps them make that maturing

determination of what is right and what is wrong, based on how appreciated they feel.

"Maintain a consistent daily routine for your child as much as possible, and make sure your child gets lots of physical activity and time to play and socialize with their friends. Encourage your child to learn how to make appropriate choices, and encourage your child to do things for themselves. Allow your child to talk about strong feelings, which will help them work through their anger and frustration."



4. Do Not Have A Favorite Child!

Many parents are guilty of this act. They have a

favorite child - e.g. "daddy's pet", "daddy's little girl", etc. They do this for a lot of reasons.

One of the reasons is that the child is seen as an answer to their prayers, either perhaps because they did not start bearing children early in their marriage or because the child is their last child.

Do you have a favorite child? Why? If you have, and irrespective of whatever reason you have that favorite child, know now that it is wrong to have a favorite child. It is not in the best interests of your other children, neither does it help your "favorite child" in any way. You only end up pitching one child against the others.

Learn from the biblical example of Jacob. He had Joseph as his "favorite child". Briefly, Jacob got married to two sisters through no fault of his. He had deep, genuine love for Rachael, the younger of the sisters but, by trickery, was given the eldest sister, Leah in marriage by his father-in-law.

In order for him to have the love of his life Rachael, he was made to serve her father for fourteen (14) good years to pay the bride price. Some would see this form of bride price as extravagant, but not Jacob. Due to his love for Rachael, those years were like "mere days in his eyes".

Thereafter, childbearing became a problem for Rachael. But, her sister Leah, on the other hand,

was favored by God with childbearing - due to the injustice of being in a loveless marriage in rivalry with her own sister. Thus, it became a continuous rivalry between the two sisters for many years to come. So when Rachael eventually gave birth to Joseph, Jacob became so fond of Joseph to the exclusion of his other children. "Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the child of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colors." Gen. 37:3

So, what became the outcome of this "favorite child"? The account at Genesis (37:4) continues: "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." See the full story at Gen. 37:3-45:1.

Do you now see the foolishness of having a "favorite child"? So, please, please, please, for the love of God, do not have a favorite child!

Treat all your children equally. There should be no double standard in the sharing of reward for good behavior and certainly there should be no double standard in the apportioning of blame to whoever of your children that has broken a family rule. In this way, there is mutual cooperation and the unity of the whole family is maintained.

5. Set Good Examples for Your Children

As a parent, your children constantly look up to you for guidance in proper conduct and responsible behavior. But, where the problem lie is, children are good copycats. And they may never ask you what is proper behavior and what is not. So, they just observe you and adopt a style of "monkey do, what monkey see" behavior.

In his chart-busting hit track "Ghost",

Tupac Shakur sang in one of his lines:

"Some say I'm crazy. These punk-ass cops can't save me.

Mama tried to raise me but had too many babies.

Papa was a motherfucking joke. Used to find dope in his coat

and nearly choke when he told me not to smoke. Damn, don't get me started.

My mama smoke so goddamned much when she was pregnant.

I'm surprised I ain't retarded..."

The foregoing is enlightening indeed and describe in graphic terms as to why many kids behave the way they behave. Is your child a problem child? Is he or she "fond" of doing things to cause you pain and

grief? Find out why. Ask yourself: could you be doing anything that the child is copying from?

Similarly, what is the relationship between you and your spouse? Is it cordial? Are you chum buddies with your spouse? Or, is there a gulf separating the two of you? If there is, know now that your children's behavior may be a reflection of the disharmony between you and your spouse. Therefore, you owe it to your children to be at peace and happy with your spouse.

Also, when it comes to disciplining a child, never take the side of your child against your spouse in front of the child. You only give the child more room to be rebellious.

6. Expect Only the Best from Your Child

In web building there is a popular saying "What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG)". With rearing children, however, What You Expect Is What You Get (WYEIWYG). Often, if you expect the best behavior and performance from your child, *that* is what you will get.

As a matter of fact, children pick up on our beliefs about them. Hence, never use derogatory words on your child - no matter how badly the child has behaved. Never ever say to a child: "I know you will turn out a no-good!" or, even when they have become young adults and are passing through some

trying times, never tell your child: "You have never made a single decision that brought progress all your life!"

Please let me know. Are those words nice words to say to anyone, much less your child? If your spouse were to say those words to you irrespective of what you have done, would you be happy or feel offended? Then why say them to your own children?

That sort of speech only serve to crush their spirit and ultimately chase them farther away from you. And do not be surprised when your children grow up to become total strangers and, much worse, sworn enemies to you. God forbid! But, just to drive this point home, please listen to the lyrics of the famous rap and hip-hop superstar Eminem's "Cleaning Up My Closet" to understand what I mean here.

To this end, according to parenting-skills-explained.com, "form a self-concept that matches that belief, and perform accordingly. If we expect them to be lazy, they'll be lazy, which will confirm our expectations for them, and the **cycle toward failure is started**."

"If, on the other hand, we expect our kids to be successful, productive, creative, and responsible and honestly believe it to be true, then our children can't help but rise to the occasion and confirm our best opinions of them with their positive actions. So

expect **nothing but the best** from your children and watch them fulfill your expectations." Great advice indeed!

7. Give Your Children Quality Time

Your children also need what is commonly known as quality time too. Spend reasonable time with your children. Do not chase a child away when the child desires your attention and wishes to communicate with you - *no matter how busy you might be*. If you do, you only end up hurting the child's feelings.

And do not be surprised that the child withdraws to him or herself during the difficult teenage years as a result of the barrier which was created a few years back. What a dreadful thing it is to find that your child has become a teenager and a total stranger to you!

Good Parenting - An Art

Being a parent in itself is a joy like no other, but it takes a lot of efforts for parents to be good parents.

Good parenting is like an art. It is a skill that is learned over time, and with many mistakes. But, like every good thing that do not come easy, do not relent after just a few tries.

Hence, believe that you are the best person for the job when it comes to rearing your children. Adjust

to the new circumstances that continually arise as your children grow. Thus, one of the keys to good parenting is to adapt well to the various challenges rearing children presents and learn from the mistakes made in the process.

Rearing children is certainly not an easy task for responsible parents who are desirous of raising their children to become responsible adults later on in their life. But, it is indeed a worthwhile task at that - especially when your children grow up to become responsible adults. It is a source of joy to you when your children grow up, live responsibly, get married and give you grand-children in your old age to repeat the eternal process all over again. The joy knows no bounds.

If there is any duty that can be delegated to other people, rearing children is not one of them! It is a job that every responsible parents should do with joy and selflessness because the good parenting skills that you invest now will come back many years later to reward you bountifully.





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