

Love Has No Limits

A Guide to Effective Parenting

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Be Supportive Parents:

Did you know that the question children most frequently ask their parents is “Will you spend more time with me? In these times, as parents, you are working harder than ever to support your children.

After taking care of your personal and business responsibilities, your spare time can be limited. That is why it is so necessary to make certain that you spend *quality* time with your children.

Here are some examples of how you can make the most of your time with your kids:

- Attend your child’s activities: sporting events, school plays, school picnics, etc.
- Play games with your children, paint with them, throw a ball around in the back yard, or do chores together. Take walks and eat meals as a family. These are all perfect opportunities for you to learn more about what is going on in their lives.
- Be interested in what your kids have to say, how they are feeling, and what is concerning them.

Being attentive and showing your children that you care is a very important step in helping them feel good about themselves, which, in turn, will enhance the quality of your relationship with them.

Remember, it is essential that you create a safe and nurturing environment with your children - at home and wherever you are.

You can further support your children when you...

- * ...assist them in holding onto their vision even though unexpected obstacles may arise.
- * ...see what is behind their behavior. Give them encouragement to take a different path.
- * ...remind them to tell others as often as possible how much they care.
- * ...tell them to smile at the people they meet.
- * ...remind them to pay compliments to the people around them.

- * ...remind them that they have a right to happiness, and to be everything that they desire to be.
- * ...listen attentively... and not only to what they are saying. Read between the lines, feel the emotion behind the words. This will give you a clearer understanding of what they are feeling.
- * ...never judge them. Let them have the total security they need to feel safe to approach you about anything.
- * ...spend quality time with them on a daily basis.
- * ...encourage them to love themselves.

The more you practice the above, the closer you will be with your kids for years to come.

Speak to your Kids from the Heart:

Some supportive phrases:

- “I’m really proud of the effort you demonstrated.”
- “You did a great job.”
- “Hold your head high and feel proud of yourself.”
- “Have the power to believe in yourself.”
- “I will still love you no matter how you are feeling.”
- “My love for you is not dependent upon what you say or do.”
- “I support you in reaching your goals and achieving your dreams.”
- “Life is a wonderful journey...enjoy the trip.”
- “I respect your feelings and what makes you happy.”
- “You are beautiful.”
- “You are a special unique individual and deserve to be treated as such.”

Have you ever asked your child these questions?

- “Are you hiding how you are feeling because it doesn’t feel safe to tell me?”
- “I feel that something is bothering you, can you share it with me?”

Speak to your kids directly so you can support them in making the best possible choices throughout their lives.

Be a Positive Role Model

Your children spend a lot of time in your presence, especially when they are young. Because you are their main authoritative figure, what you do, how you do it, and who you are as a human being will dramatically affect their lives. Your children feel your energy.

Consider the following:

- **How you handle stress is so important!** If you get angry and start screaming when confronted with a stressful encounter, you will be teaching your child that this is the way to behave. For example, a parent is driving in the car with their child... someone cuts them off... and they immediately go into a rage. Especially when repeated over and over, the child learns that this is the right way to react in similar situations.
- **How respectful you are with others is equally important.** When your child observes you treating others with kindness, rather than disrespect, they have a positive example to follow. It is important to consistently demonstrate compassion towards others. Teach your kids, by example, that every individual is a person who has the right to be treated fairly and with dignity.
- **How accountable are you?** Do you keep your word all the time, some of the time, or none of the time? When you say you will be somewhere at a certain time to meet someone, are you on time? How you demonstrate this character trait to your children is vital. When it comes to accountability, your children will follow in your footsteps. If you cannot be counted on to keep your word, it gives them a reason for not keeping theirs. This is one of the traits that can wreak havoc in the lives of many families and seriously affect the degree of success a child will have in later years.

Remember the more you demonstrate positive values, the better prepared your kids will be for handling challenging situations in their lives.

You Count...More Than You Think!

It is essential to remember that you, the parent, count very much in this whole equation. Keeping ourselves well is an essential part of keeping our children well. It's like being on a plane...when the oxygen mask falls in front of us, we must first put it on ourselves and *then* help our children. Here are some important reminders of what you can do to **maximize your own well being**, which will benefit your children tremendously.

The 10 Daily FUNdamentals to Greater Well-Being

Practicing these fundamentals every day will enhance your concentration and creativity, significantly increase your productivity, dramatically improve relationships in your life, boost your self-confidence, improve your overall health, and help you master daily stress.

- Love, Kindness and Respect for Others
- Positive Environments / Positive Attitude
- Organization / Time Management
- Maximum Comfort (air quality, clothing...)
- Personal Care
- Pacing Ourselves Throughout Each Day
- Nutrition / Eating Habits
- Breathing techniques
- Posture
- Exercise (Aerobics/Stretching/Toning)

Practice yoga and meditation, and read inspiring books...

Make certain you find some time each day for you.

By bringing yourself into balance and managing your daily stress, you will be able to handle your life with greater ease, which will immediately be reflected in a positive way as you interact with your family.

The more relaxed and patient you are, the more your children will feel comfortable to open up to you about what they are feeling.

You will also be in a better state of mind to make important decisions, rather than quick judgements. No one likes a “critical” parent.

Make Your Children Top Priority

Many of us are leading very busy lives. How often are we so preoccupied with our personal lives or work that we fail to give our children the special time they deserve? Though it's sometimes difficult, spending quality time with your children pays off big. The more you are there for them, the less likely it will be that they will encounter problematic situations. This will make your life a lot easier in the short and the long term. Most importantly, you will be building a stronger relationship with your children, gaining their trust and helping them build self-confidence.

Sometimes, being there for your children means making personal sacrifices, putting aside things that may be of importance to you. Your child needs your guidance. Whatever it takes, you must be there to give them the benefit of your knowledge and insights. That does not mean that what's important to you doesn't matter. What it does mean is that if your child reaches out, you are there for them at that time. Living in today's world, being there for them in every situation is not always possible, but it must be the rule rather than the exception. After all, what's more important than your child feeling secure and supported? If you are there for your kids, you will be positively affecting them for years to come.

Tell your child what you hold SACRED

I hold nature sacred

I hold speaking the truth sacred

I hold the hearts of people sacred

I hold you sacred

Practice the Skill of Listening:

Listening to whatever your children have to say creates a safe environment for them to express themselves. In addition to hearing what they are saying, however, it's also important to listen to what they are *not* saying. In other words, read between the lines. Sometimes, the words children use are just "cover-ups" for what they are really feeling.

An open channel of communication is very important for children, as it is sometimes difficult for them to communicate their feelings. It is essential for them to be able to trust that they won't be judged, regardless of what they are saying - no matter how foolish it might sound.

Parents can encourage their children to make intelligent choices by discussing different options and helping children see the possible consequences that their choices might create.

Pay complete attention to your child. When your child comes to you to share something, stop whatever else you are doing. Whatever you are reading in the paper or watching on TV is not as important, at that moment, as being with your child. When your children are speaking to you, look them in the eye, and let them speak from their heart.

When your children talk to you, feel the emotions behind their words. This will give you additional insight as to how they are feeling about what they are sharing with you. It is very important for you to be on top of their emotional well-being.

- Help your child to assimilate what they are telling you, so they can apply it to their own lives.
- Help them to understand the meaning behind what's bothering them.
- By listening to your children, you can help them solve their problems.
- Be sure that you are talking **to** your kids, and not *at* them.
- When your children come to you with their problems, listen to what they have to say, and ask them questions to get them to open up.
- Help them define the problem, discuss possible solutions with them, and, if possible, come up with a way to deal with the problem right then and there. This will make your kids feel good and give them the problem-solving skills they will need throughout their lives.
- Support your children in expressing their feelings. Self-Expression is important to the growth process.
- Being attentive - showing your children that you care is a very important step in helping them feel good about themselves, which, in turn, will enhance the quality of your relationship with them.

Check out the wonderful “Listen to the Sounds” recording on I-Tunes, written by David Giller

Discipline

How challenging is it to be consistent with discipline? In one moment you handle a situation in a very firm, strong way and, in another moment, it’s like you are an entirely different person...not very effective at all. You may not take the time to handle the situation very appropriately, so the punishment doesn’t match the behavior. Much of this is due to busy schedules and perhaps not thinking things out with a clear mind. Maybe you just didn’t have the time.

You are rushing off to work. Now is the time you need to remember to be calm and clear, and not to get caught up in your own baggage. It is in that moment that you need to remember that “Breath is the Key to Life.” Breathe! Take some long deep breaths. Slow down...you’re moving too fast. Breathe! If you are overreacting, that’s a wake up call for you to SLOW DOWN!!!

Do you ever find that you are over-reacting to a situation? This occurs when we don’t take the time to address the situation as it happens. “How could this be?” we think. Well, here’s an example: We’re rushing to leave for an important meeting at the office, with one foot out the door and we notice that our child is acting in a certain way that is inappropriate. We don’t say anything because we’re running late. By not saying anything at that moment, we are signaling to our child that it’s okay to act that way. Then, one day, we see this disastrous behavior again and we over-react. This could have been avoided had we taken the time to handle things appropriately when they first happened.

Another situation when we over-react with our kids is when something upsetting is stressing us out, and we become enraged over something quite insignificant.

How Did Your Parents Punish You?

Did they treat you fairly? Were they abusive? Did your dad whip you? Scream at you? Take his belt to you? Hurt you? Some parents have found that they are just repeating some of the terrible actions that were acted upon them as children. If you find that this is true, find some help. Unfortunately, you received the brunt of your parents’ anger and just carried it over...acting out like your parent(s) did. Just remember, if you are noticing this kind of behavior, there is a lot of help out there. If you need it, just reach out. If this is not the case and you are not over reacting, then let’s get back to some very sensible ways of dealing with discipline.

Time Outs

Some parents find that “time outs” are a very effective way of handling disruptive behavior with very young children, ages 2-4. It is most effective when used to change very negative behaviors such as hitting, kicking, or throwing things. The child learns at a very young age that there is some kinds of behavior that are unacceptable. So when this type of conduct occurs you let your child know in a very calm, but firm way that, *“Hitting hurts, you may not hit people.”* or *“Kicking hurts, that is not acceptable behavior.”* Next, tell them that they are going to have a “time out.”

Then, either send them to their room or have them sit on a chair. By taking them out of the activity and having them sit in a corner on a chair or in their room alone, they can think about their actions. If they will not walk willingly, you may have to say, *“You can go on your own or I will help you.”* Then lead them by the hand. Do not yell, drag, or threaten them. If this isn't working, another way is simply picking up the child and physically moving them to another place. Then, of course, another possibility is just to give them a huge hug and hold them until they calm down.

Difference Strokes for Different Folks

The type of discipline to use, of course, depends on the age of the child. If the child is older, another discipline is needed - like taking away the privilege of phone, TV, listening to music, or preventing them from doing something special that they are looking forward to - like going to the movies, or a party, etc. Sometimes, with older children, reasoning may work if you have developed a really clear means of communication.

However, as we have spoken with parents, we have found that most parents explore their own special way of disciplining their children. The best thing we can hope for is for parents to be consistent. This in itself will assist greatly with the child learning boundaries.

When Kids Fight, parents get frustrated and angry, and feel quite helpless. One thing to do is see how we can assist kids in fighting less. The following tips may come in handy.

Kids fight less if parents...

1. Don't compare one child to another
2. Give your children permission to do something to get their hostile feelings out, like hitting a pillow or swinging a stick on an old tire in the yard.
3. Give your kids an opportunity to stop fighting by letting them know that you will take the game away until they stop fighting.
4. Avoid hitting. Kids follow your lead.
5. Praise kids and hug them when they cooperate with each other.
6. Let kids express their feelings. “I hate my brother, I feel like beating him up. Let them know their feelings are okay by saying sentences like “I can tell that you are really

angry with your brother. Use your words and let him know how angry you are feeling right now.

7. Check out your children's diet. Are they having a lot of sweets that are causing them to be hyperactive? Are they drinking sodas? Are they eating foods that they are allergic to? A good diet is fundamental in preventing hostile behavior.

Two very important points.

- Make certain the punishment fits the behavior and
- Make certain you are not making empty threats. You must follow through with what you say. Otherwise, you will not be taken seriously and you will have some wild children running your household.

Create a safe environment for your child to express their feelings.

Help them to feel comfortable and secure to approach you about any subject and to express their true and honest feelings. Say to them "I love you unconditionally, even though I may not agree with your behavior."

Unleash your Child's Creativity:

When there is work that has to be done for school, it can feel like work or it can be **inspiring and creative**. One of the things that frequently happens is that the teacher, parent or mentor tells the child how to do something rather than inspiring them to creatively figure out how to do it for themselves, which will help them in developing a new set of skills.

When it feels like work instead of inspiring and inventive, it takes the enjoyment out of the situation. To combat this problem, we can encourage our children to find exciting ways to approach very mundane tasks.

This can begin with the way we do different chores around the house...or the way we approach learning about history...or the way we approach an assignment at school. How creative can we be? Maybe, you say to yourself, what are they talking about... I'm not very creative. Well, then, it is time for you to begin to think outside of the box yourself. You will see what a difference it makes in your child's life when you suddenly do things in a new and different way.

For example, how many of us have had an art teacher reprimand us for making a sky pink or green or purple, instead of blue? Well, one might say, the sky is blue...or another way to look at it is to say "a purple sky is very creative and makes me feel good." It's so nice to have the opportunity to make a creative painting that reflects the way you are feeling.

"Feelings" are important. Supporting your child in "self expression" and particularly

expressing their feelings is essential in the growth process.

Another thing that stands in the way of our creativity is the FEAR of being judged. That is a major thing that prevents people from expressing themselves. Either they are afraid of looking “foolish”, looking “dumb,” or making a “mistake.” A good way to approach life is to practice being courageous...**acting in spite of our fear**. This is very important! As parents, we have made many mistakes. So, perhaps, one place to begin is to be able to admit that we do make mistakes. Then, our children can realize that a “mistake” is not the end of the world.

Another important reminder is for us to surround ourselves with positive reinforcements and constantly make positive statements to our kids. This will help enhance their self-worth and self-esteem.

Remember, we want to **inspire the “spirit” of our children to soar**.

Allow Your Children to Play:

Nowadays, with time as a premium, some parents frequently think of play as a frivolous activity. In reality, play is a vitally important part of a child’s learning process, for playtime is the time when children expand their imaginations.

Let’s look at what some of the great minds said about imagination and play:

- **Albert Einstein** said, “imagination is more important than information.”
- **Jean Piaget**, looking at play as it relates to cognitive development wrote, “Each time one teaches a child something he could have discovered for himself, that child is kept from initiating it and consequently from understanding it thoroughly.”
- French philosopher, **Michael de Montaigne**, considered “play” a child’s “most serious-minded activity.”
- **Friedrich Froebel**, the German educator who coined the word “Kindergarten,” described play as a “child’s garden” in which the youngster unfolds and blossoms like a flower.
- A particularly unique notion of play comes from Russian psychologist, **Leo Vygotsky**, who said that through play, youngsters create new cerebral processes and restructure old ones. The child moves forward essentially through play activity. When children create imaginary situations, they learn social skills, create rules, resolve conflicts, and practice self-control as their language and communications skills grow.

Here are some TIPS other parents have found helpful that we would like to pass on to you:

- I can never tell my kids too often how much they mean to me and how much my husband and I love them.
- Remember that children with high self esteem can handle peer pressure and negativity much better. Otherwise, your child might be anxious and have a hard time finding good solutions.
- Be nurturing, affectionate, and generous with your hugs and kisses.
- Little things mean a lot.
- Leave uplifting notes in lunch boxes.
- Give positive, accurate feedback.
- Create safe, nurturing environments.
- Remind your child they have many supportive people around: parents, relatives, friends, classmates, coaches.
- Notice your children's good qualities
- Let your kids know how much you appreciate who they are, what they say and what they do.
- Just because someone says something, doesn't make it so. Even though a bully says hurtful things, parents, teachers and friends can assist in pointing out that it isn't true, and help the child develop the strength to withstand such comments.
- Notice their abilities.
- When your kid says phrases like: "I'm stupid," "What's the point," "I'm feeling hopeless," "I'm an idiot...", immediately encourage them to change their talk to, "I don't understand," "I don't know what to do," "Can you help me?" Ask them why they are saying these things.
- A parent can assist their children in developing qualities they need to achieve their dreams and enhance their self-development.

- Assist your child to develop good work habits. Teach them how to organize their things.
- Encourage your children to discuss their dreams, feelings, responsibilities, and what they love. Only when your heart is open, can you reach the sky.
- Teach your children how to identify and write down what needs to get done each day, and then help them to prioritize.
- Share family responsibilities and concerns.
- Encourage family teamwork and support.
- Teach your children that success is built on failures, as well as successes.
- Remember we are all interested in developing a strategy that works.
- Parental involvement is an important key towards enhancing self-esteem in your children.
- Be kind to yourself. You're doing the best you can

Some Fun Things to Do With Your Children:

- Coloring
- Puzzles and games Mazes...where there are obstacles, you can overcome them together
- Connect the dots...
- Hang the man
- Cut out pictures from a magazine and paste on pages.
- Make collages from photos of self, families and friends
- Stickers
- Tracing
- Read stories with your child and have your child read to you.
- Take walks
- Ride bikes
- Go to the park
- Go to the ocean
- Walk in the woods
- Camping
- Fishing

- Watch the stars
- Go to museums
- Historical sites
- Movies
- Zoo
- Botanical gardens
- Ice skating
- Roller blading
- Walk to the lake
- Boating
- Build sand castles together
- Art projects
- Produce music together - sing or play instruments
- Improvise
- Play different roles together ...your kid is the Captain of his ship and you are the mate, help plot out their course...let them say what they want to do and write it on a paper...or paste pictures on the sheet of paper.
- Create a life size drawing of your child on brown paper. Have them lie down on the paper-draw an outline and have the child color in their clothes etc. Fun to put up on wall and save to look at next year.

“You may give them your love, but not your thoughts...

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies, but not their souls...”

- A quote from “The Prophet”

by Kahlil Gibran

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