

10 Steps to More Effective Parenting

Being a parent isn't easy. It could easily be compared to rocket science or chemistry, if the answers were so cut and dry. But they aren't. Every kid is different. Every parent is different. Every home situation is different. Parenting techniques are like fingerprints. No two are the same. Despite popular belief, kids were not put on this planet for the sole purpose of bringing us joy and happiness. Just like, we, parents, were not put on this planet to make our kids' lives miserable contrary to what most teenagers believe. There is a give and a take. A balance that must be achieved for a successful relationship. Below are some tips that will help move you and your child toward a better understanding of each other.

- 1. Ask your child questions about their day and show genuine interest. "How was your day?" is not enough. Dig deeper. Find out what's going on in your child's life. Find out what's going on in their friend's lives. Oftentimes these things are similar.**
- 2. Listen to their answers. It's not enough to just ask. Listen to the answers. Interact. Show genuine interest. Make eye contact. Ask more questions. Get feedback.**
- 3. Teach your child life skills. Show them how to cook, change a flat tire, how to fix a computer, how to crack an egg, how to clean the bathtub and toilet, how to clean themselves. Most of us take for granted that kids just "pick up" a lot of skills by being around them or it is just assumed that they know. Show them how to do the things you love and show them how to do the things that aren't so pleasant. One day they are going to move out and the toilet is not going to clean itself.**
- 4. Pick your battles. Not everything should be a battle. You may be the parent but you don't always have to be right or be the winner. It is perfectly ok to admit that you were wrong. It's perfectly ok to admit that sometimes you don't know what you are doing or why you are doing it. Kids are human. They need to know that the adults in their lives are also human.**

- 5. Encourage your child to make good choices. You can do this with a simple “make good choices” as they head out the door. It shows them that you care about what they are going through, but also that you still trust their judgement. When the day is done, talk about the choices they made throughout the day, big and small. Ask them what good choices they made, what bad choices they made, and what they can do differently or the same tomorrow. Tell them when they’ve done a good job.**
- 6. Talk about sex. Being in denial never stopped a baby from being born. Kids are talking to someone about sex. It might as well be you. Even if it makes you uncomfortable, making sure your child has accurate information is well worth squirming in your seat. After all, sex is human nature. It’s a curious thing. It’s also inevitable. Keep the lines of communication open. You don’t want the first sex talk to be, “what do we do now?”**
- 7. Talk about the future. Find out your child’s plans and help them set realistic goals. College, trade school, technical school, starting their own business, etc. You may be surprised to find out your child has an amazing talent that doesn’t require a college degree to be successful or you may not even know that your child has the steady hand of surgeon. Ask them their plans.**
- 8. Make a plan B. Help your child figure out their back up plan. Even though it’s not always necessary to use it, not everyone makes it as the next NBA Star or the next Country Music sensation. Support your child’s dreams. Encourage them, even, but make sure there is a fall back plan if needed.**
- 9. Apologize. When you’re wrong, say you’re sorry. If you never apologize to your child, they will grow up to be adults who are reluctant to apologize. It does not make you weak. It makes you human. It shows them that everyone makes mistakes and saying you’re sorry---and meaning it----often helps heal hurt feelings.**
- 10. Say I love you. Hug your children and tell them you love them. Often. If you’ve never been affectionate, start with a high five, a handshake, or an elbow nudge. Just give them a gentle reminder that you are accessible and tell them you love them daily. Don’t assume they know. That’s not what you want floating around if something terrible happens to you... or them.**