

PARENTING

Parenting can be the most rewarding and the most challenging work of adult life. Since parenting is typically learned from “on the job training,” there is plenty of room for mistakes. It is important that you do not allow the past mistakes from your parents to become transferred to your own parenting behavior. Consequently, it is important to be open to learning new parenting skills as you grow through the developmental stages with your children. The following are some useful hints for different stages of development:

Infants and pre-schoolers:

- Provide abundant love through positive words and affectionate hugs and kisses.
- Discipline means teaching rules for appropriate behavior. It is the first step in their learning to be responsible for their own actions and it builds self-esteem.
- Punishment is a consequence when the child acts inappropriately. It should not be harmful or excessive and it should fit the misbehavior.
- If you have to say “no” repeatedly, try redirecting their attention. For example, remove your children from what they are doing and get them interested in another activity.

Children 6 –12 years:

- Provide abundant love through praising words and affectionate hugs.
- Since children learn mostly by experience, be a positive role model.
- Have family meals together as often as possible. Ask them about their daily activities.
- Tuck them into bed at night. While sitting on their bed give words of encouragement.
- Show an interest in what they do. Go to their games, concerts, parent’s day, plays, banquets, and award ceremonies.
- Help your child develop tolerance toward others with different values and backgrounds. Point out other people’s strengths.
- Punishment is a consequence when the child acts inappropriately. Talk about the misbehavior and discuss what can be learned from what happened.
- When your child talks to you, give them your undivided attention. While they are talking, don’t read, watch TV, or busy yourself with other tasks.
- Provide information to strengthen awareness (e.g., drugs, dating, sex, money, etc.).

Teenagers:

- Provide abundant love through praising words and hugs (if they will allow it).
- Have family meals together as often as possible. Ask them about their daily activities.
- Continue to show an interest in what they do. Go to their games, concerts, parent’s day, plays, banquets, and award ceremonies.
- Regularly spend time doing an activity, e.g., shopping, sporting event, hobby, etc.
- Pick your battles. Don’t argue about small stuff. Don’t criticize hair, clothes, their way of speaking, friends, etc. These issues are surface issues and should not be criteria for judging their worth as individuals. The more important issue is developing your relationship with the teen and learning what they stand for, how they treat others.
- Be consistent in your decisions. Keep advice in the “here and now”.
- Both adults and kids have a right to a bad day. Parents should avoid talking when they are angry, frustrated, or disappointed with their teen. Get to know who their friends are and the adults around them.
- Be reasonable; keep rules and the consequences consistent.

When to seek counseling for your child or yourself:

As a parent you will typically experience a wide spectrum of social, emotional, physical, and behavioral issues and difficulties over the years with your child. Most of the time you will overcome or out-grow these issues and be able to deal with the problems that come your way. However, as a parent, you must be realistic and responsible enough to recognize when it is time to consult a professional to assess the situation. Overall it would be recommended to contact a professional:

- When the child exhibit behaviors or verbalizations that refer to self-harm or harm to others.
- When child's behaviors or circumstances continue after you have exhausted your abilities.
- When there are issues or experiences that exceed what you have been able to handle.
- When you easily become emotionally and/or physically overwhelmed or frustrated during child-parent issues.
- When a deterioration of academic, social, emotional, and behavior changes take place in your child without a resolution and continues past a normal period of time.

Treatment:

Counseling is a vital part of the recovery process for these issues. Often counseling will take place with the child individually and/or with the parent. Parental involvement in counseling is a big part of the recovery process. Parents are encouraged to seek emotional, Spiritual, and physical support from family, friends, and the church through their difficult times of parenting. During the evaluation, it may be recommended for the child to consult with a physician for a physical evaluation.

For more information or help, please call:

MASTERPEACE Center for Counseling and Development

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