

Parenting Mistakes Are Usually Survivable and Forgivable

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If I could go through just one day with my kids without making a parenting mistake - what a day that would be! No grouchiness in the morning, the right answer to their curious question after school, the ideal mood at bedtime to induce cooperation and quick slumber. Hmmm....no, no, and no. Where did I go wrong, and can I salvage their childhoods?

There is no such thing as a perfect parent - don't even go there. Latching on to perfectionism will lead you straight to a life of misery, and probably an anxiety or depression disorder. No, kids don't need their parents to be perfect, and thank goodness. They just need their parents to do their best.

Fortunately, kids are quite resilient. No matter what is going on, they really just want to be loved and know they matter to you. The rest is all negotiable gray areas anyway. If you had to live in a cardboard box with your mom or live in a great neatly kept house with strangers, where would you rather live? Kids who feel loved and valued by their parents would live in the box.

Kids are willing to forgive when you show true remorse for snapping, forgetting something important, or wrongly accusing them. Whatever your transgression, it's the opportunity to reconnect and be honest that really matters. Believe me, they'll hope to get your forgiveness some days - like when they burn a hole in the carpet or dent your car goofing off with their friends.

When you make them feel uncomfortable by giving good solid discipline, this is no time for apologies. Seeing them cry or be mad at you is a result of their mistake, not yours. Maybe this is speaking to the obvious, but don't confuse this kind of situation with one where you clearly make a blunder. When you mess up, it's your job to make it right with them.

If you need to make amends, you don't need to say a lot. Just be genuine and offer affection. They may not want it right then, but let them know the door is open. Showing that you make mistakes is part of teaching them how to deal with mistakes when they grow up. They won't soon forget your examples. These moments may even be surprising opportunities to talk about tough subjects.

So...I'm not sure when I'll be cured of grumpy mornings or impatience during the drive home from school. That seems unlikely. But I'll do my darnedest to make sure they know they are well loved and have emotional freedom in their home. They will always know that they matter to their parents. Maybe they'll even forgive me for my grumpy mornings.

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