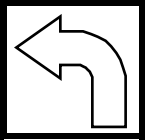


PARENT POINT



No.1

Being a Parent

Raising a child is an enormous responsibility. Most parents learn as they go, influenced by the way they were brought up or by what they have read or watched others do. Parenting styles may be different but we all share a common goal. We want our children to turn into healthy, happy, well adjusted, successful, honest, caring, responsible adults who will be respectful of other's feelings and property, be able to get along with others and be able to cope with difficulties! Your children and your community rely on you to do this well.

Your feelings: As a parent you will experience a range of emotions such as love, joy and pride but also more frightening emotions which can be very strong, such as anger, panic and hatred. Often parents feel that they are not appreciated by their children or valued by others. Such emotions can leave you feeling guilty as well as thinking you are not a good parent. It is important to remember you're not expected to be perfect and that all parents feel that they have made mistakes at some stage. Most parents at some time feel tired and upset and question what it is all about.

Value yourself: Be proud of the efforts you have put in through the day, no matter how small the tasks. When talking to friends about parenting, don't moan and groan, talk of it as a special career.

Look after yourself: See yourself as a person first and as a parent second. Be careful not to expect too much of yourself and of others. Take notice of your own special talents. Praise yourself for simple things. Don't dwell on your mistakes. Mistakes are for learning from, not for making you feel bad.

Reminders

- Parenting is forever, so make the foundation solid.
- Find out the right ingredients to raise a happy child.
- It is a marathon run not a short distance run so pace yourself.
- You are the influential person in your child's life.
- Mistakes only matter if you keep repeating them.
- Don't waste time and energy feeling guilty ... change what you are doing.
- Seek help from others, but keep on believing in yourself.

Accept your feelings: Understand that mixed feelings are normal. At times of stress or changes in your family you can be swamped with a range of emotions. At these times it is important to *reach out* and *speak out* to your partner, to your friends, to family members or to someone not caught up in the emotion.

Reward yourself: Do at least one thing a day that makes you feel good. Get someone to fill in so that you can have 'time out' to do whatever you feel like doing even if its 30 minutes - have a bubble bath, read a book, kick a football.

Talk to yourself: The way in which you talk to yourself matters. If you say 'My child is trying to get at me' or 'Why should I put up with this?' you will react very differently than if you say to yourself 'What's happening to my child to make him behave like this?'

Trust yourself: Listen to other people's ideas (this is how we all learn) but do what feels right for you. Trust your own judgement.

Work out your values: A shared and clear understanding of parenting practices makes for an

easier road. Try to reach some common agreement with your partner if you have a difference of opinion. If you differ try not to put each other down.

Sorting and fixing: If you have violence in your home, money difficulties, ill health, arguments with neighbours or hassels at work, you must try to sort out the problem. Avoiding doing something about it will only make things feel worse for you. This may mean that, for the first time in your life, you seek advice from a professional if you have been unsuccessful in sorting it out within your family.

Take care of your relationship: Make regular time for your adult relationship where you can be alone together, do things you enjoy together, talk over the day's happenings, share ideas, share feelings and just relax. These times are really important to clear up any misunderstandings and one of the very best gifts that you can give to your children.

Managing anger

There are times in all parent's lives when they feel very angry. Most of the time parents manage to handle it successfully, but sometimes the anger can be in danger of getting out of control. Anger is always mixed with another feeling such as guilt, frustration, sadness, feeling unwanted or feeling used. Try to do something about whatever is causing the underlying feeling if you can. Get to know your own body signs when anger is building up and act before it blows up. Work out when you are most likely to lose your cool and plan to do something different at those times e.g. when you first get home from work. Get some space - go outside, go for a walk or a run. If you have very young children and no-one to mind them take them with you.

The critical thing is to admit you are angry and deal with it in a way that won't harm your family.

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