

Counselor's Corner

September 28, 2020

Steps to Effective Parenting ~ Part 1

Practitioners who work in children's health often are asked about which parenting techniques are most effective. This week and next, I will share guidance from medical experts and pediatric specialists at Nemours, which is one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the United States devoted to children's health. These tips can lead to more fulfilling and influential parenthood.

Boost Your Child's Self-Esteem

Kids start to develop their sense of self as babies when they see themselves through their parents' eyes. Your tone of voice, your body language, and your every expression are absorbed by your kids. Your words and actions affect their developing self-esteem to a great extent. Praising accomplishments, however small, will make them feel proud; letting kids do things independently will make them feel capable and strong. By contrast, belittling comments or comparing a child unfavorably with another will make kids feel worthless. Choose your words carefully and be compassionate. Let your kids know that everyone makes mistakes and that you still love them, even when you do not love their behavior.

Catch Kids Being Good

How many times do you react positively or negatively to your kids each day? You may find yourself criticizing far more often than complimenting. The more effective approach is to catch kids doing something right. Make a point of finding something to praise every day. Be generous with rewards — your love, hugs, and compliments can work wonders and are often reward enough. Soon you will find you are "growing" more of the behavior you would like to see.

Set Limits and Be Consistent with Discipline

The goal of discipline is to help kids choose acceptable behaviors and learn self-control. They may test the limits you establish for them, but they need those limits to grow into responsible adults. Establishing house rules helps kids understand your expectations and develop self-control. A common mistake parents make is failure to follow through with the consequences. You cannot discipline kids for talking back one day and ignore it the next. Being consistent teaches what you expect.

Make Time for Your Kids

It is often difficult for parents and kids to get together for a family meal, let alone spend quality time together. But there is probably nothing kids would like more. Kids who are not getting the attention they want from their parents often act out or misbehave because they are sure to be noticed that way. Adolescents seem to need less undivided attention from their parents than younger kids, but make the effort to be available when your teen expresses a desire to talk or participate in family activities. It is the many little things you do that kids will remember.