

Counselor's Corner

October 5, 2020

Steps to Effective Parenting ~ Part 2

Continuing our conversation from last week, here is additional 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.

Be a Good Role Model

Children learn a lot about how to act by watching their parents. The younger they are, the more cues they take from you. Be aware that you are constantly being watched by your children. Model the traits you wish to see in your children: respect, friendliness, honesty, kindness, tolerance. Above all, treat your kids the way you expect other people to treat you.

Make Communication a Priority

Children will not do everything simply because you, as a parent, "say so." They want and deserve explanations as much as adults do. If we don't take time to explain, children will wonder about our values and motives and whether they have any basis. Parents who reason with their children allow them to understand and learn in a nonjudgmental way. Make your expectations clear. If there is a problem, describe it, express your feelings, and invite your child to work on a solution with you. Be sure to include consequences. Make suggestions and offer choices. Be open to your child's suggestions as well. Negotiate. Kids who participate in decisions are more motivated to carry them out.

Be Flexible and Willing to Adjust Your Parenting Style

If you often feel let down by your child's behavior, perhaps expectations are unrealistic. Parents who think in "shoulds" might find it helpful to read up on the matter, or to talk to other parents or child development specialists. Children's environments have an effect on their behavior, so you might be able to change that behavior by changing the environment. As your child matures, you will gradually have to change your parenting style. Chances are, what works with your child now may not work as well in a year or two. Teens tend to look less to their parents and more to their peers for role models. But continue to provide guidance, encouragement, and appropriate discipline while allowing your teen to earn more independence. And seize every available moment to make a connection!

Show That Your Love Is Unconditional

As a parent, you are responsible for correcting and guiding your children. But how you express your corrective guidance makes all the difference in how a child receives it. When you have to confront your child, avoid blaming, criticizing, or fault-finding, which undermine self-esteem and can lead to resentment. Instead, strive to nurture and encourage, even when disciplining your kids. Make sure they know that although you want and expect better next time, your love is there no matter what.

Know Your Own Needs and Limitations as a Parent

We are imperfect, and that carries over into parenting. You have strengths and weaknesses as a family leader. Recognize your abilities and work on the weaknesses. Try to have realistic expectations for yourself, your spouse, and your children. You don't have to have all the answers, so be forgiving of yourself when necessary. Try to make parenting a manageable job. Focus on the areas that need the most attention rather than trying to address everything all at once. When you feel burned out, take some time out to do things that will make you happy as a person. Focusing on your needs does not make you selfish. It simply means you care about your own well-being, which is another important value to model for your children.