

Positive Parenting

Raising children is one of the most difficult, yet most fulfilling jobs in the world. It may also be the one for which you are the least prepared. Below are seven ways to tackle child-rearing that can help you feel more fulfilled as a parent and make family time more enjoyable.

NURTURE SELF-ESTEEM — Children begin to develop self-esteem as babies when they see themselves through their parents' eyes. Your tone of voice, expression and your body language are absorbed by your children and your words and actions affect them more than you know. Praise your child's accomplishments and help him or her learn from failures, encouraging independence.

PRAISE GOOD BEHAVIOR — Stop and think about how often you catch your child being good. It may be far less often than you think. Take time each day to focus on the good behaviors you see in your children and tell them you notice. Positive reinforcement is the most effective way to promote good behavior.

SET LIMITS AND USE CONSISTENT DISCIPLINE — Discipline is necessary for every family. The goal of discipline is to help children make good decisions and learn self-control. It is normal for children to test the limits you set. Be firm about your expectations and make certain your children understand what you want from them.

MAKE TIME FOR YOUR FAMILY — In our busy world, it can become all too easy to neglect family time. Take time to sit down and eat meals together as a family. Encourage family activities that promote talking and laughter. Take a walk after dinner, go to a museum together or plan a game night each week. Be sure to turn off the television and interact with one another.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL — Children learn a great deal by simply watching your reactions to different situations. Before you lash out or lose your temper in front of your child, think about this: Is that how you want him or her to behave when upset or angry? Teach by example. Model the behaviors you want to see within your family.

SHOW UNCONDITIONAL LOVE — As a parent, you are responsible for guiding your child's development. Show children you will love them every day. Avoid using your love as a reward and do not withhold affection as a means of punishment.

BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN NEEDS — No one is a perfect parent. We all have strengths and weaknesses. Recognize your limits and make sure to take time for yourself. If your needs are not being met, it will be difficult to meet the needs of your family. Have realistic expectations for your family and yourself.

