

## **Ten Suggestions for Positive Parenting©**

By Jan Yordy, M.Ed., MSW, Play Psychotherapist

### **1) Find Many Ways to Share Your Love and Approval**

Let them know how much you appreciate who they are and how unique and special they are. Don't compare them to others or try to treat them exactly like another sibling. Give them a positive sense of self by telling them how much you value their special qualities. Find ways of giving them affirmations. You are special to me! I'm glad you are a part of my life. You are loveable and huggable. I value your \_\_\_\_\_.

### **2) Encourage Positive Communication Patterns**

When you ask children open ended questions, they learn how to think and express themselves better. What do they think about \_\_\_\_\_? How are they feeling about \_\_\_\_\_? What are they interested in? What was the best part of their day? Let them know you value what they think and feel by really listening to them and responding appropriately. If your child wants your attention when you are busy cooking supper or talking to a friend, let them know when you will be available to listen to them.

### **3) Set a Good Example**

Children watch what we do more than they listen to what we say! If you expect your child to be honest, helpful, respectful, and kind then you need to act that way too. Your child looks up to you and will mimic what you say and do naturally.

### **4) Notice Good Behavior and Ignore the Bad**

What you give energy to will grow! Children love to be noticed so give attention for helpful and positive behaviors and ignore the bad. Avoid getting into arguments and yelling at your child. This may reinforce your child acting in negative ways to get your attention. Use time outs or natural and logical consequences for unacceptable behavior.

### **5) Set Reasonable Limits and Boundaries**

Appropriate limits and boundaries help children to feel safe. Discuss with your child how it is your responsibility to keep them safe. As much as possible include your child in the decision making about the boundaries and limits. Be consistent and fair with your child about enforcing the limits and when it is possible use natural and logical consequences when they forget them. Using discipline which teaches your child instead of punishment which creates anger and resentment will pay off in the long run.

### **6) Accept Your Child's Feelings and Find Safe Ways of Helping Him or Her Cope**

Feelings are not good or bad, right or wrong. Feelings just are! Feelings help us to know who we are and when something is good or bad for us. Children learn how to manage and express their feelings from their parents. That is why it is important to talk about and find appropriate ways of dealing with your own feelings. When children have big feelings, stay calm and help them find safe ways of releasing the negative energy of their

feelings. Suppressing feelings creates bigger problems in the long run such as depression, anxiety, or stress and health problems.

### **7) Help Children Be Problem Solvers and to Learn From Their Mistakes**

Everyone is going to encounter problems and obstacles in their life. Help children to see there are many ways of dealing with obstacles and solving their problems. If they are having a hard time solving a problem, provide them with different ways of looking at the problem and some alternative solutions. When they make a mistake, let them know that it is ok to make mistakes. They can be our best teachers if we allow them to be. When something does go wrong instead of making a big deal about what went wrong, ask them what they have learned from this situation.

### **8) Avoid Threats and Bribes**

Manipulating children because you have created fear or giving bribes to get them to behave will cause problems in the long run. Children need to feel safe and to trust the adults in their life. Threats and bribes only work in the short term because behavior which is controlled externally creates negative feelings so it is not effective and lasting. Positive behavior is an internal choice the child makes based on love and wanting to please the parents.

### **9) Only Make Promises You Can Keep**

Your child counts on you to feel loved and secure. When you don't come through on a promise, she may feel insecure and believe that you don't care about her. Promises are just as important for something the child doesn't want like a time out! Avoid making big threats or punishments – these are promises too. Later, you may realize that you made a mistake or overreacted and it confuses the child when you don't carry through. When you make smaller consequences for their behaviors, you are more likely to carry through. You need to train your child to know that your Yes means Yes, and your No means No.

### **10) Give Reasonable Responsibilities**

Children need to learn from experience. Give them jobs which help them feel valuable and important. Even at a young age children can be helpful and feel like they are contributing to the family in an important way. If you take time to make chores fun, he will learn to be helpful and to feel good about himself.

Parents have a tougher job today being good parents. There are many demands on their time and attention and the negative influence of our current media on children is growing. Every parent will have their good days and their bad days. The trick is to catch yourself when you are just starting to get upset or frustrated at your child. Recognizing that you are being triggered and taking some calming breaths to get back under control may be helpful. Take charge of the situation with your child before it gets out of hand – maybe by giving a time out or by taking a time out yourself to regain control. Parents make most of their mistakes when they are mad: they yell, they argue, they give attention to negative behaviors and they give punishments which do not fit the situation. If you can catch yourself before you lose control, it will help everyone feel better in the family.