

Five Tips for Effective Parenting in the 21st Century

Parents have the incredible task of raising children who are happy, productive and contributing citizens. This is both challenging and rewarding. This article will provide five tips for parents to use with children in the 21st century.

The days of past parenting, children were expected to do as they were told by their parents without back talk, or hesitation. Children were mostly raised by two parent households and the mother usually stayed at home. This dramatically changed the family dynamic and is not the case in our society today. With divorce rates over 50% and singles parents raising children in large numbers, getting support for parenting is always needed.

These tips can assist parents to be successful in raising their children.

1. Be consistent.

This is the most important thing any parent can do. Most parents love their children, so this is assumed. Consistency involves doing what you say each time. If the rule is to have your children in bed at a set time, then stick to it. This provides security to your children. They need to have a sense of belonging and have boundaries. Consistency provides kids with knowledge and lets them know what is expected. If they know their bedtime is set, then they may work on arranging activities to fit their schedule. If an exception is needed a conversation with the child and the reason for the exception must be clearly defined and the exceptions must be few. An example might be where a child wants to stay up to watch a TV program past their bedtime. The use of technology can be a solution. DVR and on demand programming are two options many families have. Have the child record the program and save it to view later. Children with consistency learn to follow rules, have boundaries and to be a part of the decision process.

2. Don't compare children with siblings or other children.

This creates anger, unhealthy competition and jealousy. Children all desire the attention of their parents and comparing them can hinder their ability to learn how to be authentic and independent as they mature. They need to learn that life is not always fair and that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. A good practice for parents is to encourage their children daily and speak positively about their strengths. They can support and assist their child in improving in areas of weakness. I call this creating opportunity for growth. Children should never feel like one child is favored over another. It can be true some personalities are easier to deal with than others but as parents, our responsibility is to empower our children and help them to be the best they can be with respect for themselves and others.

(see sibling rivalry resource at www.carescounseling.com)

3. Be flexible.

This means that change is a part of life. We have evolved as a society. When I grew up there was no such thing as the internet, cell phones, GPS or social media. Communication was usually done in person, by mail and phone. There were no emoticons to express our feelings. We had to talk and listen to express ourselves. Children are now more advanced and have access to so many ways to do things. They can view something on YouTube and recreate it. They can use a phone to calculate things and reference things online. Time will always change, and parents need to be flexible as well. Allow your children to be a part of decisions that affect them whenever possible. Children can make decisions, and this helps them become better at problem solving. Of course, decisions must be age appropriate and can't put children's health or safety at risk. Children may come up with options for problems you as a parent might not have considered. This also helps them improve their intellectual capacity and consideration of others if they feel their input is valuable and matters. There is more than one way to do things in many situations. Help children learn to be flexible.

4. Model Correct Behaviors.

Children do as they see, not as they are told. At least not when you aren't around. If you are short tempered and aggressive, chances are your child may follow your example. If you use abusive or negative language around your children, they probably will also. If you are manipulative, lazy, or rigid, children learn this and make their choices accordingly. Perfection is not the goal, but self-improvement is. Discuss with your child what your expectations are and show them with your actions. You might share a challenge you had and how you dealt with it with your child. Allow them to ask you questions and problem solve with them.

5. Practice patience and forgiveness.

No one is perfect. We all make mistakes. Your child is no exception. Yes, they will misbehave, and a consequence must occur. Punishment is meant for compliance and consequences are meant to teach children responsibility. Children can and will push our buttons. You will become frustrated, disappointed and angry with your children but be forgiving. Discuss better options for future situations and don't bring up the past. Have you ever made a mistake at work, felt guilty about it and relived it over and over in your head? When you can, you acknowledge it, correct it, and make amends if you can. You don't expect to go to work everyday and be reminded of your mistake. Children are the same way. They usually know when they have made a wrong choice and they feel guilty about it. This is an opportunity to show them how to be accountable and responsible for their actions. We all need grace, and this allows children the choice to exercise grace with others and not be guilty. They also learn how to move on from errors and to show patience. When we are angry we can make poor choices. Forgiveness of ourselves and others is an important lesson we all need. visit our website for information about our behavior management game and program. Children should be taught how to manage their emotions and behaviors. Self-control is critical to be successful and to have healthy relationships

For additional parenting tips visit our website to purchase our 20 tips on parenting children in the 21st century.