



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER *for*
HEALTHY MARRIAGE *and* FAMILIES

Strong Families:

Tips for Healthy Parenting



Children can be a source of happiness and joy, but they also can be a source of stress, frustration, worry, and heartache. All parents face challenges, so it's important to learn about healthy parenting practices. These skills can help you build strong family relationships and create a home where children feel safe, secure, and loved. Healthy parenting also means that parents and children can handle disagreements and conflicts without any abuse, neglect, or violence.

Healthy parenting benefits families because:

- **Parents and children have strong relationships.**
- **Home is a place where children can learn and explore.**
- **Children learn about healthy communication and relationships from watching their parents.**

Your relationships have an important impact on your parenting choices. Relationships have a “spillover effect;” when things are going well in a couple’s relationship, the positivity promotes positive parenting. But when things are going badly, the conflict and tension can cause ineffective parenting. This is true whether parents are in a romantic relationship with each other or whether the parents are working together as co-parents (where one parent does not live with the child).¹

There is no way to be a perfect parent, but a million ways to be a good one.

Anonymous

As a parent, you play many different roles at work and in your family. Sometimes balancing these different roles can be difficult and even the best parents get run down and stressed out. Try to take time to relax and “recharge” your batteries by doing something you enjoy. When you take care of yourself, you’ll be better able to care for others as well.

Three Key Healthy Parenting Practices

Healthy parenting practices promote children’s well-being. When children have a trusting relationship with their parents, they feel safe. They can develop a positive bond that makes them more willing to talk with their parents about their thoughts, feelings, and worries. The following parenting practices can help your family develop and strengthen these bonds:

Be Positive – Children do better when they receive encouragement instead of criticism. Try to focus on the things that go right instead of the things that go wrong.² A good rule of thumb is to say or do eight positive things for every one negative thing when you are spending time with your children.³ Remember, your children get positive messages from things you say and

do (such as a hug or a high five). Think: more connecting and less correcting.

Connect – Children need to feel loved and build strong bonds with their parents. Spending time with your children is one of the best ways to help them feel loved. Young children need playtime with their parents, and older children need parents who support their activities.⁴ When you are spending time with your children, make sure you are listening to them, providing encouragement, and using healthy conflict management skills.

Manage Behavior Effectively – Parents need to model positive behavior, set clear expectations and boundaries, and be consistent. Be sure you know your children’s friends and other influences, such as what TV shows and movies they are watching, what they are doing on social media, and what they are doing when they spend time online. A healthy way to manage your children’s behavior is to use positive reinforcement when they are behaving well and appropriate consequences when they misbehave.⁵ Healthy parenting means avoiding sharing control with your children and providing opportunities for them to think, make decisions, and learn through their mistakes.⁶

Unhealthy Parenting Practices

These can include abusive tactics such as scolding, intimidation, comparing and criticizing, or harsh physical and/or verbal punishment. Other unhealthy practices include inconsistent parenting, like failing to follow through on discipline or consistently giving in to children’s demands; labeling children; not setting limits; and not listening enough.⁷

To learn more about age-appropriate parenting, take advantage of the free online resources, including videos and fun activities, offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/parents/>

As a parent, you are the primary role model for your child. Your children will learn about life skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, from watching you. When you invest time in your children, they will feel important and loved. By following these tips and discussing healthy parenting practices with service providers, you can learn and develop healthy parenting skills that will deepen your family’s connections and help you grow closer together. ■

SOURCE: Adapted from Harris, V. (2014). *Tips for service providers: Healthy parenting practices*. Fairfax, VA: National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families (Product #076). Available at <http://tinyurl.com/providers-parenting-p>

NOTES

- 1 Schramm, D. (2014). *Parenting mini-course*. Fairfax, VA: National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families. Available at <https://training.HealthyMarriageandFamilies.org>
- 2 Coplen, R. D., & MacArthur, J. D. (1982). *Developing a healthy self-image*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.
- 3 Latham, G. I. (1994). *The power of positive parenting*. Logan, UT: P & T Ink.
- 4 Schramm, 2014.
- 5 Latham, 1994.
- 6 Cline, C., & Fay, J. (2006). *Parenting with love and logic*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
- 7 Schramm, 2014.

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