

## **Parenting Tips**

### **I love my children, but being a parent can be so hard!**

Being a parent can be a joy, but it's also a tough job. No parent is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. Even loving parents sometimes do things they don't mean to do, such as yell at a child. But if you think you're having trouble controlling yourself, get help so a pattern of abuse doesn't start.

### **I get so frustrated sometimes. Is this normal?**

Yes, all parents get frustrated. Children take a lot of time and energy. Parenting is even harder when you have problems in your own life, such as worries about your job, your bills or your relationships, or problems with alcohol or drugs. To be a good parent, you have to first take care of yourself. That means getting help for your problems.

### **What can I do when I feel frustrated?**

Take a break. Everyone needs a break from being a parent once in a while. If you have another adult in your family, take turns getting away. For example, have your partner stay with the children so you can visit friends. Take turns sleeping late on the weekends. If you're a single parent, ask friends and relatives to help by running some errands for you or watching your child while you go out.

### **I sometimes lose my temper. Does that mean I'm a bad parent?**

No, many parents lose their temper with their children. It's okay to feel angry, but it's not okay to take it out on your children. When you're really angry, take a break. For example, take your children for a walk or call a friend to come help you. If you feel angry with your child almost every day or have trouble controlling your temper, get some help by talking to your family doctor. He or she can offer advice and provide resources to help you. There are groups that can help parents, also.

### **Is it okay to spank my child?**

Spanking isn't the best way to discipline children. The goal of discipline is to teach children self-control. Spanking may teach children to stop doing something out of fear. There are better ways to discipline children. (In 2019, the American Academy of Pediatrics published a formal statement opposing use of corporal punishment of any kind).<sup>i</sup> “With new evidence, researchers link corporal punishment to an increased risk of negative behavioral, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional outcomes for children.”

One good way for infants and toddlers is called "redirecting." When you redirect a child, you replace an unwanted (bad) behavior with an acceptable (good) behavior. For example, if throwing a ball inside the house isn't allowed, take your child outside to throw the ball.

If you have older children, explain the consequences of their actions and why it is important to take responsibility for them. For example, you can explain to your child that everyone had to wait for dinner because he or she didn't set the table when asked. Explain that your child has to wash the dishes after dinner because he or she didn't set the table before dinner.

### **All It Takes is H.E.A.R.T.**<sup>ii</sup>

**Hug, Engage, Ask Questions, Read to, Talk to** - These five basic measures are sure to accelerate your child's neurodevelopment and increase levels of bonding between the both of you.

### **Special Time**

Designate regular “Special Time” for 5-15 minutes of your undivided attention, allowing your child to lead the activity; without directing them, or judging their comments or behavior.

## How can I be a good parent?

There's not just one right way to raise children. And there's no such thing as a perfect parent or a perfect child. But here are some guidelines to help your children grow up healthy and happy:

- **Show your love.** Every day, tell your children: "I love you. You're special to me." Give lots of hugs and kisses.
- **Listen when your children talk.** Listening to your children tells them that you think they're important and that you're interested in what they have to say.
- **Make your children feel safe.** Comfort them when they're scared. Show them you've taken steps to protect them.
- **Provide order in their lives.** Keep a regular schedule of meals, naps and bedtimes. If you have to change the schedule, tell them about the changes ahead of time.
- **Praise your children.** When your children learn something new or behave well, tell them you're proud of them.
- **Criticize the behavior, not the child.** When your child makes a mistake, don't say, "You were bad." Instead, explain what the child did wrong. For example, say: "Running into the street without looking isn't safe." Then tell the child what to do instead: "First, look both ways for cars."
- **Be consistent.** Your rules don't have to be the same ones other parents have, but they do need to be clear and consistent. (Consistent means the rules are the same all the time.) If 2 parents are raising a child, both need to use the same rules. Also, make sure baby-sitters and relatives know (and follow) your family rules.
- **Spend time with your children.** Do things together, such as reading, walking, playing and cleaning the house. What children want most is your attention. Bad behavior is usually an attempt to get your attention.

## Who can I ask when I need help raising my child?

There are many ways to get good parenting advice. Sign up for parenting classes offered by hospitals, community centers or schools. Read parenting books or magazines. Talk to your family doctor, a minister, a priest or a counselor.

You can also ask your family doctor for parenting help. Don't be embarrassed to ask. Raising children is hard, and no one can do it alone. Your doctor can help you with issues like discipline, potty training, eating problems and bedtime. Your doctor can also help you find local groups that can help you learn good parenting skills.

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### **PLEASE VISIT [CAP4KIDS.ORG/SANANTONIO](https://cap4kids.org/sanantonio) FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.**

Cap4Kids will help you find many community agencies that exist to improve or enhance the lives of children, teens and families.

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<sup>i</sup> Sege, RD, Siegel BS. Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. (2018). Effective discipline to raise healthy children. *Pediatrics* 142(6), e20183112

<sup>ii</sup> American Osteopathic Association, in partnership with the Erikson Institute. (n.d.) The H.E.A.R.T. Initiative. *Early Childhood Development Education Modules*. Retrieved from: <https://osteopathic.org/practicing-medicine/providing-care/early-childhood-development-modules/>.