

Healthy Parenting Tips

The most important need of your kid is to feel loved. Kids need at least one adult to be emotionally available for them in order to become an emotionally mature adult with healthy relationships. Your role as a parent is to emotionally show up for them.

Practice self-care & self-soothing

You can't take care of your kids unless you are taking care of yourself. When you are stressed or emotionally overwhelmed, it's impossible to calm your kid. Your kid's nervous system learns from your nervous system. In order to help your child develop emotional regulation skills, it's important to practice them yourself. Self-care strategies are rituals and routines that provide for your basic needs and promote overall health for yourself. Self-soothing strategies are techniques and skills that you can use when you feel overwhelmed.

Validate and connect first

While it's easy to feel threatened or overwhelmed by your kid's emotions, your kid needs to know that you can handle all their big feelings. You can help your kid develop healthy emotional regulation skills by validating what they feel, riding emotional waves with them, and helping them calm their bodies. Use phrases like, "It makes sense that you feel that way," "That must have hurt," "I bet that made you feel angry," or, "I would have felt upset too." Offer physical comfort if they want it or let them know you are near and ready to help them when they're ready.

Focus on teaching second

When your kid is upset or has done something wrong, your first move is to connect with them and help them emotionally calm down. Your second move is to choose 1-2 things to teach them. Your kid's brain can only hear you once they've emotionally calmed down and regained their ability to listen. When you teach your kid, focus on simple and direct language. Tell or show them what you want them to do next time, instill any consequences, and help them make things right.

Nurture your connection

All kids long to feel seen, heard, and understood by their parents. That means investing your energy, emotions, and time into getting to know them and helping them know themselves. To do this, it's important to keep an internal map of your kid's world and to pay attention to their likes, dislikes, triggers, strengths, and weaknesses. Use open-ended questions to invite your kid into conversation and greater connection. Open-ended questions are ones that begin with 'What,' 'How,' and 'Where,' and cannot be answered with a simple yes or no.

Repair often

You will make mistakes as a parent. You will hurt your kid's feelings, say things you regret, and overreact to situations. When you make mistakes, the most important thing you can do is take responsibility and seek to make things right. One of the greatest gifts you can give your kid is letting them hear you apologize because this empowers them to take responsibility for their mistakes.