

THE PARENTING EDUCATION PROGRAM

HELPFUL TIPS FOR PARENTS

All healthy families have arguments and disagreements from time to time. Many parents and children find it very difficult after an argument to get back on track and resolve things. They may be emotionally bruised from hurtful things that were said or done in the heat of the argument. Sometimes they are afraid to say anything for fear that the argument will be stirred up again. Embarrassment, hurt, pride, and self protection can get in the way of handling problems that still need to be worked out. The following is a list of six steps for winning children over that can be used after cooling off.

1. Imagine how your child might be feeling
2. Let your child know you understand
3. Ask the child if he would be willing to hear your feelings about the situation
4. Share your feelings with the child using, "I messages" (I was hurt, disappointed, etc.)
5. Ask the child if he would be willing to work with you on a solution.
6. Work on the idea to prevent the problem in the future

The Importance of Routine

Maintaining routines is very important for children. Routines establish an orderly and logical way that things take place. It also helps the child to know what to expect from day to day. Knowing what to expect allows the child to prepare themselves for what is about to happen. This establishes a way for the child to make sense and have control over some parts of their life. An established bedtime insures that the child knows when they are expected to go to bed. They then can prepare for bed both physically and mentally. Physically preparing for bed obviously may include washing, brushing teeth, changing clothes and the like. Mentally preparing for bed includes

winding down activities, beginning to think about bedtime and sleep and preparing to leave the company of the family.

A bedtime routine can also be helpful to parents. Once the bedtime routine has been established and carried out, the parent can look forward to a change in their activities since at least one child is in bed. This enables parents to plan their evening, perhaps to have some quiet time themselves or to share that time with another family member.

Just as a bedtime routine is important, it is also helpful to have a morning routine. The morning routine prepares the family for the day's activities. When daily activities change children need to be informed. They need to know for themselves what will be happening that day, how it might effect them, how to plan around it, and how to prepare for the day. This teaches children how to set an organized plan for their day and carry it out. Routine establishes a sense of security for the child.

Routines are an important part of life. School and work involve routines. Very young children can begin to develop respect and appreciation for routine. Families must balance routine with flexibility. Situations arise that interrupt the normal routine that families establish. Maintaining flexibility keeps the family members from being derailed when the schedule is interrupted.

Training

Children have to be trained to be capable of carrying out everyday tasks. These tasks may include their own personal care, such as dressing, bathing, and eating. They also may involve responsibilities around the house like picking up toys and clothes, helping with the dishes, yard work, or even cooking for themselves. Children do not learn to successfully complete these tasks by simply observing others do them. They need to be taught step by step how to do these things. They need time to practice doing them and they need encouragement.

Learning to dress themselves can be very challenging and frustrating for the small child. Buttons may be difficult to work

with for little fingers. Fronts and backs of clothing may be confusing. Deciding where toys belong and fitting them into toy boxes and closets are skills that take time to learn.

Training and teaching can become a part of the daily routine for parents and children. Training takes time and patience for both the parent and the child. While training children, parents need to allow enough time to show a child how to do something and then allow time for the child to do it, practicing it over and over. It also takes repetition. The child may forget how to tell the front from the back of an outfit. They need to be told again how to tell the difference. This may need to be repeated over and over before the child remembers. This is normal. It takes lots of practice for a child to learn to remember how to do something new and then to actually do all of the steps in order.

Parents need to exercise lots of patience when training their children. They need to allow lots of opportunities for practice. The child needs to be praised and encouraged to continue to try to meet their new challenges. The child needs to be praised for trying, even if they are not very successful. Their efforts are very important and need to be acknowledged. Parents can also help them by reflecting back to them other tasks that they have learned to manage. This gives the child the hope and belief that are making progress.

Let Children Handle Their Own Problems

Parents have enough problems of their own and enough to do raising their children without taking care of their children's problems. Parents often get so engrossed in helping and supporting their children that they take over for their children. Children learn and grow from challenges. Parents begin to trust in their child's abilities to handle things when they let go and allow the child the space to handle their own problems.

Probably the most common children's problem that parents get involved in is fights between siblings. Often the children begin to fight among each other and then rush to a parent to interfere or

referee the fight. When parents refuse to become entangled or involved in these fights, children figure out themselves how to resolve them or how to prevent them. If the parent was not there at the beginning of the fight, they probably will not be able to gather enough accurate information to settle it fairly.

This puts them in the position of taking sides or making judgements or assumptions about the children's participation in the fight. Unless a child is really in danger of being seriously physically or emotionally injured the parent can and should probably choose to stay out of it.

This position also helps to free the parent from constantly being manipulated by one child or another. Children will often enroll one parent with them against another child without the parent even being able to determine what is going on. This often happens when one child decides to tell on another. The tattler-teller is aligning themselves with a parent and declaring how good they are for informing on the other. This implies that the other child is bad and creates unfair alliances between the parents and the children. Children should not be placed in the position of informing on each other unless the situation is very serious or dangerous. Parents should make it clear to their children that they will not participate in this game and will not act on or listen to tattler tales.

Parents Need and Deserve Support Too

Parenting is a very tough and long lasting responsibility. It can be one of the most draining and stressful experiences of a lifetime. Few parents are truly prepared for the job when they get it. It takes a lot of courage for a parent to admit that they don't know what to do with, for, or about their children. This courageous step is the first step to doing a better job as a parent. Parenting is a process that changes and unfolds differently with each parent and each child. A parent may raise three children with a certain amount of success and satisfaction and still be baffled and have doubts with the fourth child. Parents who are open minded and willing to look at doing things differently are more likely to also have a great deal of joy and satisfaction in their relationships with their children.

Parents need support and encouragement too. Sometimes they just need a safe place to vent how worried or scared they are about their children or about how they are doing as parents. At other times, they need solutions or new approaches to use with their children. Today fortunately, parents do have places to go to get help or support with their children. They have the opportunity to learn how to be more effective parents from a variety of resources. Bookstores and libraries are rich resources for gathering information on different parenting techniques and approaches. Classes are available in almost every community and are taught in schools, churches, and counseling centers. Many communities offer the classes free of charge or at sliding scale fees. Other parents can be a valuable support to each other and teach each other. It is important for parents to look for and find support and encouragement for themselves and their children.

One of the most helpful things parents can do for themselves and their children from time to time is to give themselves some time off from the parenting role. Couples need to have time alone, away from their children, in order to keep their relationship thriving. Moms and Dads also need time off alone to take care of their own individual and personal needs. Parents who know how, and practice being good to themselves, teach their children to do the same. Each person needs time for rest and recreation. The parent who is overworked and frazzled has little to offer their child. Rest allows us to regain our energy and perspective. Although most parents are aware of how difficult it is to be around an overly tired child who needs a nap, they fail to recognize that they also need rest to behave their best. Recreation provides a place for RE-CREATING ourselves. We release stress and are renewed through recreation. It is OK for parents to need a break from their kids. Kids need a break from their parents too.

Planning time on a regular basis for rest and recreation is important. This gives parents and children something to look forward to. It helps parents and children to recognize that parents are also

individuals with special interests and they deserve to have a life outside of the children. When planned regularly, it becomes easier to make arrangements for responsible baby sitters or caretakers. Children learn to respect their parents needs and learn how to rely on someone else temporarily.

Teenagers are Special

Teenagers are special indeed. They are at a very precarious time in their lives. They are definitely not children anymore and yet still not quite adult. They face many crossroads and decisions which will have a very strong impact on them for the rest of their lives. The teenage years are often filled with internal conflict and struggle. For many teenagers this internal conflict and struggle is very evident in their behavior and the conflicts spill over into their relationships with their families. Teenagers actively seek support and validation from their peers. They have a strong need to be grown up and try their wings on their own. At the same time they still need reassurance, encouragement, and guidance from their families.

Ideally the teenager launches off on their own adventure, setting their own course, well prepared for the voyage that awaits them, with blessings and gifts from their families. However, for many teenagers the experience is more like trying to ride a storm in the dark in a leaky boat. All too often, teenagers leave home ill prepared to deal with life on their own and with no place to turn for help and support.

Parents can prepare children to be independent by teaching them about adult responsibilities in life. Teenagers don't learn how to handle money successfully overnight. Teenagers need to have their own money to learn to manage whether they receive it as an allowance or work for it. Even young children can and should begin to learn how to manage money. They need to have someone teach them how to read and pay bills, how to write checks, balance a checkbook, and fill out an application. Parents can think about all of the things they must know how to do to get by in life and provide opportunities for their teenagers to learn these things.

Parents have an obligation to prepare both their sons and daughters for independent living. They need to be able to rely on themselves. Both boys and girls need to know how to cook and clean for themselves. They both need to know how to manage money and how to ask for help when they need it. Both need skills that they can use in a job to support themselves.

They also need to know the basics about maintaining an auto and taking care of an apartment or house. Parents owe it to their children to set them up to be successful and to teach them how to learn from their mistakes and be persistent.

Parents can really enjoy being with their teenagers and watching them grow to become competent, responsible, and confident young adults. Leaving home can be very difficult for both parents and teenagers, but they may not show it the same way. Teenagers naturally need to pull away from their parents as part of the process of preparing to leave home. It is difficult for parents to feel this separation from their child and to realize that they may soon move away from home. Many arguments between teenagers and their parents are a result of their difficulty dealing with these changes in their relationship. Keep communication open. Talk to each other about how different things are becoming and how different they will continue to be. Share your feelings with each other honestly. Respect your teenager's right to privacy and their need to pull away. Fill your own time with new activities and prepare yourself for your child's eventual departure.

Try to remember what it was like when you were a teenager. Remember how much you needed to prove yourself. Remember how important your friendships were to you. Remember how good it would have felt to have had someone tell you how great you were and that they were proud of you. Although times have changed a lot, teenagers still need a lot of the same things their parents did when they were teenagers. Offer your teenager your unconditional love. Be supportive of them. Let them know that they can come to you to talk about problems and that you will listen to them. You don't quit being a parent because your child has grown. The parent - child relationship just changes, and hopefully it is still filled with love and respect for each other.

STUDY QUESTION - STUDY GUIDE THIRTEEN
HELPFUL TIPS FOR PARENTS

1. Sometimes after an argument with their children, parents are afraid to say anything:
 - a) because they don't like their children
 - b) for fear that the argument will be stirred up again
 - c) because they know they are right
 - d) because they think their child is right

2. Which of the following is not on the list of six steps for winning children over after cooling off?
 - a) imagine how your child might be feeling
 - b) let your child know you understand
 - c) share feelings, using "I messages"
 - d) insist that your child apologize to you

3. Maintaining routine is _____ for children.
 - a) not necessary
 - b) a luxury
 - c) very important
 - d) something that doesn't work

4. Maintaining routines establish _____ and logical ways that things take place.
 - a) natural
 - b) orderly
 - c) problematic
 - d) strict

5. It helps a child to _____ from day to day.
 - a) not to be told what to do
 - b) to know what to expect
 - c) have no serious routine
 - d) simply play freely

6. Knowing what to expect allows the child _____ for what is about to happen.
 - a) to be unconcerned
 - b) to become suddenly anxious
 - c) to prepare
 - d) none of these answers

7. Which of these is not included in mentally preparing a child to go to bed?
 - a) spending some time rough housing with parents
 - b) preparing to leave the company of the family
 - c) winding down activities
 - d) thinking about bedtime and sleep

8. The morning routine prepares the family _____.
- a) to be together
 - b) for the day's activities
 - c) for going to bed on time
 - d) all of these answers
9. When daily activities change, children need _____.
- a) nothing
 - b) to quickly conform to the new activities
 - c) to be informed
 - d) all of these answers
10. Routine establishes a sense of _____ for the child.
- a) anxiety
 - b) trust
 - c) boredom
 - d) security
11. Families must balance routine with _____.
- a) chaos
 - b) anxiety
 - c) flexibility
 - d) order
12. Children have to be _____ to be capable of carrying out every day tasks.
- a) expected
 - b) trained
 - c) none of these answers
 - d) constantly helped
13. To learn tasks, children need time to practice doing them and they need _____.
- a) criticism
 - b) encouragement
 - c) routine
 - d) flexibility
14. Training takes time and _____ for both the parent and the child.
- a) practice
 - b) help
 - c) criticism
 - d) patience
15. If things need to be repeated over and over before a young child remembers how to do things, _____.
- a) the child is probably stupid

- b) the parent is doing something wrong
 - c) the child should be punished
 - d) this is normal
16. Parents need to allow lots of opportunities for children to _____ new things they are learning.
- a) fail at
 - b) practice
 - c) forget
 - d) be criticized about
17. Children need to be praised for trying _____.
- a) only if they succeed
 - b) if they have tried many times
 - c) even if they are not very successful
 - d) only if they fail
18. Children learn and grow from _____.
- a) challenges
 - b) failing
 - c) criticism
 - d) only their successes
19. Probably the most common children's problem that parent get involved in is _____.
- a) their school work
 - b) fights between siblings
 - c) boyfriend/girlfriend relationships
 - d) none of these
20. Children should not be placed in the position of _____ each other unless the situation is very serious or dangerous.
- a) taking care of
 - b) helping
 - c) compromising with
 - d) informing on
21. _____ for a parent to admit that they don't know what to do with, for, or about their children.
- a) it is a mistake
 - b) it can lead to trouble
 - c) it takes a lot of courage
 - d) all of these
22. Parenting is _____ that changes and unfolds differently with each parent and each child.
- a) an event
 - b) a circumstance
 - c) a goal

d) a process

23. Rest allows us to regain our _____ and a balanced perspective.
- a) energy
 - b) time
 - c) none of these
 - d) all of these
24. It is _____ need a break from their kids.
- a) not a good idea for parents to
 - b) not good for children if parents
 - c) ok for parents to
 - d) one way parents show a lack of respect if they
25. The teenage years are often filled with _____ and struggle.
- a) drama
 - b) alternating helplessness
 - c) internal conflict
 - d) none of these
26. Teenagers have a strong need to be grown up, try out their wings on their own and at the same time:
- a) they still need reassurance, encouragement, and guidance from their families
 - b) they don't need anything from their families any more
 - c) they demand that they be treated like little children
 - d) all of these
27. Parents have an obligation to prepare _____ for independent living.
- a) their sons
 - b) their daughters
 - c) both their sons and daughters
 - d) they do not have an obligation to prepare their children for independent living
28. Parents owe it to their children to set them up to be successful and teach them how to _____ mistakes and be persistent.
- a) be critical of their
 - b) make very few
 - c) learn from their
 - d) not make any
29. Teenagers naturally need to _____ as part of the process of preparing to leave home.
- a) heavily depend on their parents
 - b) pull away from their parents
 - c) fight and argue constantly with their parents
 - d) run away from home
30. Offer your teenager your _____ and be supportive of them.
- a) unconditional love
 - b) conditional love
 - c) open criticism

d) problems to have them solve