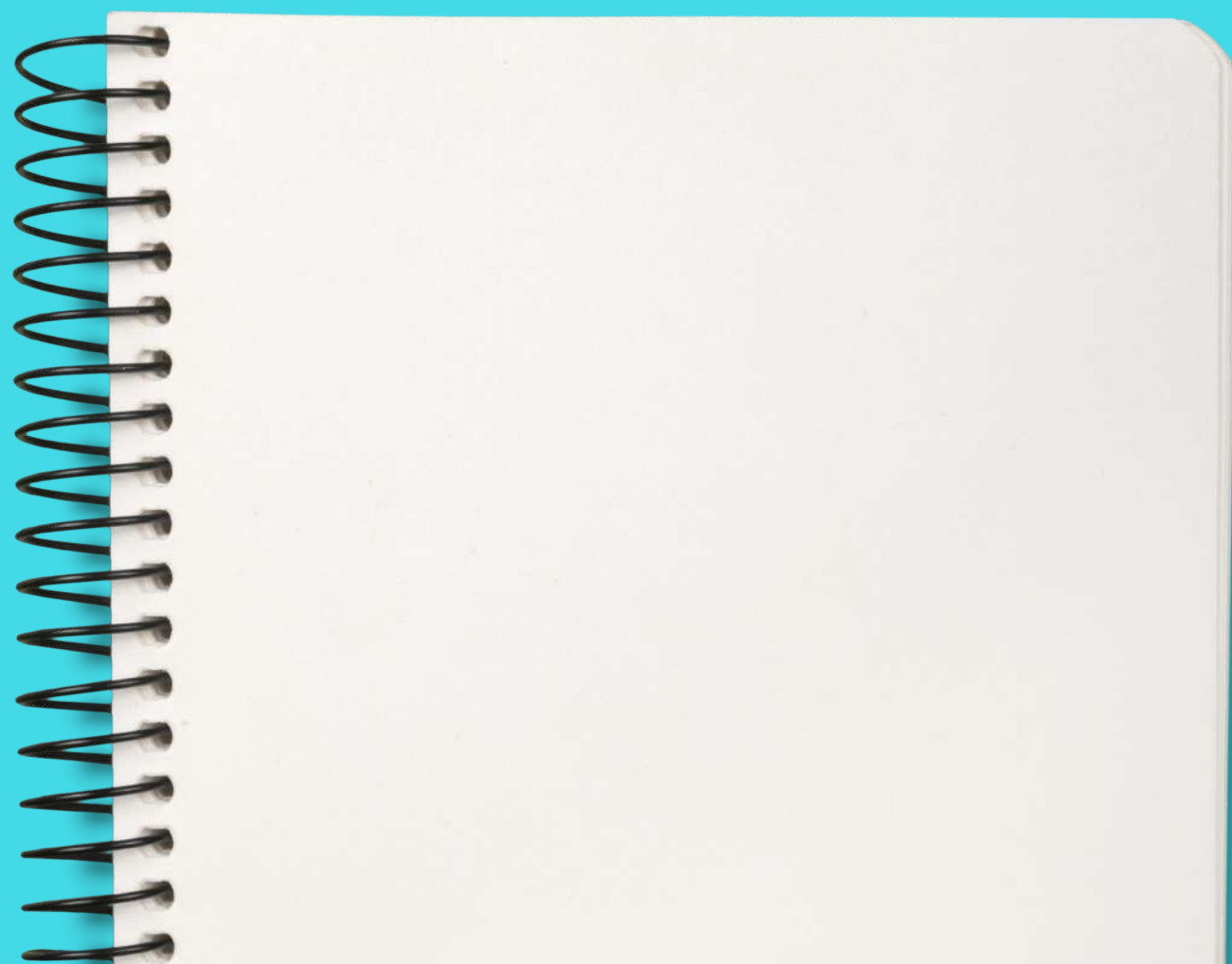


A HANDBOOK BY JOLENE YEE

THE MOM CHRONICLES

The chronicles and
misadventures of working
and parenting!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Jolene Yee, I am a Mother and started blogging in early 2018.

I have two boys, and 4 furbabies, and after 20 years with my husband, I learned a whole lot about human interaction, social connection and life as a woman. I am still finding balance between trying to hold on to my career, style, and femininity while being a wife and mom of two boys.

I struggle between wanting to be a career woman, my own person, and wanting to provide a loving, nurturing home for my family! Why can't I do both?!? My tips on my blog are what helps me balance my two roles, while providing motivation, inspiration and tips for growth and mental wellness.

I love to read, write and spend time with my family.

I also like to show off the grace and beauty of my home in Hawaii, while being a mom, wife, and a woman.

I have a Master's Degree in Psychology and I spend my time blogging, specializing in motivation, human behavior, social connections, and personal growth.

My goal is to provide inspiration and tips to other working moms who, like me, are struggling to find a balance between their sense of self and their family.

I want to motivate, inspire, and uplift other working moms to be their best, and be able to take anything on in their careers, as well as in their homes!

Most of the time, us parents don't really know what the hell we're doing. Am I right? I remember my mom telling me "you didn't come with a handbook." When I had my boys, I decided to get my Master's Degree in Psychology, mix it with real life experiences, and make my own handbook.

I wanted to make sure that new parents, like myself at that time, had somewhere to go, something to reference, that would give them some advice on parenting. General parenting. I wanted to make it simple, fun, and real-life. That's the secret ingredient here. This is all based on real life experiences, mixed with my knowledge, and some good, ole fashioned research.

I know that I'm not a perfect parent, there is no such thing. But I at least want to make sure that my kids don't have to spend too much on therapy when they get older. I want them to grow into the best that they can be. I want them to know success, happiness, and balance. And I want to make sure that I give them the tools necessary to make that happen. Below are some of my favorite pieces of parenting advice that I put together.

**MOM-
SHAMING**

Why is this real?

It seems that whenever we go on the internet and read parenting magazines, there are judgement calls about almost anything and everything parents do. No matter what parents decide, and how they decide to raise their children, there is another parent, or professional in a certain field, shaming them on their parenting decisions.

No matter how much research you do, and how much professionals you consult, there will always be a nagging insecurity about how well you are as a parent.

How long has Mom Shaming been around?

In a lot of ways, I feel that Mom-Shaming has always been around. There was always someone that was shaming another mother. And below I'll discuss why we do this. We have all, at one time or another, been guilty of mom-shaming.

If you think about it, mom-shaming was done less, but on a more personal basis before social media was around. A mom would hear things from her mother, mother in law, friends, etc. And the opinions would be face to face. But in this day, we have social media, and we are mom-shamed almost immediately right after posting a photo, a facebook post, etc.

So Why do We Do it?

Personally, I think we all are guilty of it, because we all have our opinions on what is best for the children. Some shaming is done innocently, because it is wrongfully being perceived as mom shaming, when it's really just overly strong advice. Here are 7 reasons why we mom-shame, according to Scary Mommy

1. You're bored. I get it. If my son asks me to be the "red ninja" one more freaking time, I'm going to stab myself in the eye with his plastic sword. I spend endless minutes spinning around with him and yelling "Ninjaaaaaa-GOOOOO" like a good red ninja. Until I can't take it anymore, and retreat to the quiet of the Internet. The parenting routine can be mind-numbing. Sometimes a good argument about how the formula companies have brainwashed the sheeple, or how breastfeeding past 12 months is perverse can make you feel like your neurons are actually firing. Our mothers' generation watched soap operas in the afternoons. Facebook and Twitter are the new Days of Our Lives, but it's dangerous when we can contribute to the train wreck in real time.
2. You're angry. When you're a mom, you can't get mad at the kids in the same way you get mad at adults. I have an out-of-body experience when my 1 year old takes his entire breakfast and launches it off his high-chair. I hear myself saying calmly "Bennie, no throwing food. Food is to eat." when inside my head I'm screaming "Are you fucking KIDDING ME?! I would give anything to actually eat a hot breakfast and you are throwing it on the FLOOR?!" But mothers can't say that. So we yell at each other instead.
3. You're jealous. You know that mom who wears the tassel bikini to the pool? The one we all whisper about, because her fake boobs barely fit in the little triangles (Who the hell wears little triangles when they're swimming with a screaming 2 year old anyway?) And she obviously had a bikini wax. Who has time for that? Although I must admit, I considered subjecting myself to the searing pain of having hot wax put on my lady parts just so I could have 20 minutes of uninterrupted time to lie down. Why are we so judgmental and snarky about each other's bodies? Well ladies, it's because we're jealous. Your fake boobs are perkier than mine. I wish I could rock a triangle bikini. We hate each other for being someone else's version of perfect, when the truth is that we hate ourselves for not being Pinterest-ing enough.

4. You're overwhelmed. Get kids dressed, get myself dressed, get everyone fed, feed them again, clean up food they threw on the floor, assemble the stroller, disassemble the stroller, get them in car seats, unpack the lunch boxes, make the snacks, nurse the baby, play with everyone, do the dishes, and be the red ninja. This is motherhood. I love it. But it freaking exhausts me. Then we go online and filter out the sweat and the stains and the screaming with pretty photo filters. Why do we lie to each other about real life? You show me yours, and I'll show you mine.
5. You're exhausted. Not even going to explain this. Instead, will go microwave my piss-warm coffee and raise it in your direction.
6. You're not sure of your identity. New motherhood can be lonely. We all want to belong, and it helps to have a group of people who think like we do. It feels safer to be tethered together by similar parenting beliefs. In the riptide of motherhood, we're all looking for a life raft that will help us stay afloat. Even if we have to kick you off of yours.
7. You're dying to be recognized. Do you do a touchdown dance when your baby sleeps through the night? Do you shout it from the rooftops when you hit the 6 month mark of exclusive breastfeeding? Our celebrations scream "Notice me! Someone please tell me that I'm doing a good job, because nobody else is! Wait...I am doing a good job, right?"

How Do We Deal With It?

There are many different ways to deal with mom-shaming.

Accept the fact that being a parent who is not judged, at least in some way, is probably unlikely. In other words, expect to be challenged so you won't be surprised or caught off guard when it happens.

Understand that judging and criticizing makes some people feel better. Your mother, for example, may assert herself only to feel involved.

Keep ears perked for critics who dispatch information just to hear themselves talk—the know-it-alls.

"Mom shaming" is often a cover for someone's own insecurities or guilt about things they wish they had done differently. For some, who may have older kids, transmitting advice is a way to have a vicarious "do-over."

Stick with your supporters and reduce the time you spend with those who judge you—be they family or friends.

Accept that some days you will feel as if you messed up. No one is perfect; almost all parents make mistakes (perceived or real) now and again.

Use your sense of humor as armor against judgment. What your butting-in critics say may even become laughable in a year or two.

Don't be influenced by friends whose parenting looks seamless and easy—what you see especially online is often a smokescreen.

What you take as judgment may be ignorance. Close family members may not know your history or why, for instance, you don't breastfeed or have more children or why you discipline your children as you do.

You know your child better than anyone else. Be confident about what you believe is best for your child and you, not what others believe—and say—you should be doing.

CO- SLEEPING

Benefits and
Truths

There are many different views on Co-Sleeping. Some are for, and some are against. However, the honest to goodness truth is that it really is your preference as a parent as to what you would like your sleeping arrangements to be. Some of us sleep better when our babies are in our beds, and some of us don't. Many of us have found a happy medium with "room-sharing" as opposed to bed-sharing. There is no right or wrong, and all babies are different, and all parents are different. Don't be mom-shamed about your decisions as a parent. There are a lot of benefits, and disadvantages to Co-Sleeping though. Let's start with the Benefits.

BENEFITS

According to a study done at Mom Junction there are a lot of benefits when it comes to co-sleeping.

Research studies reveal babies are at a lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) when they sleep in the same room as parents.

It improves the sleep time for both mother and baby. There is no need for you to wake up, get up from the bed and go to the baby to feed or comfort her.

You will face fewer bedtime hassles.

Your baby, if she is a toddler, feels secure and warm beside you.

Breastfeeding during night time is easier.

It will decrease the chances of nighttime separation anxiety.

The sleep pattern of both the mother and the baby syncs and enables comfortable nursing.

A baby can fall asleep soon, and get back to sleep quickly if she wakes up in the middle of the night.

Infants go through several feelings such the warm touch of the mother, her movement, smell and comfort that would help in their overall development.

You will be able to monitor the baby well during illnesses.

You develop an attachment with the baby.

Helps working mothers spend more time with their babies while sleeping, and gain a sense of intimacy.

There are no chances of the child falling from the bed.

Sleep-sharing offers a safer environment for children, helping them develop confidence.

Not only the mothers but also the fathers will enjoy co-sleeping with their children, as it leads to a great bonding time.

DISADVANTAGES

The baby can get strangulated or suffocated due to a lack of enough space.

Co-sleeping is known to promote unhealthy dependency on the parents.

Some mothers complain of not being able to sleep as the constant or sudden movement of the child disturbs their sleep pattern.

Co-sleeping can be risky if the parents have certain infectious health conditions.

Co-sleeping should not be practiced if the parent is under any heavy medication or therapy.

If either or both the parents have a habit of smoking, drug or alcohol abuse, then co-sleeping is known to pose severe health risks.

Once the baby is used to sleep with the parents, it will be difficult for her to sleep independently at a later point.

Conditions like separation, divorce or death of any parent could leave the child in a deeply disturbing situation.

The couple may be deprived of intimacy.

GUIDELINES -

It is important to realize that the physical and social conditions under which infant-parent cosleeping occur, in all its diverse forms, can and will determine the risks or benefits of this behavior. What goes on in bed is what matters.

Bottlefeeding babies should always sleep alongside the mother on a separate surface rather than in the bed.

If bedsharing, ideally, both parents should agree and feel comfortable with the decision. Each bed-sharer should agree that he or she is equally responsible for the infant and acknowledge before sleeping that they are aware that the infant is present in the bed space. Do not place an infant in the bed with a sleeping adult who is not aware that the infant is in the bed with them. My feeling is that both parents should think of themselves as primary caregivers. Infants a year or less should not sleep with other/older child siblings -- but always with a person who can take responsibility for the infant being in the bed.

Persons taking sedatives, medications or drugs, or intoxicated from alcohol or other substances, or otherwise excessively unable to arouse easily from sleep should not cosleep on the same surface with the infant.

Excessively long hair on the mother should be tied up to prevent infant entanglement around the infant's neck (yes, this has very unfortunately happened).

Extremely obese persons or others who may have difficulty feeling where exactly or how close their infant is in relation to their own body, may wish to have the infant sleep alongside but on a different surface, such as a co-sleeper attachment.

Finally, it may be important to consider or reflect on whether you would think that you suffocated your baby if, under the most unlikely scenario, your baby died from SIDS while in your bed. Just as babies can die from SIDS in a risk-free solitary sleep environment, it remains possible for a baby to die in a risk-free cosleeping/bedsharing environment. Just make sure, as much as this is possible, that you would not assume that if the baby died, that either you or your spouse would think that bed-sharing contributed to the death, or that one of your really suffocated (by accident) the infant. While this is an unpleasant and uncomfortable topic, it is one that is worth thinking about before you make the choice to cosleep/bedshare with your infant.

Discipline

Through Natural
Consequences

Natural consequences are outcomes that happen as a result of behavior that are not planned or controlled (Pryor & Tollerud, 1999).

For example, if a student cuts in front of another student in line, the natural consequence may be that the other child won't play with the "cutter" at recess.

This has been coming up more and more in parenting articles that I've been reading.....discipline through natural consequences. Is this a thing? Really? You know what the funny thing is? It's GENIUS! It is really plain and simple, common sense, that parents in the last few generations have not been enforcing. If your child doesn't want to get a jacket - he or she will just suffer through the chill. If your child doesn't want to put a hat on, he or she will suffer through the sunburnt nose. Within reason, of course, this is a genius way of discipline, because it teaches our children REAL LIFE consequences that are not enforced by us, but by their actions.

I grew up listening to my parents say "because I said so" and did not really understand until I was an adult, that they had very good reasons for making me do things or stopping me from doing things, that I wanted. As a child, and really a teen, you think you know best, but really, your parents do. It's common sense, they've been alive longer.

I've done some research on Natural Consequences and what that means. Basically, if my boy doesn't bathe and brush his teeth, or apply deodorant, he will be teased by his peers. He will be the stinky boy. And then he will learn to apply these practices on his own. You can say it once, maybe twice, and if they refuse, they will learn the hard way.

That's really what this is....LEARNING THE HARD WAY. LETTING THEM LEARN FOR THEMSELVES WHY THERE ARE RULES PUT IN PLACE.

However, like I said before, within reason of course.

Consider the following:

Make sure that the decisions they are making are not dangerous to themselves or others. Naturally. We don't want to allow them to drive a car and get into an accident, endangering themselves and others. Just to prove a point.

Make sure it's within reason. You don't want to let actions continue if you suspect depression or other extreme situations. In reality, I cannot allow my son to NOT bathe for longer than a couple days....hoping that the lesson kicks in.

Have a back up plan and plan on being there for support when they need help. Because they will.

I have always been an advice giver to my two younger sisters (I'm the oldest) and my advice has always been that I cannot make choices or decisions for them, and I cannot control their actions. I can only be here for support and to help pick them up if they fall. I use the same practice in parenting, especially because my boys are getting older and are expressing their need for independence.

So Natural Consequences. Yes, this is becoming prominent in our need for exploring other avenues in guiding our younger generations. Let's hope that they realize and learn the lessons they need to before they are old enough to vote.

Parenting Styles

How strict is too strict?

In case you haven't heard, parenting is hard....very hard. We are never very sure of what to do in every situation, and there are judgement calls that we have to make daily that are very hard. According to psychological experts, there are four different parenting styles. Bright Horizons did an article on parenting styles, and I've listed the different parenting styles below:

Parenting Styles

Authoritarian Parenting

- Authoritarian parents are often thought of as disciplinarians.
 - They use a strict discipline style with little negotiation possible. Punishment is common.
 - Communication is mostly one way: from parent to child. Rules usually are not explained.
 - Parents with this style are typically less nurturing.
 - Expectations are high with limited flexibility.
- ### **Permissive Parenting**
- Permissive or Indulgent parents mostly let their children do what they want, and offer limited guidance or direction. They are more like friends than parents.
 - Their discipline style is the opposite of strict. They have limited or no rules and mostly let children figure problems out on their own.
 - Communication is open but these parents let children decide for themselves rather than giving direction.
 - Parents in this category tend to be warm and nurturing.
 - Expectations are typically minimal or not set by these parents.

Uninvolved Parenting

- Uninvolved parents give children a lot of freedom and generally stay out of their way. Some parents may make a conscious decision to parent in this way, while others are less interested in parenting or unsure of what to do.
- No particular discipline style is utilized. An uninvolved parent lets a child mostly do what he wants, probably out of a lack of information or caring.
- Communication is limited.
- This group of parents offers little nurturing.
- There are few or no expectations of children.

Authoritative Parenting

- Authoritative parents are reasonable and nurturing, and set high, clear expectations. Children with parents who demonstrate this style tend to be self-disciplined and think for themselves. This style is thought to be most beneficial to children.
- Disciplinary rules are clear and the reasons behind them are explained.
- Communication is frequent and appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Authoritative parents are nurturing.
- Expectations and goals are high but stated clearly. Children may have input into goals.

What is MY parenting style?

As you can see, there is a possibility of being "too strict" and we don't ever want our children to feel like they fear us, because they will never tell us anything. Finding your own parenting style does not have to be black and white - I believe that there is usually a mix of different parenting styles. Maybe you are more prominent in one style than another, but there can be a mix.

In parenting, it's important to remember that the most important course of action is to love your children. In time, your parenting style will fall into place. Remember to spend quality time with your little ones and be present in their lives. The worst thing you can do is ignore them, and make them feel like they are a burden to you. Just love them, be present, and support them.

Good Luck!

Raising Children Takes a Village

Why?

It Takes A Village To Raise A Child.

According to the Internet source Wikipedia, the famous African proverb: 'It takes a village to raise a child!' originated from the Nigerian Igbo culture and proverb 'Oran a azu nwa', which means it takes a community or village to raise a child. (www.ngopulse.org/article/it-takes-village-raise-child)

I do believe this in this proverb wholeheartedly, because the island culture here in the islands is very similar, and families are so close, that we are literally a village raising our children. At any given time, my boys are with my either, one of my sisters, my brothers in law, or my parents. And Vice Versa. There is an 8-6 1/2 adult to child ratio in my family right now, and at any given time, here is an adult present, an adult to go to, and we are all here to help with the children in our family.

My parents are very, very involved, as well as my sisters, and both brothers in law. We are all here to support each other, because that's what we do. It is our job to make sure that our children have wonderful, safe, and comfortable childhoods. We create their holidays, their celebrations, as well as handle the not so happy parts of raising children too.

Here are some important reasons why it takes a village to raise children:

You Are Not the Only One that loves your kids

It's most likely that you are not the only person in the world that loves your children. Let others love and indulge in your children the way you do. As their parent, no one will ever love them as much as you, but trust me when I say that I'm sure that your family members and friends love and care for your kids very much.

It's Hard To Be a Parent

I don't know if you have heard...but it's really, really hard to be a parent. Parenting is tough, and can be exhausting for anyone. Sometimes you need a second, third, fourth, and fifth opinion. You will never always know what to do in every situation, and you'll probably have to make difficult judgement calls all the time. A second or third pair of eyes, and others to bounce ideas off of is always a good idea. There will be times when you will need the talents, skills and insights of others in your village.

Strong Kids Come from a Close Family

If you have a close family with very strong family values, then you are raising strong children. They need to know that they come from a strong support system that contains people that they trust and can speak to. Sometimes that is not always going to be the parent. My children are comfortable talking to my sisters about some things that they are not comfortable talking to me about, and I'm ok with that. Because my nieces and nephews feel comfortable talking to me about things that they don't want to talk to my sisters about. It's what we are all here for.

Parents will Trust the People that are in Charge - and will have free time to work on their marriage/relationship

There will not be any guilt or worry when going on date nights, or taking a couple days away from the kiddies. You will trust the people they are with, because these people are already an important part in your lives.

Lastly - Parents and Children will not feel Lonely

It is not hard to feel alone when you are a parent...and even a child. You will not feel like the entire weight of your child's world rests only on your shoulders. There are others around to share this with you, to help, to confide in, and to help you feel like everything is going to be OK. You will have people in your corner, whether these are family members or close friends.

Remember, life is short, and raising children is hard. Whenever we are faced with difficult tasks, we have a support system for everything else in life. In work, sports, anything - there is a team, a coach, a manager, and we share these difficult tasks with others. Why shouldn't we be doing the same with our children, and our families. With people we trust.

**My 9
Year Old
Son**

Raising Boys

My son recently turned nine. Because I'm not a tall person, he's almost the same height as me. It really has me thinking...am I doing my best to raise a responsible, honorable, noble, honest, man? He's going to go through puberty soon, then he's going to be a teenager. And judging from the size of him, he's going to be an awfully large teenager. Will I be able to reach him on a level where we can talk about anything? Will he take my advice, and find me to be supportive, and understanding? All these questions scare me, even though I know that I have a great son!

Raising Boys

Raising boys is not easy....especially for moms. We are girls! I'm not saying that we can't do the same thing as our male counterparts, but we don't understand a whole lot when it comes to boys. Specifically if you are a girly-girl like I am. I'm not going to lie. I am not in any way a tom-boy. I'm not a "boy's" girl. I didn't have boys that were friends, and I never got messy, dirty, or took any risks. I don't throw caution to the wind and let it all hang loose. So it was amazing to me that the Powers that Be in the Heavens thought it was appropriate for me to have two boys. Very BOYISH boys. My two boys can't get any more boyish. They are rough, they are naughty, they are curious, and they are deliciously carefree. I cherish everything about them, but I don't understand a whole lot about them. What do I do if I don't understand something? RESEARCH.

Here are some tips that I found handy when raising boys:

Make sure you like them and feel comfortable with their boyiness. ...

Give boys one message at a time. ...

Be firm, fair and direct with boys. ...

Avoid being a controlling mother. ...

Coach boys in relationships skills. ...

Allow boys to learn on the go. ...

Get dads (or any male role models around) involved so they can download the software about how to be male.

NINE YEAR OLD BOY - MILESTONES

I always like to make sure that my boys are reaching the milestones that they need to - so here are some milestones below according to Very Well Family that you should be looking for if you have a boy, or child in general, reaching the age of 9.

Physical Development

May begin to experience early signs of puberty. Girls usually display signs around age 8 or 9; boys are more likely to enter puberty a bit later, around age 10 or 11.

Experience a growth spurt. Your child may get significantly taller and gain more weight.

Able to persist in physical activity to reach a goal, such as when playing a game or completing a physical fitness challenge.

Emotional Development

May insist on having own way but is able to listen to reason

May act unreasonable or rude when things don't go as planned, but is as able to recognize behavior and apologize

Seeks out peers to cope with uncomfortable emotions but is able to rely on own resources

Parenting Tip

Your child may have questions about stories he's overheard in the news or things going on in the community. Provide age-appropriate, factual information. Focus on everything that is being done to keep people safe and consider getting him involved with a simple project, like writing thank you notes to first responders after a tragic event or donating clothing to victims of natural disaster.

Social Development

Communicates needs and wants in socially appropriate ways

Works cooperatively toward shared goals

Consistently recognized the views of other people

Cognitive Development

Increased attention span but interests may change rapidly.

Learning there is a middle ground—things aren't all right or all wrong

Exhibit interests in collections and hobbies

Other Milestones

Children of this age also tend to crave a certain level of organization in their life and will often keep track of their daily activities and schedules. They will still need 10 to 11 hours of sleep per night, but it may be more difficult to enforce an earlier bedtime. My boy definitely doesn't go to sleep when I tell him to, and I've noticed that it's harder to get him settled down for the night.

Many 9-year-olds enjoy attending groups. Youth groups, clubs, and organized activities can be a big draw for kids in this age group because it gives them an opportunity to work on a shared goal while also helping them socialize with new peers.

Teaching our Children Empathy

And how it leads to Kindness

I have such a busy schedule, there really is not enough hours in the day for me. So many times a day, I brush my children away "mommy's busy, baby" and I feel eternally guilty about it. If I'm lucky enough in the moment, I realize what I just did, and I get to rectify the situation by taking a few breaths, and a few minutes, to listen to what is ailing my child, and I can try to help.

With everything going on in our lives, I find it difficult to find the time to teach basic fundamentals to my boys, such as empathy, generosity, kindness, etc. I mean, they know basic rules, manners, politeness, and all that, but to really get down to the nitty gritty, and give them the explanations that they need in order to really understand why being empathetic and generous is the best way to live their lives.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Which means that you are putting yourself in someone else's shoes, really feeling what they must be feeling in their current situation.

Knowing how to do this will inevitably lead to kindness, generosity, and compassion. When you can truly feel the hurt that someone else is feeling, you want to prevent, and stop, the hurt from spreading. You spread goodness and joy instead.

That is why it's important to teach our children empathy at a young age, and to truly make sure that they understand. It's not easy to do, even for adults.

TIPS FOR TEACHING EMPATHY

An article at Huffpost lists these tips below:

Teach them about emotions. ...

Read and watch TV together. ... explain the situations and the feelings that are being displayed.

After conflicts, discuss what everyone was feeling. ...discuss why they are happy, sad, hurt, etc.

Let them see you resolve conflicts in your own life. ...explain conflicts that you are experiencing currently, and explain how you are going to resolve them, explain your actions, and how they will help the situation.

Speak for those who can't speak for themselves. This is something that my Dad used to teach my sisters and I...to help those who cannot help themselves. Protect the weak. Speak up. It is a valuable lesson, and one that I will also be passing down to my boys.

TIPS FOR TEACHING GENEROSITY

As you can see - these tips from Babycenter.com go hand in hand with teaching empathy.

Demonstrate generosity. ...lead by example. Remember your children will inevitably follow in your footsteps and they will mimic the actions that you have demonstrated in your life.

Discuss other people's wants and needs. ...teach them that others have needs that they may be able to fill.

Teach your preschooler that sharing can be temporary. ...

Show that you disapprove of selfishness. ...punish selfishness and greed. Let them know that it's not a good way to live.

Pile on the praise. ...praise generosity!

Set some toys aside. ...donate as much as you can and include your children.

Let your preschooler learn from her peers. ...

Look for the reasons behind her stinginess. Look for reasons why your child may be holding on to their items so fiercely. There may be an underlying reason for their need to hold on to their things. A control issue, etc.

Empathy really is the pathway to generosity, kindness, and compassion. We all want our children to live good lives, be good people, and be fulfilled in their hearts and their minds. We can open doors to all kinds of opportunities for goodness when we start by teaching empathy.

Tips for Dealing with an Angry Child

Tips

Do you have an angry child? Do you feel like your child shows much more anger or emotion, and is maybe having trouble with control?

It happens.

Not all children are created equal. As parents, we must gear our parenting and action toward the child. All personalities are different, and we must never make our children feel like their natural feelings and emotions are wrong. They just need guidance in self control. We can always control our feelings, actions, and reactions. We cannot control our emotions.

I know what you're going to say, aren't feelings and emotions the same? It's not.

Emotions are uncontrolled reactions that your body will generate in response to an experience. Feelings are what you choose to feel when these emotions come up.

You can control your feelings, and say, I will not choose to let this anger overtake my feelings. Your feelings can be controlled. You can choose to feel happiness in a sad or angry situation, but looking at the bright side of things.

Here are some tips for helping your child

Teach Your Child About Feelings. ...

Education and knowledge makes us stronger. If your child knows what they are feeling, they will know what to do and how to control it. It's natural for us, as human beings, to lash out when we are feeling scared, and we feel scared when faced with the unknown.

Create an Anger Thermometer. ...

This is actually a great tip! Create something that will help your child identify their feelings and emotions. This will help them in realizing what they are feeling, and what to do about it.

Develop a Plan to Help Your Child Calm Down. ...

The plan that I like to practice with my children, is to

1. Take a deep breath
2. Identify what is making them angry
3. Take another deep breath
4. Walk away from the situation and contemplate a solution, if necessary.
5. Teach Specific Anger Management Techniques. ...(see below)
6. Make Sure Angry Outbursts Aren't Effective. ...
7. Follow Through with Consequences When Necessary. ...
8. Avoid Violent Media.

ANGER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES - see Anger Management Techniques

1. Think before you speak

In the heat of the moment, it's easy to say something you'll later regret. Take a few moments to collect your thoughts before saying anything — and allow others involved in the situation to do the same.

2. Once you're calm, express your anger

As soon as you're thinking clearly, express your frustration in an assertive but nonconfrontational way. State your concerns and needs clearly and directly, without hurting others or trying to control them.

3. Get some exercise

Physical activity can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities.

4. Take a timeout

Timeouts aren't just for kids. Give yourself short breaks during times of the day that tend to be stressful. A few moments of quiet time might help you feel better prepared to handle what's ahead without getting irritated or angry.

5. Identify possible solutions

Instead of focusing on what made you mad, work on resolving the issue at hand. Does your child's messy room drive you crazy? Close the door. Is your partner late for dinner every night? Schedule meals later in the evening — or agree to eat on your own a few times a week. Remind yourself that anger won't fix anything and might only make it worse.

6. Stick with 'I' statements

To avoid criticizing or placing blame — which might only increase tension — use "I" statements to describe the problem. Be respectful and specific. For example, say, "I'm upset that you left the table without offering to help with the dishes" instead of "You never do any housework."

7. Don't hold a grudge

Forgiveness is a powerful tool. If you allow anger and other negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice. But if you can forgive someone who angered you, you might both learn from the situation and strengthen your relationship.

8. Use humor to release tension

Lightening up can help diffuse tension. Use humor to help you face what's making you angry and, possibly, any unrealistic expectations you have for how things should go. Avoid sarcasm, though — it can hurt feelings and make things worse.

9. Practice relaxation skills

When your temper flares, put relaxation skills to work. Practice deep-breathing exercises, imagine a relaxing scene, or repeat a calming word or phrase, such as "Take it easy." You might also listen to music, write in a journal or do a few yoga poses — whatever it takes to encourage relaxation.

10. Know when to seek help

Learning to control anger is a challenge for everyone at times. Seek help for anger issues if your anger seems out of control, causes you to do things you regret or hurts those around you.

How to Calm Toddler Tantrums

Tips

Most of us Mamas out there who have children are either experiencing, or have experienced, the inevitable "toddler tantrum" which is really the worst feeling in the world as a mother, because it kind of makes you feel helpless, like nothing you can do will make it better. Especially if the tantrum is over something that you cannot fix....like the toothpaste being pink. (My 4 year old will only use blue toothpaste, and I don't know why.) In these instances, as parents, we want to teach our children to adapt to their situation, but as toddlers, that means they have a meltdown first.

Before we go into what to do in these situations, let me explain why tantrums are actually extremely beneficial to our child's growth and long term behavior patterns.

WHY TANTRUMS ARE GOOD FOR OUR CHILD

According to Parents.com there are certain benefits to our child's tantrums.

Crying actually releases stress from our bodies. This is a proven fact. Tears will lower blood pressure, and afterward will increase endorphins, much like exercise.

Crying helps your child to learn by clearing mental blockages that they may be experiencing. Think about certain times your child had a tantrum. Were they trying to build something, draw something, cut a piece of paper, and failing? Sometimes a meltdown is necessary so that a clear head can come back and finish the task.

Your child will sleep better. Most times a tantrum is occurring is because your little one is tired and restless, and really just needs to go to bed.

Tantrums will help you bond. After the tears, offer hugs and comfort.

Tantrums will help your child's behavior in the long run. Having a big tantrum helps your child release the feelings that can get in the way of his natural, cooperative self.

PREVENTING TANTRUMS

According to RaisingChildren.net there are things you can do to make tantrums less likely to happen:

Reduce stress. Tired, hungry and overstimulated children are more likely to experience tantrums.

Tune in to your child's feelings. If you're aware of your child's feelings, you might be able to sense when big feelings are on the way. You can talk about what's going on and help your child manage difficult feelings. You might also be able to distract your child.

Identify tantrum triggers. For example, your child might have tantrums when you're shopping. You might be able to plan ahead or change the environment to avoid tantrums. For example, it might help to go shopping after your child has had a nap and a snack.

Talk about emotions with your child. When your child struggles with a difficult feeling, encourage him to name the feeling and what caused it. For example, 'Did you throw your toy because you were cross that it wasn't working? What else could you have done?'

TIPS ON CALMING YOUR CHILD THROUGH A TANTRUM

Stay calm (or pretend to!). Take a moment for yourself if you need to. If you get angry, it'll make the situation harder for both you and your child. If you need to speak at all, keep your voice calm and level, and act deliberately and slowly.

Acknowledge your child's difficult feelings. For example, 'It's very upsetting when your ice-cream falls out of the cone, isn't it?'. This can help prevent behavior getting more out of control and gives your child a chance to reset emotions.

Wait out the tantrum. Stay close to your child so she knows you're there. But don't try to reason with her or distract her. It's too late once a tantrum has started.

Take charge when you need to. If the tantrum happens because your child wants something, don't give him what he wants. If your child doesn't want to do something, use your judgment. For example, if your child doesn't want to get out of the bath, it might be safer to pull out the plug than to lift him out.

Be consistent and calm in your approach. If you sometimes give your child what she wants when she has tantrums and you sometimes don't, the problem could get worse.

Remember, after the tantrum is over - offer hugs and comfort! Very important for your child to know that you are still on their side and still love them the same.

Why Quality Time is Important

Tips

As adults, we get so wrapped up in the mundane responsibilities of life that we forget why those responsibilities are responsibilities in the first place. We need to remove all the clutter of life, and remember what we are doing all this for. Why are these duties so important?

For me, and most parents, we get busy and work our butts off for our families. We want to provide the best life for our children, give them whatever they need and want, and make sure that they are happy. But what if just spending time with us makes them happy? I asked myself this question and made very important decisions based on my answer to myself.

Quality time is important for many reasons, and it is important for you to remember that quality means exactly that...quality. It is possible to be present, and not provide quality time with your family. AKA, you are present but on your phone, checking emails, social media, etc. So what is quality time? Why is it important?

Quality Time

Quality time, in my opinion, means living in the moment and really enjoying company around you. Being mindful about and active in conversations, jokes, and really responding to what's going on around you. Asking questions and being interested in the people you are spending quality time with is key. I like to ask my boys about two or three of their favorite things about their day, or something interesting that happened at school that they want to talk about.

Sometimes it's a problem, or something happening that they need help with, and if you ask, they will respond in a way that will open the door for you help. When dealing with talking to your sons, or boys in general, a trick I learned a long time ago is to talk to them about important issues when you are doing a task together, i.e cleaning their room, or working on a project.

Why it's Important

Quality time is important because it shows the people in your life that they are important to you. You are dedicating your time to them, and time is your most valuable asset. None of us ever have enough of it, so giving it to someone else is a true gift. It will also show your children, and loved ones, that they are valuable as well, and that they deserve time and attention from the people that they want to dedicate themselves to. They are not disposable. Spending quality time with people that you love and cherish will also give you a sense of fulfillment that you cannot find anyone else.

In closing, it's worth it make sure that you spend quality time and surround yourself and your free time with people that you care about. It will make you happy, and it will make your loved ones happy. It's a win-win situation!

Preschool

Is it Necessary??

Recently, there has been a sky-rocketing jump in statistics of new parents sending their children to the most expensive, most glamorous preschools. But is it necessary? Is it important, and specifically, does it give our children an advantage in their learning experience when they enter Kindergarten and beyond. Are there long term benefits to sending our children to most prestigious preschools? Because, come on, let's face it, as parents we will kill ourselves to make sure we give our children every possible advantage, but is this necessary for our children at such a young age?

Benefits

There are certain benefits to sending our children to preschool. According to an article on NPR here are the benefits to sending our children to preschool.

Their study has shown that kids who attend public preschool programs are better prepared for kindergarten than kids who don't.

Among their findings here are some key areas of interest:

While all kids benefit from preschool, poor and disadvantaged kids often make the most gains. "Researchers who study pre-K education often find that children who have had early experiences of economic scarcity and insecurity gain more from these programs than their more advantaged peers."

Children who are dual-language learners "show relatively large benefits from pre-K education" — both in their English-language proficiency and in other academic skills. Dual-language learners are mostly low income, Spanish speaking children, often with underdeveloped pre-literacy and pre-math skills. But, says Phillips, "there's substantial evidence now that, because they're learning two languages at the same time, they have stronger brain circuits that support self regulation." That may explain why preschool can help them make quick progress: "Their capacity to incorporate new information and to switch attention from one task to another, these are the skills they bring."

And yet, the researchers said, that doesn't mean preschool should necessarily be targeted toward poor or disadvantaged kids. "Part of what may render a pre-K classroom advantageous" for a poor student or a child learning English, "is the value of being immersed among a diverse array of classmates."

Not all preschool programs are alike. Features that may lead to success include "a well implemented, evidence-based curriculum" and an emphasis on the quality and continuous training of pre-K teachers. There's still a lot of research that needs to be done, the study concludes, "to generate more complete and reliable evidence on effectiveness factors."

Debatable Information

When we think of what preschool offers - we think of what our children need in terms of development. According to an article with The NY Times, they studied what children need and will take away from preschool.

"Children have evolved over millennia to develop their bodies and minds through interaction with the physical world. Preschool children, in particular, need to touch and feel and run and jump. Play is what they need to develop their motor, social, emotional and intellectual skills, and they need to do it with minimal interference from adults, within a nurturing environment."

So in essence, if we have the capability to provide this in our homes to our children, is it possible that it's more beneficial for children to receive this kind of learning from their parents? Is more time with a loved one that they trust a better choice?

I leave you with this information for you to do what you feel is best for your child. At the end of the day, it is your choice as a parent, and what you feel is best. All children are different, and there is no cookie-cutter way to educate and help them to learn and develop. As parents, we should be doing our best to know our children and know what they need. Good Luck!

Preparing for Kindergarten

Tips

When your first child is ready to go to Kindergarten, there are so many questions that come up about the process and where your child should be by the time he or she enters Kindergarten. Research is key, and I'm assuming you are doing your due diligence as a parent to make sure that you and your child are ready for Kindergarten, since you are reading this blog article. I'm going to be discussing a few steps, such as where your child should be, how you can prepare them, and also, what you should bring to registration with you. Here we go.

Basic Skills

Children entering Kindergarten should have the basic skills listed below:

Identify some letters of the alphabet

Grip a pencil, crayon, or marker correctly (with the thumb and forefinger supporting the tip)

Use scissors, glue, paint, and other art materials with relative ease

Write his first name using upper- and lowercase letters, if possible

Count to 10

Bounce a ball

Classify objects according to their size, shape, and quantity

Speak using complete sentences

Recognize some common sight words, like "stop"

Identify rhyming words

Repeat his full name, address, phone number, and birthday

Play independently or focus on one activity with a friend for up to ten minutes

Manage bathroom needs

Dress himself

Follow directions

Clean up after himself

Listen to a story without interrupting

Separate from parents easily

Don't worry about whether your child has ALL of these skills, because they will learn plenty during Kindergarten. Personally, the most important is to know that they can follow instructions, routines, and a schedule.

Areas of Concentration

The Washington Post interviewed some educators and picked out the top 8 areas of concentration that help them the most when children enter Kindergarten.

1) Citizenship. Teachers want students to be aware of their community and be willing to be a part of it. They want children to understand they are an important part of a larger group. Give your child simple jobs around the house that help the household. Explain why it is an important job. Examples include making their bed, clearing their dishes from the table and cleaning up toys.

2) Empathy. Understanding other's feelings is an important part of forming and sustaining friendships. Kids who are aware of others emotions are able to play more fluidly. Talk to your children about their own emotions and help them identify them. Also talk about other's emotions.

3) Science. Have conversations with kids about vegetables, herbs, fruits and grains. Explain which foods are healthier than others and why. Take a trip to the grocery store to explore various foods. If you are able, plant a food you can grow and enjoy together.

4) Math. Kindergarteners should have a basic understanding of numbers. When you walk up stairs, count with them. When you give them crackers or berries, count with them. Add a few and take a few away and count with them.

5) Books. Reading is a sensitive topic in kindergarten. You can help your student by making sure they love books — read to them! — and that they understand books. They should know what an author and an illustrator are, they should understand the dedication page and they should know that they read from the left to the right and the top to the bottom. They should also have phonological awareness of letters and rhyming words.

6) Following directions. Your child should be able to follow two-step directions such as take off your shoes and come sit at the table. In school, they will be asked to complete many tasks on their own and regulate their emotions. Be sure they are able to take their own shoes and coats on and off, and zip their backpacks without help. They also need to know how to take turns with friends.

7) Fine motor skills. Teachers say some kids' fine motor skills aren't as strong because they spend so much time with screens. Some kids learn their letters and numbers from a computer or tablet and are not given as many opportunities to write and draw. Give your children crayons and paper often. Let them write letters, draw sunsets, make self-portraits and sometimes just scribble.

8) Gross motor skills. Give them plenty of unstructured outdoor play. Let them run and jump and imagine and create outside. When kids are able to run and play on their own they get to know their own bodies and limitations, practice balance and gain strength. Oh, and when they exercise a lot, they sleep much better — something both kids and parents will appreciate.

How to Prepare

Finally, there are ways you can prepare yourself and your child that will tremendously ease the way into Kindergarten.

Talk about new routines with your child. It will ease them into the transition knowing that something new and exciting will be on the horizon, and it won't be such a shock to them.

Prepare a cheat sheet for the teacher that will give them an idea of who your child is and what they will need to help the transition. It should also give them information on allergies, quirks, special habits, etc.

Visit the classroom and show your child their new environment, so that the next time they come, it will be a familiar place.

Choose a transitional object. A security blanket, a stuffed animal, anything that will give them comfort.

Figure out logistics ahead of time. The bell schedule, drop off areas, parking procedures, and code words for relatives picking up your child will help the transition.

In closing, just remember to relax and know that your child will be well taken care of, and that this is a huge milestone, and an exciting time for the entire family. Good Luck!

**Should boys
and girls be
treated the
same**

I say YES!

An age old question, and debate, that's been going on years is - should boys and girls have the same rules? Should we treat our boys the same as our girls? and vice versa. Or do they have different rules, and are treated differently?

There are a few arguments out there to argue one against the other, but there are countless studies that show boys and girls should be treated the same, and have the same rules!

HOW RULES DIFFER - and why they shouldn't

There are so many parents out there that are willing to let their teenage boy out till the wee hours of the night, but not willing to let their teenage daughter out. Of course, the fears of teen pregnancy, rape, and other dangers come to mind when you think of young teen girls, but what about the dangers for young teen boys?

Either way, the dangers out there are dangerous for both genders. So shouldn't the rules be the same? Shouldn't curfews be the same?

WHAT GENDER STEREOTYPES WILL DO

Parents should, in fact, be practicing gender neutrality. Meaning that we need to let our boys know that they are just as smart as the girls in their class, and we need to let our girls know that they are just as strong as the boys in their class. We need to let them both know that they each have an equal chance in ace-ing the test, and meeting their goals. Boys should be allowed to cry and talk about their feelings. Girls should be allowed to try out for sports that interest them. Studies have shown that there is very little difference between the sexes when it comes to the gender stereotypes that society has thrust upon us. There are differences, but they are not as much as we thought.

WHAT WE SHOULD BE TEACHING OUR CHILDREN

According to PHD IN PARENTING this is what we should be teaching our boys and girls:

We need to teach our girls:

That there is more to life than meeting your prince

That big rigs, trains, dump trucks, and fire engines are pretty cool

That boys are not dumb

That no one is allowed to hit them ever

That they can play hockey, box, and ski jump (even if the Olympics doesn't think so)

That they can be political and business leaders

That math, engineering, science and information technology are great careers

To not let anyone tell them to cover up or strip down

That their health issues are important, even if research and care for them is underfunded

To say No

We need to teach our boys:

That it is okay to cry and it is good to express your emotions

That they can like pretty colours, flowers, sunsets, and cute furry animals

That girls are not sissies

That violence is not an acceptable way to resolve disputes

That women and girls are people, not objects

That they can be stay at home fathers

That they can play with dolls

That their health issues are important, even if society tells them that only the weak see a doctor when they are suffering

To Respect No

Why Showing Praise is Important

It Really IS

As parents, do we show our children enough praise? Do we compliment them enough? Are we helping them be their best? These are all questions that we should be asking ourselves daily, because these very subjects help our children to become their best. We all want our children to be their best, and to succeed in life, be happy, fulfilled, all the good things! But are we doing our parts to help them get there?

It's not hard for life to get the better of us, errands, work, etc. and it's also not hard for us to get so caught up in it that we forget to pay very close attention to our children. We forget to pay attention to their accomplishments, their goals, their dreams, as well as their failures, because there will be failures. We forget to be there for support, instead waving them away with a "good job" and a pat on the back. But is that sufficient?

It's not.

According to Kids Matter praise is fundamental in the overall progress and development of our children. It teaches them to work towards a goal, and to try very hard to accomplish this goal. Motivation is what drives us to act in order to achieve our goals.

We can be self-motivated when we give ourselves rewards such as when we:

feel pleasure and pride

feel good about ourselves, our efforts and what we have achieved.

Children who are self-motivated tend to stick at things for longer. They feel a sense of control over what they are doing and like challenges. When children feel they can achieve their goals, they feel good about themselves which benefits their mental health and well-being.

I recently did an article on Raising Independent Children and the overall lesson is that we need to practice constant, positive reinforcement in order to ensure we are raising confident, young adults.

(If you're wondering right now about discipline, I also did an article on Discipline Through Natural Consequences)

TIPS ON GOOD PRAISE:

A good praise encompasses all of the following:

Acknowledges the Child.

IS SPECIFIC - this is very important, because if too general, the praise is ineffective.

Makes a comparison to past behaviors vs current behaviors and shows how they grow.

Links children's activities with the feelings of enjoyment they experience while doing them.

Links children's success the effort they put into an activity.

Next time your child is trying to show you their favorite painting, a new clay sculpture, or an A on their current school assignment, here's a tip, pay attention, and give praise using these tips above. It will make all the difference!

Teaching our Children to be Independant

It's Important to Learn this
Early!

As parents, most of us want our children to grow up to be independent, and successful adults. However, the early years make it hard for us to practice some parental responsibilities to ensure that our children are independent.

Think about it. How many times have you taken over a chore or duty that your child (toddler, more than likely) is supposed to do, and then tell yourself that it's "easier and faster if I do it." I'm extremely guilty of this. Especially if we are in a time crunch to be somewhere, like dropping my 9 year old off at school. The mornings are always the hardest. Am I right, parents?

We are not aware of the possibility that taking away small responsibilities will further debilitate our children's growth, and limit them in a way that makes it hard for them to grow into independent people.

According to Psychology Today there are two different kinds of children, and what we do as parents, will determine which of these categories our children will fall in to.

Contingent Children (There are sub-categories within this category, you can read all about it here: [Parenting: Raise Independent Children](#))

The definition of a contingent child is that they are dependent on others for how they feel about themselves. They also depend on others for motivation, happiness, and have little to no ownership of their lives, thoughts, emotions and actions. They are also poor decision makers because they don't think that they know what's best. Their parents make all their decisions, and never ask for their opinion or their thoughts.

Independent Children

These children believe that they are competent and capable of caring for themselves and others. They are motivated, and are very good at using their judgement and making decisions. This is in part because their parents have a more collaborative relationship with them, and not a controlled relationship.

Tips on how to raise independent children are below:

Give your children love and respect.

Show confidence in your children's capabilities.

Teach them that they have control over their lives.

Provide guidance and then give them the freedom to make their own decisions.

Teach Responsibility - with consequences laid out if these responsibilities are not met

Demand Accountability

Encourage Exploration - encourage your child to be curious and explore their unknown!

So, the next time you want to put your child's shoes on yourself, because they are taking too long, stop yourself. Let them take all the time they need, within reason, to take care of their own responsibilities. They need to feel the success of accomplishment, and the feeling of self-worth! Throw in a side of confidence and capability, and you got yourself one independent child!

Talking to your Teen about Fitting In and Popularity

We love our children! Relating to our younger children is easy. You're teaching them things such as, sharing, caring, empathy, kindness, manners, politeness, and simple rules. But what about when they reach an age where their problems become harder? Social skills are very difficult to face, and to understand, in most cases. We, ourselves, have trouble in social settings sometimes, and the last we want to see is that our child is suffering in social situations, making us feel helpless. We cannot walk our older children, or Teens, to class, and make sure that no one makes them feel bad about themselves. Can we? I know sometimes we want to, but it's just not possible. All we can do is talk to our children as they get older and make sure that they are aware that no matter what, the most important thing to remember, is that they are true to themselves, and being unique is celebrated! As their true selves, they are enough, loved, and special! Is popularity important? Not necessarily, in fact, it can be damaging. Also, we need to explain the difference between popularity vs. real friends.

I like to let my children know that as long as they have true friends in their lives, that's all that matters.

I'm going to outline some tips and facts about popularity in school, and how we should talk to our Teens about it.

Social Exclusion

Sometimes as parents, we don't know or see details aside from the bigger picture of popularity. It's almost black and white. However, there are other categories that could make our teens feel bad about fitting in, such as Social Exclusion. Social exclusion is described when your Teen doesn't get invited to social gatherings, parties, etc. There should be a conversation about this to make sure that your Teen is OK when he or she does not get invited to certain gatherings. Before you pick up the phone to ream the other child's parents, remember that your job is not to fight your child's battle, but rather help them fight their own. Find out what's going on, and help them find the reason to why they weren't invited, as well as a solution to the situation.

The Cost of Popularity

As a parent, it's very important that you outline what your Teen could be giving up about themselves, just to fit in. You should also help him or her know that they should not be willing to give up anything about their true selves in order to fit in with a group or crowd.

According to Psychology Today these are the costs of Popularity:

Popularity requires pleasing - you must strive to be nice to people who you want to keep liking you.

Popularity brings pressure -- to belong you have to conform, being like, behaving like, believing like other members of your group.

Popularity takes being current - you have to look cool, keep up with what's happening, and stay cutting edge.

Popularity is precarious - people can vote you in and they can vote you out, and "elections" can be held at a moment's notice when you accidentally offend or someone "better" comes along.

Popularity is partly unpopular - while some people admire you, others envy you, can get jealous, and want to bring you down.

Popularity attracts imitators - people act like you so they can be liked by you, and liked by others by acting like you.

Popularity breeds insincerity - you may often fake being nice to people, and people may often fake being nice to you.

Popularity is confusing - sometimes you wonder if people want to be your friend because of who you are or because you're popular.

Popularity attracts attention - you are noticed more, judged more, your flaws and failings are more closely observed, and you are more gossiped about.

Popularity is competitive - since so many people want to be popular, you have to perform your best against your rivals every day.

Popularity can go to your head - popular people can believe their own reviews and act special or entitled, injuring friendships they thought secure.

Popularity can be limiting - the more you invest in popularity at school, the less you are likely to invest in creating a social life outside of school.

Popularity can be demeaning - people who pursue popularity will sometimes accept mistreatment from more popular people just to be accepted.

Most important, popularity and friendship are not the same. Popularity is political; friendship is personal. Popularity is about rank; friendship is about relationship. Popularity is more casual; friendship is more caring. This goes back to what I was saying earlier about Popularity vs True Friends. The last thing we want to witness is our Teen discovering that they have been betrayed by who they believed to be their friends.

I feel that empowerment is the best possible way to make sure that our Teens are confident, and will make good decisions. We need to make sure that our Teens have a strong sense of Self. This will help with other Teen problems such as Peer Pressure, etc.

In closing, parenting is not an easy job, and as they get older, their problems will get harder. We may not always know that correct answers, but remember that most of all, we need to make sure our children know how special they are, and how valuable they are. We don't want them wasting their time on trying to be popular when there are so much more important life experiences that they could be having in these important years.

Talking to your Teen about Peer Pressure

It's Important!!

We all have that moment of AHA! when we realize that our child is nearing an age when they will have to make decisions without you. They will have to make their own judgement calls, and as parents, this scares the hell out of us. How do we ensure that they make good decisions, without us being there?? Did we raise good children with strong values?

Well, here are a few tips, to ensure that we rest a little easier when dealing with peer pressure.

Have Open Communication

Create a relationship with your child that ensures he or she will come to you with their problems, no matter uncomfortable they may be. Make sure that they trust you and your judgement, and that they trust the advice that you will give them. Make sure they know that you have dealt with the same issues as well. Make sure that you openly talk about the items that they will have to face, such as smoking, drugs, alcohol, and (for older children) sex.

A few tips and talking points to share with your child about peer pressure:

Make your own decisions. Do things that make you happy and make those decisions on your own.

Plan a response. Whether you haven't experienced peer pressure yet or you want to respond better for next time, think of a response you can use if you're ever asked something you don't want to do.

Avoid places and situations that make you uncomfortable. If you suspect that people are meeting up to drink alcohol or do drugs before an event, tell them that you'll meet them at the event itself. Avoiding situations that might tempt you can help you avoid peer pressure altogether.

Choose positive friends. When dealing with peer pressure, start by choosing friends who won't pressure you to do things. Your friends should accept you for who you are without wanting to change you. If your friends don't make bad decisions, you're less likely to make them, too. Make sure you are involved and a consistent presence in your child's life.

The only way to make sure that you know what's going on with your children, is to be present in their daily lives! Not just being around, but being an active presence in their lives. Spending quality time, having conversations, and paying attention.

Maintain Rules and Boundaries

Make sure that your child knows that there are rules in your household. Boundaries are put in place for their safety and well-being, not because you're trying to be mean.

KEEP THEM BUSY

This is important, and I cannot stress this enough. Encourage healthy activities and hobbies that will keep them busy! This way they are never bored, and never looking for entertainment in unhealthy areas. Boredom = looking for excitement and risks.

HELP YOUR CHILD BE CONFIDENT IN THEIR DECISIONS

Make sure that your child is confident when they establish a NO. That they are not unsure of themselves, or their decisions. With this - make sure that your child knows to always TRUST his or her instincts. If something feels wrong, it is wrong.

Establish a CODE Phrase

When the going gets tough, make sure your child can call you with a code phrase that will secretly mean "I NEED HELP" - this helps with peer pressure more than parents will understand. Because your child will be able to save face in front of his or her friends, but still get the help that they need.

When in Doubt - trust your support system - Raising Children Takes a Village

There are many ways we can help our children, the growing process is not always easy, and decisions can be hard. It's also never too early to start incorporating some of these tips. So good luck, and remember to always make sure you send your child into the world armed with the tools that they need to make good decisions. It makes all the difference.

Sibling Rivalry

How do we prevent? How do
we fix it?

Sibling Rivalry can be a tremendous stress point for families, and even has the possibility of tearing families apart. So how do we prevent it? What do we do to fix it once it's taking place in our families? When there is already a presence of sibling rivalry, is it too late? Not at all!

Sibling rivalry is merely the jealousy, competition and fighting between brothers and sisters. It is a concern for almost all parents of multiple children. Problems often start right after the birth of the second child. If not dealt with early, sibling rivalry usually continues throughout childhood and can be very frustrating to parents.

So what causes this?

Factors that can cause sibling rivalry: Each child is competing to define who they are as an individual. ... They want to show that they are separate from their siblings. If children feel they are getting unequal amounts of attention, discipline, and responsiveness, feelings of jealousy and bitterness will start to form between siblings.

Fortunately for us worried parents, sibling rivalry is completely normal! It's a way of life, and in families, it's not something that cannot be fixed. The secret is acknowledging it sooner rather than later, and practicing healthy patterns to eliminate any kind of underlying bitterness between the children.

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH IT?

Expect many episodes of sibling rivalry. ...

Treat your children as the unique individuals they are. ...

Don't show favoritism. ...

Stay calm and objective. ...

Make need rather than fairness the basis for decisions. ...

Come up with a list of basic rules. ...

Don't look for someone to blame or punish.

Try to divide your time evenly with each child, and find a special connection with each child.

Don't ever compare your children or pit them against each other. Remember, that at the end of everything, they will only have one another.

In Conclusion, I believe that we should ALL have a handbook of some kind. Some general, real-life information that makes all of us not throw up at the thought of having children. When we are new parents, having a kind of nervousness is completely normal. You're in charge of a human now, a person, who will some day have thoughts and a personality of their own.

So do you want to screw that up? Absolutely not!

Unfortunately it's super easy to make mistakes, and absolutely lose our minds. Maybe with a handbook, these freak-out moments will be few and far between.

They won't disappear, but they will sure be easier to maintain. You can remain calm and know that you have a guide to reference back to.

There are absolutely those times when I just want to scream at the top of my lungs and say every curse word that I know...most of the time I am able to control myself. But I do have my fair share of freak-moments. *"WHY ARE THESE DISHES NOT WASHED?"* That seems to be the sentence of the night...every.night.

Happy Parenting!