

9 Simple Parenting Strategies That Work

If you're a parent, then you are likely interested in finding ways to interact with your children that create a strong relationship, foster positive behaviour, and helps you respond to behavioural problems.

Take a look at any bookstore and the shelves will be full of advice. But figuring out which strategies are actually effective can be a challenge. The Psychological Association was asked about the best research-based parenting strategies that showed effectiveness in improving behaviour, strengthening the bond between parents and children, and helping parents react to behavioural problems that arise.

The following empirically tested parenting strategies were the result.

1. Praise. Studies have shown that the behaviour that gets attention is the behaviour that you'll get more of. Attention to undesired behaviour — often in the form of **reprimands or punishment** — can **increase undesired behaviour**. At the same time, very specific, labeled praise of desired behaviours can often increase that behaviour. Parents should not offer praise indiscriminately. Instead, parents should give specific feedback on exactly what the child did that the parent liked.
2. Ignore Minor Misbehaviour. If a misbehaviour is minor and not dangerous, ignore it. Ignoring when a toddler throws food on the floor or a pre-teen slams a door, while responding with attention when they ask nicely or express their feelings teaches the child that good behaviour is a reliable way to get more attention.
3. Develop Consistent Routines. By getting your child into a regular routine for homework, bedtime etc you can avoid a lot of negative and difficult behaviour. While it can take a month for a child to be trained in a new routine it is well worth it. Once the child is used to the routine they will usually comply willingly with the expectations. In order to develop a good routine you need to be very consistent with what is expected at what time each day.
4. Understand Child Development. Understanding developmental milestones can help a parent attend to and praise steps towards that milestone. Knowing a four-year old wants to please friends will make you more likely to praise their positive behaviour with friends. At the same time, understanding that young teens typically have concerns about body image, looks and clothes might make it easier to ignore all that extra time spent in front of the mirror.
5. Do Time-Outs Right Along With Quality Time-In. Brief and immediate time-outs have been shown to work best, particularly when paired with parents who are also modeling positive behaviours and praising good behaviour. Keeping calm — often a real challenge at the moment a misbehaviour is occurring! — and praising compliance makes time-outs more effective.
6. Use the "Rewards" and "Removal of Privileges Strategies". When your child continues to misbehave or refuses to comply with instructions you may wish to remove an enjoyed privilege they usually have access to for a few hours (or even for a day). This may be an X Box, Scooter, or other toy they engage with regularly. Alternatively you may like to put them on a Star Chart to promote positive behaviour choices. Speak to your teacher or the Guidance Counsellor at your school if you are not sure how to do this.
7. Focus on Prevention of Misbehaviour. Paying attention to when a child gets tired or hungry can prevent a large portion of meltdowns. Planning ahead and anticipating potential problems and teaching a child ways to cope with problems when they arise can even eliminate the need to use time-out.
8. Take Care of Yourself First. Children are negatively affected by parental stress, with 86 percent of children reporting that parental stress bothers them. It can seem nearly impossible when you're busy with the demands of parenting, work and life, but it is essential to take time to exercise, maintain hobbies and connect with friends and partners.
9. Take Time and Do Nothing. Spend time with your child (experts recommend 1 hour a week per child) doing nothing but being with them, acting interested in them, and expressing positive thoughts and feelings to them. Avoid teaching, inquiring, correcting or offering alternative perspectives.

At times, parenting can feel like you're in an airplane in turbulence in a thunderstorm and the oxygen masks have dropped. As with on a plane, when parenting it's important to remain calm, put your oxygen mask on first — before you help your children and give specific instructions of what to do, with lots of positive feedback for good behaviour.