

Guidelines for Parents

The US National Institute of Mental Health asked the following question of 50 parents whose children had become well-adjusted, productive adults:

Based on your personal experiences, what is the best advice you can give new parents about raising children?

Love Abundantly. The most important task is to love and really care about your child. This gives him or her a sense of security, belonging, and support. It smooths out the rough edges of society.

Discipline Constructively. Give clear direction and enforce limits on your child's behavior. Emphasize "Do this" instead of "Don't do that."

Spend Time With Your Children. Play with them; talk to them; teach them to develop a family spirit; and give them a sense of belonging.

Give The Needs Of Your Mate Priority. One parent put it this way: "A husband and wife are able to be successful parents when they put their marriage first. Don't worry about the children getting 'second best.' Child-centered households produce neither happy marriages nor happy children."

Be Realistic. Expect to make mistakes. Be aware that outside influences such as peer pressure will increase as children mature.

Develop Mutual Respect. Act in a respectful way toward your children. Say "please" and "thank you," and apologize when you are wrong. Children who are treated with respect will know how to treat you and others respectfully.

Really Listen. This means giving your children undivided attention, putting aside your beliefs and trying to understand your children.

Offer Guidance. Be brief. Don't give speeches. And don't force your opinions on your children.

Foster Independence. Gradually allow children more freedom and control over their lives. One parent said, "Once your children are old enough, phase yourself out of the picture, but always be near when they need you."

Teach Your Children Right From Wrong. They need to be taught basic values and manners so they will get along well in society. Insist they treat others with kindness, respect, and honesty. Set personal examples of moral courage and integrity.



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