**15 Ways to Be a Better Parent**



Most people want to be the best parent possible and while many do a fantastic job of it, there's always room for a little improvement. Use these ideas to help you become a better parent.

1. Be a conscious, mindful parent; one that is fully present and interactive with your child. Put the phone down, let go of stressors that are beyond your control and focus on what matters most, your child.
2. Give your child lots of things to help them develop their creativity; crayons, paints, wood, fabric, boxes, strings, playdough, blocks, magnets and more. It doesn't have to be costly or elaborate, in fact, sometimes the simplest things end with the best ideas. Focus on the process of being creative, not the end product. Ask questions as they create to get insight into their thinking. Encourage them to think of solutions to problems they face as they create their masterpieces.
3. Give your child wings and let them fly. Children are constantly learning and part of that is letting them take the lead. Give them age-appropriate tasks that help them become independent.
4. Teach your child to celebrate the bumps in the road. Mistakes happen. Ideas fail. That doesn't mean they are a failure. The important thing is they learn something from the experience and use that new-found knowledge to do better next time.
5. Practice what you preach. If you want your child to act a certain way, eat certain foods or learn certain things, then you need to set a good example. Kids follow what they see more than what they hear.
6. Get to know your child's inner self. Ask open-ended questions and genuinely listen to what they have to say. Accept, without judgement, your child's feelings. Honor their uniqueness without comparing them with others. Encourage their interests. Compliment them on their inner strengths such as being kind, committed and working hard.
7. Make decisions that are best for your child, not for yourself to fulfill some need of your own. For example, does your child really want to learn to play the piano or are you pushing them to do so because you always wanted to learn? Is your child ready for and excited about playing sports or is that something you want them to experience because you enjoyed it as a child?
8. Set boundaries and adjust them as your child grows. Remember, there will be some hard limits they must always adhere to for safety reasons. Don't feel bad about enforcing those limits.
9. Learn from your child. When you and your child do not see eye to eye, they say or do something that sets you off. Stop, take a deep breath and ask yourself why their actions or words have triggered you. Is this something you need to work on about yourself?
10. Pick your battles. When setting boundaries, don't set so many rules that they are hard to remember. Focus on the important things that will benefit them most in life. Things like telling the truth, being polite and treating others with respect are important. Wearing play clothes to school one day or choosing not to eat dinner one night are not life changing events.
11. Instead of fixing things for your child, teach them problem-solving skills. Help them work through their options and choosing an appropriate solution.
12. Teach your child to trust themselves, their opinions and instincts. Teach them to accept themselves for who they are. They do not need look to others for approval.
13. Nix the nag. Yelling, screaming and nagging only create tension. It's not part of a healthy relationship. Instead, let kids make mistakes and suffer the consequences of them. Get down to their level to talk with them. Hold firm on your boundaries without using harsh words or raised voices. But also look behind the bad behavior. Is there something else going on that is triggering them to lash out or make poor decisions?
14. Spend quality one-on-one time with each child. It doesn't matter if it's tossing a football on a Sunday afternoon, cooking breakfast together or exploring a museum, seeing a play or spending time at the library on a regular basis. Give them one-on-one time regularly.
15. Teach your child to self-soothe and to be proud without reward. Don't automatically pick your child up each time they cry. Don't hand them a food, a treat or toy for being good or doing something nice. Instead, acknowledge that they are upset but they are okay. Praise them for a job well done without offering more.