

I'm not robot!

Raising kids is never easy. In fact, it's often one of the most challenging—and frustrating—things you will ever do, especially because you are learning parenting skills as you go. No one goes into parenting knowing exactly how to handle everything that is thrown at them. But the best parents are always looking for ways to improve. If you want to learn more about parenting, you've already made the first step toward becoming the best parent you can be. Clearly, you care about how you interact with and raise your kids; that's likely the most important part of being a good parent. Parents who struggle with their parenting responsibilities or feel too overwhelmed to try to improve may be negatively impacting their kids. Neuroscience research shows that when kids are exposed to negative experiences during their childhood, it can be harmful to their developing brains. But being a good parent can offset those negative experiences—and enhancing your positive parenting skills is a great place to start. To help you work on consistently improving your parenting skills, view this parenting skill checklist of six things you can do right now to be a better parent to your kids. Have you ever been so busy that you don't realize your kids are talking to you? Don't worry—it happens to the best of us. However, when you are spending time with your child, do your best to avoid distractions, including those intrusive thoughts about work, the laundry, or your phone that seems to be calling your name. Make it a priority to know what your kids are hoping for, what they fear, and what they feel anxious about. Listen and ask questions, even if they ignore you or try to evade answering. When you demonstrate that you care, you are showing them that you love and value them and their thoughts and opinions. Active listening also means you focus on what is being said without thinking about how you're going to respond. It's about watching body language and picking up on cues. Another way to improve your listening skills is to get on your child's level so that you can look them in the eye. That may mean kneeling down so that you match their height. Give your kids your complete attention and make good eye contact. Even reaching out and gently touching their arm or holding their hand when they're upset communicates not only that they have your full attention, but that you empathize with what they're feeling. As a parent, it's your job to teach your kids the difference between right and wrong, which means you need to follow the rules, too. So, when you do something wrong, make a mistake, or lose your cool, fess up. Model how to apologize, take responsibility for your actions and make amends. You also need to be sure your discipline is consistent but flexible. For instance, there will be times when you'll say no to your kids and mean it. There will be other times when you realize you've made a mistake or perhaps responded too harshly. If you do change your rules, be sure you say, "I was wrong," and explain why you changed your mind. Also, remember that we all make mistakes. So, don't be afraid to admit that. However, when the punishment fits the crime, stick to your guns. Kids notice inconsistencies and will use them in their favor. Remember, rules must be enforced after they are made. And whatever rules are set in your house, you need to follow them as well, unless you have a really good reason why you're excluded. Don't do anything in front of your children that you wouldn't want them to do. If you find yourself exhibiting behavior that you don't want your child to mimic, then it's a sign you should change how you react in certain situations. Kids will copy what you do, not what you say. Remember, your kids are watching you head off to work every day. They see you doing chores, making dinner, and paying the bills. As a result, it's important that they see you managing your responsibilities to the best of your abilities. Just remember, you aren't trying to be perfect, you're just teaching them about the importance of hard work, responsibility, and honesty. If you lose your cool in front of your kids, they may become fearful or anxious, especially if they are younger. Whether you're arguing with a customer service representative on the phone or you're having a disagreement with your spouse, do your best to avoid exhibiting reactive, immature, or mean behavior in the presence of your children. Anytime you lose control, yell, or argue with someone, you're showing your children this is how people react when times get tough. Instead, demonstrate how you can keep your cool and resolve problems in a calm manner. When you do, you're showing them what emotional intelligence looks like. If you do blow up, be sure to apologize and take responsibility for your anger. Doing so is another way to model healthy behavior. Sometimes parents struggle with unrealistic expectations and goals for both their kids and for themselves. When this happens, parenting can feel burdensome and overwhelming. If you find that you regularly feel that way, you may need to be more flexible when it comes to yourself, your kids, and your parenting. Being a perfectionist parent is stressful. Not only do parents in this camp fear messing their kids up for life, but they also put extreme pressure on their kids to perform flawlessly. They also expect way too much of themselves. Likewise, if you are a perfectionist, you may worry about what other parents think of you or that you will be shamed for your parenting. For instance, you might feel that your toddler isn't potty training fast enough or that your school-age kids aren't doing well enough in school. This kind of pressure can backfire, especially if your expectations set your child up to feel like a failure. It's important to take a step back and reevaluate whether or not your expectations are realistic. Likewise, learn to be more flexible and let go of things that don't matter in the long run. Both you and your kids will benefit from a more go-with-the-flow attitude. There's no doubt that you love your kids, but how do you show them? Do you shower them with kisses and hugs as often as you can? Remember, embracing your child will make them feel safe and loved. So will holding their hand, stroking their hair, and kissing their cheek. Another way to show love is to spend time together. This is a great way to show kids that they are a priority to you. Just don't forget to actively engage with them. This means putting down your phone and really engaging with your kids. Also, initiate activities, such as playing board games, enjoying outdoor activities, or simply talking with your children to make the most of the time you have together. Showing interest in things that they are passionate about is another great way to show your kids that you love and understand them. So, if your child loves basketball, watch a basketball-themed movie or play HORSE (a two-person basketball game) together. You could even watch March Madness or the NBA playoffs with them. Likewise, if your child likes painting, consider spending an hour painting with them or taking them to the art museum or an arts and crafts festival. No matter what your kids' interests are, they can be a great vehicle for engaging with them. When you show you care about what your kids care about, that encourages them to be more compliant with your rules and lets them know that you love them. When it comes to parenting skills, remember that there's a difference between being a good parent and being a perfectionist. While it's important to improve your parenting skills and strive to be a good parent, don't beat yourself up when you make mistakes. No one is a perfect parent. Additionally, making a mistake now and then is not going to harm your kids. Just own your mistakes, make amends if you need to, and move on. Instead, focus on being consistently there for your kids, setting boundaries and rules, and showing them that you love them. parenting skills Translate as you type World-leading quality Drag and drop documents Translate now Medically reviewed by Karen Gill, M.D. — Written by Sara Lindberg on September 28, 2020Important skillsImproving your skillsParenting skills assessmentTakeawayShare on PinterestKristen Curetty and Daemaine Hines/Stocksy UnitedCar seat, check. Newborn diapers, check. Tons of onesies, check.Parenting skills handbook... wait, what?Were you missing the parenting skills section on your postpartum after-care instructions? Don't worry, you're not alone. While it would be nice to bring your newborn home with a "how-to" manual, part of this parenting process is to learn by doing (and sometimes failing). But what if, instead of stumbling along the way, you had a map (like a checklist of essential parenting skills) that guided you in the right direction? It should come as no surprise that some parenting techniques produce better outcomes than others. In general, all parents want their children to be happy and healthy, but our own goals and circumstances can also influence where we place the most value when it comes to our parenting skills.In an attempt to figure out which parenting skills were most important, Robert Epstein, a senior research psychologist at the American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology, looked at data from 2,000 parents (who took an online test of parenting skills) to determine which parenting practices encouraged by experts most often lead to happy, healthy, and successful children. Based on the results, Epstein and his team discovered 10 competencies that predict good parenting outcomes. In order of importance, here are the 10 parenting skills or Parents' Ten, according to Epstein and team.1. Love and affectionShowing love is the number one competency that predicts good parenting outcomes. This includes showing unconditional love, support, and acceptance. It also stresses the importance of spending one-on-one time with your child. 2. Stress managementNot only is it important for you to manage your own stress, it's also critical to teach your child stress management and relaxation techniques.3. Relationship skillsSuccess in this area means you model and maintain healthy relationship skills with other people (spouse, significant other, co-parent, co-workers, family, etc).4. Autonomy and independenceWhen parents foster autonomy and independence, it tells their children that they respect and believe in their abilities. 5. Education and learningTeaching children to be lifelong learners begins at home. This includes valuing education, modeling learning, and providing enrichment opportunities for your child. 6. Life skillsProviding for your child's needs and planning for the future falls into this category. This includes showing your child how to positively view obstacles and challenges, which helps them develop resilience and perseverance. 7. Behavior managementParents who use positive discipline rely on positive reinforcement and deliver consequences (not punishment) in a kind and firm manner, helping a child feel connected, capable, and a sense of belonging. This also minimizes or eliminates yelling, and harsh verbal discipline, which one 2014 study found is damaging to developing adolescents.8. HealthYou model healthy lifestyle choices that include exercise and good nutrition choices for your family. 9. ReligionYou support spiritual and/or religious development. 10. SafetyYou help to ensure your child is safe. This includes setting boundaries and being aware of their activities and friends. And it's also tactical things — everything from babyproofing your home and enforcing wearing helmets while bike riding to teaching them how to cross the street smartly and what sexual consent means. When essential parenting attributes are missing, Deborah Ann Davis, educator, parenting skills coach, and award-winning author, says your child may feel uncertain, insecure, and unsure of how to navigate and move forward in the world. While not an exhaustive list, the following tips can help you improve your parenting skills. practice active listening with your childshow love and affection daily offer choices when possibleteach them how to express their feelingsmake time for your childavoid yelling, shaming, and labeling assign age-appropriate choreslet your child fail (this teaches them how to be resilient)set limits and be consistent with discipline and consequencesdon't make repeated threats about a consequence follow through with consequences immediately acknowledge and validate their feelingsseparate the action from the child (a behavior is bad; a child isn't bad)respond in a calm, even toneshow unconditional lovemodel the behavior you want them to display practice positive disciplinecatch your child doing something right and make a positive comment about itInstead of focusing on one aspect of parenting, or worse, bogging yourself down with trying to do all of them simultaneously, Davis says to rotate. Start with the following assessment, but do it judgment-free, says Davis. You have to know where you're at so you can see where you're going. Parenting skills to assess:unconditional lovedependable security and safetystress management techniquesconstant communicationtools for building healthy relationshipsmodeling healthy choices life skills developmenteducation advocacyStart by assessing where you currently are. Make a list of all the parenting skills listed above. Rank each one on a scale of 1–10 (where 1 = emerging; 5 = adequate; 8 or above = one of your strengths) for the current positive impact.Now, it's time to assess your child's needs.Make a second list of all the parenting skills listed above. Rank each one on a scale of 1–10 (where 1 = definitely needed; 5 = fills needs adequately; 8 = benefits child) for what most benefits your child right now.Davis says you now have a quickie objective indicator of the strengths and weaknesses in your parenting process. That said, she does remind us that you and your child are different people — with different needs, personalities, and outlooks on life, so don't expect #1 and #2 to match. For example, showering a child with unconditional love through repetitive hugs is great for a kid who loves hugging, but it's not suited for all children. "Some kids feel uncomfortable with physical closeness, so establishing unconditional love has to be in a manner they can relate to," Davis notes.Now that you've assessed where you are, it's time to take action. Here are Davis's tips for improving your parenting skills. Start by reinforcing the skills that rank highest for your child. It's already working, so use it to bolster yourself with more success. Do it all week.Next week, pick one thing in the middle areas (adequate) from either list, and try a little something new. If it produces the desired results, it's a keeper. If not, toss it, and try another tactic in the adequate parenting skill zone. When you find one that works, add it to your arsenal.With a couple of weeks of confident parenting under your belt, it's time to select a previously neglected parenting skill that your child needs more of. Choose a baby step to try initially. You don't have to figure it out by yourself — research strategies you can use. Find an expert in that area to help you.Every week, focus on a different parenting skill. Tell your family what you're working on so they can cheer you on, make you accountable, and recognize the positive changes.Going forward, each week, Davis recommends emphasizing what works, boosting the middle of the road skills, and rotating through the areas that need the most attention, trying one strategy at a time. Experts agree there are specific parenting skills associated with positive outcomes for children and parents. Identifying those skills and refining the ones that need work takes time, the right tools, and a whole lot of patience. The good news? There's a good chance you're already using many of these skills. But if you have any questions about parenting skills or strategies, talk to your child's pediatrician or a child psychologist. Last medically reviewed on September 28, 2020







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