

Positive Parenting Skills

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*“Life affords no greater responsibility, no greater privilege
than the raising of the next generation.”*

Charles Everett Koop

Abstract

Adolescence is a period of rapid, physical and psychological development. Being a parent is arguably the hardest job on earth and not every person expecting to become a parent is prepared for it. The relationship between parents and their children can have a great influence on their psychological and social wellbeing. The neuro developmental changes during adolescence makes adolescents to take daring challenges in life, without weighing the risks and dangers associated with it. Parents are children's first teachers and they should set an example in whatever they do as children try to emulate them. Parents need to positively respond to their children even when children put them in difficult situations. Parents need to be supported and taught how to be parents through positive parenting programs.

Keywords: Positive Parenting; Active Listening; Anger Management Assertive Discipline; Role Modeling.

Introduction

Adolescence is a period of rapid, physical and psychological development. It is a time when critical behaviors are shaped which has impact on the rest of the life. Adolescents constitute 1.2 billion of the world population. They are the sculptors of the future world. There is no doubt that for most families, the teen years present a challenge for both parents and children. Being a parent is arguably the hardest job on earth and not every person expecting to become a parent is prepared for it. The relationship between parents and their children can have a great influence on their

psychological and social wellbeing. Depending on child's behavior, the parenting journey varies and it takes plenty of patience and understanding. Positive parenting is considerably difficult, but it is the best way to be a parent which helps teens to pass through these years with relative ease.

Neuro developmental Changes during Adolescence

Significant neuronal developments occur during the adolescent years. Though the developments are linked to hormonal changes, they are not always dependent on them. Developments taking place in the limbic system of the brain are responsible for pleasure seeking, reward processing, emotional responses and sleep regulation and these developments occur earlier compared to development of the pre-frontal cortex area which is responsible for executive functions like decision-making, organization, impulse control and planning for the future. This causes adolescents to take daring challenges in life, without weighing the risks and dangers associated with it.

During adolescence, kids need their parents

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more than ever. Changes in behavior, changes in the attitude, attention deficit, lack of confidence, loss of self-esteem, problems with relationship and disorganized behavior are some of the symptoms that show that teens are in trouble. Every teen needs love and care, a good diet, about nine to ten hours of sleep, honest and open parent child communication, fun family activities, safe, supportive and positive learning environment at home. They also need encouragement to participate in interesting curricular and play time activities at school or college and enjoyable activities in the society.

What is Positive Parenting?

"When the other person is hurting, confused, troubled, anxious, alienated, terrified; or when he or she is doubtful of self-worth, uncertain as to identity, then understanding is called for. The gentle and sensitive companionship of an empathic stance... provides illumination and healing. In such situations deep understanding is, I believe, the most precious gift one can give to another."

- Carl R. Rogers

The words of Carl R. Rogers are the guiding spells for positive parenting. Positive parenting is an alternative to the punitive, authoritarian approach which we are more used to. It is a change of mind set from punishing bad behaviors to actively modeling and teaching children about positive behaviors. There is a commitment to approach children with love and empathy and there is no enforcement of rules. Excessive scolding and physical torture is a temporary way to control the stubborn kids. Punishments can have a negative impact in children's minds. Punishing children, threaten them and children may change their behavior momentarily. But in due course, they become resistant, become rebellious and some may go into depression. Giving proper reasoning about children's actions and the consequences in a language understandable to them is the right step in growing children as good adults.

Parenting Programs have gained popularity nowadays. The purpose of such programs is to prevent severe emotional, developmental and behavioral problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents. One such program is Triple P program - Positive Parenting Program which is a, "A multilevel, preventively oriented parenting & family support strategy" Sanders, (1999). This program was created by Matthew Sanders and his colleagues in Australia. A meta analysis conducted by Nowak & Enriches (2008), to evaluate the impact of the Triple P program revealed positive changes in

parenting skills, child problem behavior and parental wellbeing.

Following are some of the attributes parents need to develop or acquire in order to have happier, productive children:

Love and affection: Love can move mountains. Make sure to find time every day to show or tell your love to your child. The expression of love is the most important attribute you can give your child. When a child grows in a family surrounded by love, she is more likely to love in return. Take care of his or her daily routines, offer help occasionally and when needed like helping her while getting up late for school. Frequent hugs, kisses and words of praise can do wonders. Make them happy as in the words of Thomas Bray, "Happiness is the atmosphere in which all good affections grow".

Empathy: Remember you're a parent, as well as friend. Give respect to your teen, also consideration, and authenticity, you'll receive it in return. As a parent, you should be able to interpret different behaviors, representing hidden feelings.

Active Listening: Teenagers often complain that their parents don't listen to them. To listen actively to your teen, be sure your conversations take place at a time and in a setting where your complete attention is available. When your child speaks, take the time to listen to them, encourage child to ask questions and try to understand their thoughts, fears and worries. When you understand them and their problems, they come closer to you. Teen girls want to be heard, not lectured. Week end, meal times, and after school times are a great opportunity to know about the days agenda, to ventilate their feelings and to express their challenges, and to spot budding problems.

Patience: It's true, patience is a virtue! Parents tend to become impatient, when the child asks the same question again and again after hours of hard work. Try to laugh when you want to scream, and find the innocence in your teen's questions and actions and do not become angry.

Improving relationships between parents and children: Research conducted to create a method for improving relationships between parents and their children revealed that positive exchange ratio developed was 4:1 which means that every time parents correct their child, they should try to offer four positive interactions as well which can take the form of compliments, hugs, jointly completing an activity, a small favor, praise, playing outside together, kisses, patting the back, etc, in addition to correcting the bad and highlighting the good.

Use of assertive discipline: Discipline is not an easy measure; it needs patience, maturity, consciousness, self-control and expertise in the needs and developmental stages of children. Right management strategies must be used to discipline children. Instead of physical punishment, parents should use more effective strategies. Involve them when setting up rules for specific situations, discuss the rules with children. When they are involved they are committed to follow it. E.g. When setting your teen's curfew, decide together on the time he or she must be home after day out or ending screen time, etc, which makes them be more responsible in following the rules. Make the house rules well known to all, so that your teen cannot plead ignorance for breaking one. Having realistic expectations helps children to grow in the right direction. Jointly, along with the child, set goals of discipline and identify wanted and unwanted behaviors. Reward good behavior immediately, do not reward the misconduct and use the appropriate measure as decided jointly, any misbehavior. Practice consistency, as it helps to establish routines, give children a sense of security and helps them establish positive habits. When you are not able to manage your child, to bring them back in right path, get help from a professional expert.

Role Modeling: "Actions speak louder than words." Our children learn from us everything. Understand that children most often copy what they see and not what they hear. Our actions have direct impact on how they choose to behave. If you want your kid to be polite, you need to model them. If you want your kid to be punctual, you should demonstrate punctuality. Be a positive role model for your child to imitate. Let your children see you manage your anger, in a positive way by expressing it appropriately and calmly, without raising your voice.

Anger Management: Anger is a naturally occurring emotion that cannot be avoided. Certain kinds of circumstances trigger anger. Parents should be a good model for their children for how, and how not, to manage anger. The following are some valuable strategies to manage anger; In the first place, record a list of instances which made you angry, the triggering moments or activities of your child, which aggravated the situation. Next, assess your anger behavior and rethink of the incidence and the consequences and then evaluate your behavior how and when you managed your anger well and the times you didn't. Reflect on situations when you are likely to become angry and not managed your anger well. Lastly, make a commitment to change. Take a resolution that the next time, when

you are tempted to get angry, you will breathe in for a moment, control your anger and do not react too quickly. Communicate your child that you are working to manage your anger and you will do your best to act better in the future. Apologize if you have mistreated your child when you felt angry.

Effective Communication: The relationship between teens and their parents is a special one. Mothers can imagine their miniature in their daughters so do fathers. But when adolescence spurts, teens run away from parents, to their friends. Most teenagers want to communicate with their parents, but not all the time and all the matters. Privacy, is an important part of becoming an adult, it's a sign of becoming independent. Honest communication to truly see each other, paying close attention, at the same time respecting teen's privacy, praising them genuinely, respecting child's concerns, dropping too many expectations, as tightly held expectations may cause disappointment, making opportunities for meaningful conversations and guidance, learning to "read between the lines and giving them freedom within safe limits are sure ways of having a smooth relationship.

Never criticize or dismiss their worries as unreal especially when they are upset. Many teens are sensitive and teasing can hurt them. The ability to stay calm, no matter what your son or daughter shares with you, is critical if you want her or him to keep coming back to you. This is really important to find them at times, when they are actually in trouble and to avoid grave dangers.

Fostering Confidence

- *Praise your teen's effort instead of the outcome:* Rather than praising your teen for getting a good grade on exams, appreciate her for her efforts because, efforts can be controlled and not the outcome. Success all the time is not in our hands and not important for a parent but your appreciation is more important for your child.
- *Teach assertiveness skills:* Teens need to know how to speak up for themselves in an appropriate manner. Encourage them to be assertive as an assertive teen will be able to ask for help himself and find ways to manage his activities in a better manner.
- *Explore teen's talents and abilities:* Encourage them to join a sports club of their choice, musical club, engage in social work, etc, help them to acquire and master new skills which boost their confidence.

- *Stress the importance of practice:* Practice makes a man perfect is a proverb which tells us the importance of continuous practice. Only with regular practice, we can achieve our target and succeed in our field. Knowledge without practice cannot take us to our goal. Parents should stress that if their children want to excel, and become expert in their field, consistent practice will open the door for success.
- *Model confidence and self-worth:* Talk your life time difficulties and how you managed them bravely. Your experiences are lessons for them to grab courage and confidence from you. Teens with a positive self image tend to feel more competent, have more friends and do better in academically and have high self esteem. Basing self-worth on superficial things or other people leads to a lack of confidence in the long-run. Teach them values in life like respecting elders and teachers abiding to societal norms, faith in kindness charity, etc. Positive self-talk like I can do better, I am a good person, etc, will help boost their image and self worth.
- *Exercise:* The old adage, "A sound mind in a sound body "stands true for all the years to come. Physical health is as important as mental health. Being stronger makes teens healthier and confident. A regular 15 to 20 minutes of exercise keeps them fit and mentally relaxed apart from offering long term benefits.
- *Yoga:* Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices which originated in ancient India. Yoga creates a harmony, to support life, by aligning the body, mind and spirit into one. The purposes of yoga include cultivation of discernment, self-awareness, self-regulation and higher consciousness apart from innumerable health benefits for the individual. Parents who perform yoga naturally prompt their teens to practice it.
- *Meditation:* Meditation is a practice where individuals focus their mind on a particular object, thought or activity in order to train attention and awareness, thereby bring mental processes under greater voluntary control which foster emotionally calm state and greater mental well-being.

Positive Relationship with Your Partner: It is crucial to realize that your child is a mirror image of the how you hold yourself and your relationship with your partner. Children notice the way you

both act when you are around each other and this could definitely impact your child's development. Children grown in a happy family tend to exhibit positive behavior.

Social Interaction: Developing and continuing friendships allow children to grow. Social interaction favors advances in social skills, emotional intelligence, and cognitive development. When you allow few hours at the park, encourage them to take up some leadership position in the college or sports events, or outing with friends, you're giving your child freedom to be on their own to interact with the world and life itself. They will learn to interact, adjust, manage problems, and they learn when to use appropriate behaviors, and when not to and when to report to elders. Keep up appointments for school programs. Meet teachers at school or college occasionally to learn about your child performance.

Continue family meetings: Family meetings are excellent opportunities for discussing funs, worries, sibling disagreements, schedules and any topic of concern for the family. A few minutes of conversation when your child takes evening snacks or before bed time can keep you tuned to their needs. Establishing a regular weekly routine, doing something special like, going out for ice cream or to a park or to buy some sports or musical items opens channels of communication. Get to know how things are going on, whether they are happy with others. Ask about your kids' friends and their parents and get familiar with their activities. Talking with your kids, giving them certain responsibilities on family occasions and involving them in family conversations help your teen to know the world and face it confidently.

Conclusion

Children are the clay in the hands of parents and children become beautiful creations or otherwise, depending upon the parenting style. Parents are children's first teachers and they should set an example in whatever they do as children try to emulate them. Parents need to positively respond to their children even when children put them in difficult situations. Parents need to be supported and taught how to be parents. The above mentioned techniques will help parents to be happier parents. Last, but not the least is, *to take care of oneself as a parent* as being a parent can be stressful and parents need to know how to relax and be happy in and out of the family.

*Happier kids and happy parents,
Builds a Peaceful home!*

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