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# Tips for Raising Happy Healthy Children



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Parenting Styles</b>	<b>4</b>
Authoritarian	5
Authoritative	5
Permissive	5
<b>Rhythms and Routines</b>	<b>6</b>
Bedtime	7
Mealtime	7
<b>Building Connections</b>	<b>8</b>
Sharing Stories	8
Singing and Clapping	8
Drawing and Painting	8
Understanding Behaviours	9
Repair after a Miscue	10
<b>The Natural World</b>	<b>11</b>
Seasonal Rhythms	12
Nature Meditation	13
<b>Playtime</b>	<b>14</b>
Free Play	14
Screens and Digital Devices	15
<b>Couples Time</b>	<b>16</b>
Communication Skills	17
<b>Final Comments</b>	<b>18</b>

# Introduction

## **Children thrive when they feel safe and secure.**

All parents want the best for their child, but first-time parenting can be a minefield of do's and don'ts, and well-meaning advice.

I offer some tried and true tips to help you negotiate this stage of your life.

Most importantly, relax and have fun together.

## **You can't spoil a child by giving them too much love.**

A strong sense of safety and early attachment security enables them to explore their world and develop confidence in themselves as unique individuals.

Children develop independence when they are allowed to find it naturally, in their own time.



# Parenting Styles

**Early secure attachment to a carer is the basis of feeling safe and secure in the world.**



## **Securely attached children generally:**

- Have more supportive friendships.
- Have closer relationships with their parents.
- Have better emotional regulation.
- Enjoy better health.
- Do better at school.

The following pages offer suggestions for developing relationship security in your children, helping them to grow up with a strong sense of themselves and their place in the world.

# Parenting Styles

**There is a fine balance between authoritarian and permissive parenting styles and being the authority.**

Children naturally look to parents and carers as knowing more than they do. This gives them a sense of security and safety, knowing they can rely on you to make the big decisions.

Yes, you're that important!

## **Authoritarian Parenting**

- Based on threats, shaming and punishment
- Shape behaviour by enforcing a rigid set of standards.
- The downside is resentment and rebellion

## **Parent as the Authority**

- Based on understanding and leadership
- Firmness and limits without punishment
- Consistency leads to independence, confidence and sensitivity to the needs of others

## **Permissive Parenting**

- Based on negotiation and consultation
- No clear guidelines on appropriate behaviour
- Little thought for the needs of others
- Beware the teenage years!



# Rhythms & Routines

**Regular daily, weekly and yearly rhythms help to keep your child's world feel safe and predictable.**

Rhythm is our natural way of being. Children feel more settled and respond to change more readily when they know what to expect.

## **Yearly rhythms include:**

- Birthdays
- Christmas
- Easter
- Anniversaries
- Holidays
- Seasons

## **Your weekly rhythm might be:**

- Movie night on Friday
- Pizza on Saturday
- Visit grandparents on Sunday



Regular rhythms can make discipline so much easier, replacing nagging, reminding, correcting, directing, managing, negotiating and uncertainty with the benefits of predictability.

# Regular Routines

## Bedtime routine

Children won't sleep?  
Try a bedtime routine.



- Dinner at 6pm
- Bath at 6.30pm.
- Clean teeth.
- Story time at 7pm.
- Turn off the light, but maybe leave a small night light on.
- Share some quiet time to unwind the day and help your child to transition gently into the world of dreams.

## Mealtime routine

Shared mealtimes offer children the opportunity to learn important social skills of listening and taking turns to speak when sitting at the table with adults. Replace mealtime chaos with a peaceful routine.

- Set the table
- Add a candle or some flowers
- Turn off the TV, phones and other devices.

- Take a breath and exhale slowly.
- Allow space and time to relax and prepare your body for digestion.
- Enjoy simply being together.

# Building Connections



## **Sharing Stories**

Story time takes us into the magical world of fantasy and imagination. It's also a lovely time to share a snuggle. Children learn new words from the stories you read to them, and how to combine words to create language. They are also learning about emotions and how to recognise feelings.

## **Singing and clapping**

Making joyful music is an important part of childhood, and is a lovely form of self expression.

## **Drawing and painting**

You don't need to be an artist. Your children will only remember how much fun it was to be with you.



# Understanding Behaviours

## **All behaviour has meaning.**

The trick is learning to attune to what our children's behaviour might be trying to tell us. Then we are more able to respond with empathy and compassion, rather than punishment and control.

When in doubt, ask yourself ***"How might my child be feeling"*** and ***"What might they be needing?"***.

This will help you to see the world at their level.



## **Three simple steps for addressing challenging behaviours.**

We can look at behaviours as your child's way of expressing some big feelings that they need help with understanding.

1. Regulate your own emotional reaction first, so you can help your child to calm.
2. Tune into their needs, offering empathy and understanding.
3. Let your child know that you understand, and are here to help and support them in their learning.

# Rupture & Repair

**None of us is going to get it right all the time.**

All relationships have periods of conflict, times when we misread the cues of what our child might really need. The trick is to recognise and acknowledge our mistakes, be compassionate towards ourselves, and come back into relating with our child.

Your child will feel secure knowing that when there is conflict, you will still be available to acknowledge their distress and comfort them. They are learning that we can make mistakes too, and we are showing them how to make repair and resolve conflict safely.



**Many of our parenting challenges come from our own childhood attachment history.**

The frustrations you feel are often coming from the past, and actually have little to do with your child's behaviour in the present moment. If this is happening to you, it is often helpful to seek counselling support.

# The Natural World

**More than simply something we visit nature is something we are.**

Spending time connecting with the natural world offers time to slow down, breathe, and take in the beauty that is all around us, and is associated with increased wellbeing and self esteem.

The natural environment allows children the freedom for unstructured play, developing their sensory and motor skills and supporting their social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing.

## **Activities to help children connect with nature:**

- Build and decorate sandcastles
- Play in water, splash in puddles
- Feel the sun on their faces
- Make mud pies
- Clamber over rocks at the beach
- Go for bushwalks
- Climb trees, balance on fallen logs
- Plant and tend a garden

# Seasonal Rhythms

**An awareness of seasonal rhythms helps children tune in to the natural world, giving them a feeling of belonging and a sense of the passing of time.**

Nature journaling, growing vegetables or keeping a nature treasure table, can help children tune into seasonal changes.

## **Summer**

- The warmth of slow, languid summer days
- Fun at the beach

## **Autumn**

- Cooler days, trees changing colour and losing their leaves
- Days becoming shorter

## **Winter**

- Cold and windy days in winter, and
- Time spent indoors in front of cosy fires

## **Spring**

- A time of re-awakening and renewal
- Days lengthening





# Nature Meditation

- Find a comfortable spot and lie down on the grass
- Breathe deeply into your belly and slowly exhale
- Be aware of any sensations in your body
- Simply notice and acknowledge them

## **Name:**

- *5 things you can see*
- *4 things you can touch*
- *3 things you can hear*
- *2 things you can smell*
- *1 thing you can taste*





# Play Time

**Learning to play independently directly benefits all aspects of your child's early development – physical, social, emotional and spiritual.**

While it looks like your child is just having fun, there is so much early learning happening “behind the scenes”. Play is where children learn about themselves and their environment, how to express emotions and build their language and socialization skills.

## **Benefits of free play**

- Body awareness
- Social skills
- Self expression
- Developing imagination
- Problem solving
- Thinking independently
- Creativity
- Planning



# Screens and Electronic Devices

**Time spent on electronic devices is time spent away from important natural processes of early development.**

Your young child needs plenty of time and safe spaces to move and learn important physical and social skills.

This will never happen in front of a screen, no matter how much they seem to enjoy it. Occasional screen time needs to be balanced with plenty of time spent out in the natural world and connecting with others.



We all know how addictive screens can be, and how hard it is to let go of our phones. Just five minutes checking social media can easily become hours.

Screens can be just as addictive for children. Creating strong and consistent boundaries around their use early on can save you from bigger struggles later.

# Couples Time

**Nurturing your relationship is just as important as nurturing your children.**

Taking time out for yourselves is an important part of parenting.

You can't pour from an empty vessel, and it's hard to be loving and nurturing when your emotional cup needs refilling.

Adult relationships are continually evolving, particularly when you are adapting to lifestyle changes, such as becoming parents.

**Effective communication is the basis of fulfilling relationships, promoting empathy and mutual support.**

Your children are learning about being in a relationship by watching the way you relate to each other.



We learn and grow through relationships. Occasional conflict is perfectly normal. It's how you manage it that matters.



# Communication Skills

## **Tips for effective communication:**

You are role modelling skills of communication for your children.

These tips might help to prevent potential conflict from escalating.

### **Speaking:**

- Make 'I' statements
- Avoid blame, shame and criticism
- Share your thoughts and feelings
- Don't expect your partner to read your mind

### **Listening**

- Relax, attune to what the other person is communicating
- Listen to understand, rather than to reply
- Avoid judgements
- Be empathetic to the other persons experiences

We often bring hurts from past family dynamics into our adult relationships.

Working with a counsellor can help you to address these in a safe supportive space.





Thank you for joining me!

I hope you have found these tips helpful. Best wishes for your parenting journey. Without a doubt this is the most important job you will ever do.

You are raising tomorrow's leaders, poets, artists, teachers, nurses, doctors, therapists, writers, counsellors, scientists, naturalists, farmers, architects ... And parents.

For more parenting tips check out my website

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