

Who Do You Want To Be In the Life of Your Child?

Marie Masterson, Ph.D.
www.mariemasterson.com

This brochure's content was taken from
Enjoying the Parenting Roller Coaster: Nurturing and Empowering Children through the Ups and Downs
Marie Masterson & Katharine Kersey.
Gryphon House, 2016.

The most influential person in your child's life – is you! Parenthood can motivate us to become more honest and thoughtful about the way we live, knowing that we are leaving a lasting legacy and impacting the direction of our children's lives. Keeping the camera on the amazing and lasting strength of our influence in the lives of our children is at the heart of positive parenting.

When children experience a positive relationship with you, they will understand how good it feels to be safe, protected, and loved. In the future, this is the kind of love that they will seek with others, and this is the kind of love that they will be able to give.

Keep in mind what it feels like to be a child and to be dependent on someone else for everything, including affirmation.

Tips to Inspire a Positive Connection

- 1. Be positive.** Children are watching all of the time. They will do what they see. They catch your tone of voice and expressions. What you give to them in positive energy and sensitive words will come back to you in your children's voice and behavior. They will adopt your behavior, values, and attitudes.
- 2. Be kind – starting with yourself.** The *Golden Rule* says to treat others the way you want to be treated. Listen carefully to your words and practice affirming yourself and others. "It's a hard day, but we are going to take it step by step. Let's do this together."
- 3. Be present.** Be sure each child has enough of you. Spend private time every day so that your child can count on your undivided attention. Let your child lead the conversation and activity. Your children long to feel that you are engaged and focused on them.
- 4. Be your child's cheerleader.** "You can do it!" Those are powerful words. "It was hard, but you stuck with it and figured it out." Encourage children by noticing and describing their positive and caring actions. What we nurture and value will grow.
- 5. Be ready with love.** Defuse intense emotions rather than confront a child. "I can see you are having a hard time. Let me give you a hug." Then, when your child is calm, you can talk quietly together about how to help.
- 6. Be nurturing.** Share soothing touch. When you are near, give a hug or a pat on the back. Rub your child's hand, touch his arm, or scratch his back or neck. You will continue to be your child's favorite place to come when he needs comfort.
- 7. Be supportive.** Ask, "How can I help you?" "What can we do together to get what you need?" When a child hears this kind of caring response, it inspires cooperation.
- 8. Be polite.** Teach and practice simple manners. "No thank you." "Please may I have some?" "Thank you!" and "You're welcome!" are manners that never go out of style. Be sure to model these yourself. "Excuse me" and "Thank you for the nice time," will endear your child to others.

Many parents wonder what the best strategies are for guiding behavior. Starting with a close and connected relationship is the best way to build cooperation and inspire a spirit of caring. *Guidance* means to give counsel, direction and instruction. Guidance empowers children with skills and strategies for success, so that they learn what to do next time.

Every child needs security, safety, and positive approaches to guidance, which lead to self-regulation, empathy, compassion, and to ongoing spiritual and psychological wholeness.

When children are young, we want to stay “tuned in” to their physical surroundings and make sure we look ahead to anticipate potential problems. Children also need us to be consistent and follow through. “When you have put your things away, then you may play a game.” The game doesn't happen until the responsibility is completed. Consistency, love, and respect will make all the difference.

Each day brings a fresh start as we become our own best selves and show our children how to live. As we aim for the future, we can parent without fear, knowing we are securing a strong foundation that will last. This deeper purpose of parenting inspires us to renew our vision to mentor and guide children by our example. We can leave a legacy of strength and security that will nurture and empower our children for life.

The following strategies will foster skills for caring and cooperation with children of all ages. Positive guidance will bring out the best in our children – and in us.

Teach calming strategies. Model how to calm down when you are stressed or upset. “I am going to take a few deep breaths to calm down. I need to take a few minutes to think about what I want to do.”

Role-play problem solving. “What do you need to solve the problem?” “What can we get that will help?” Caring words help children look for solutions.

Give something to do that is incompatible with the inappropriate behavior. If a child is running around, instead of mentioning it, simply ask him to help you by putting the cereal boxes on the shelf. Instead of stopping a behavior – redirect (replace) a behavior with a constructive or engaging task.

Give the child two choices, both of which lead to a positive outcome. “Would you rather tiptoe or hop over to the bathroom?” “It's time to get in the car. Do you want to wear your sneakers or boots?” State what needs doing. Give two positive choices. Then say - “You choose or I'll choose.”

Ask a child for input. “What work best for you? What can we do to make this better next time?” Children have wonderful insight into their own behavior and great suggestions for ways to make things better.

Keep it simple. When a child is balancing like a wild acrobat on a tricycle or bike, avoid, “Oh my stars, you are going to fall down and crack your head open, and then I am going to have to call Aunt Millie to watch the baby and take you to the hospital.” Simply say, “Feet on the pedals to be safe.” When it is past time for bed, rather than, “You are going to be a tired mess and fall asleep tomorrow if you don't go to bed right now,” - say simply, “Bedtime.” Children listen to fewer words best!

When needed, use “take a break” instead of time out.

Let the child take a break to cool off, think, and calm down. The child is in charge and can return when ready. Offer to take a break with your child. Power struggles are set aside when a break is used for calming and thinking – rather than for punishment.

Turn “no” into “yes” as often as possible. When your child says, “May I go outside?” instead of saying, “No. Not now.” try responding, “Yes. After lunch and nap, you may go outside to play.” If they say, “I want to build a rocket ship,” you can respond, “That's a super idea. Let's collect the materials, and when Grandpa comes, he can help you build your design.” It might be tempting to say, “Not today. It will make a mess.” But we want to affirm and encourage great ideas.