

TIPS FOR IMPROVING PARENTING SKILLS

Parenting is the most difficult job you will ever have. It takes time, patience, understanding, stamina, and the ability to laugh at really weird things.

Everyone wants to be a good parent. No one ever says “I want to be a really bad parent and totally mess my kid up forever.” But, we all need help and reinforcement at times.

First, it’s a good idea to see children as part of the total family. Giving up everything for them is probably not a wise idea. As parents you have needs that must also be met.

It has been suggested that every child needs to have people “Who are really crazy about them, people who love that child with all their hearts.” Parents are especially good at this kind of loving and it may be the most important life-long contribution you can make for your child’s growth and development.

As a parent you need to keep your cool and stay in control. If you don’t approve of something your child does, act before the situation gets out of control, before you become angry and overly frustrated, and before your child’s behavior becomes unreasonable.

When making rules present the rules in impersonal terms. Then if your child feels any conflict it will be between the child and the rule; not between you and your child. For example, say, “The rule is food and drinks in the kitchen only” instead of “I don’t want you eating in the living room.”

Make your rules brief and clear. Remember, the more often you repeat the same rule, the more your child will tune you out.

If someone says to you “Don’t look at the spot on my shirt” you immediately look at the big old spot. Children are no different. It’s important to focus on “do” instead of “don’t.”

Tell your child what to do instead of what not to do. If you already have the “Don’t” habit using “do” may be difficult and takes lots of thought and practice. However, the change in how you and your child get along will make it worth the effort.

Always remember to talk to your children the same way you want others to speak to you. Using polite words to your children such as please, thank you, and excuse me allows you to model the words you want your children to say and shows them you care.

For more information on parenting skills, contact the Nebraska Extension in Otoe County Office at 402-269-2301.

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