

ARE YOU ARE POSITIVE PARENT?

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We hear the term 'positive parenting' bandied about, but in reality positive parenting seems elusive much of the time. It has been said that around 70% of parent communication towards children is negative, for example, "How many times have I told you not to hit Janey!" "Don't squeeze Fluffy. You are making his eyes bug out!" "You haven't cleaned your room properly!" "That's a half-hearted attempt at setting the table!" or "That's not washing your hands!" Granted, early childhood is the time when all basic training takes place and, therefore, copious instructions are given.

It is a time of trial and error for both parents and children. The thing we need to understand as parents is that our kids start off in this world knowing absolutely nothing, whereas we have already been through all the early childhood training ourselves and forgotten what it was like. They are not mind readers. We need to cut them some slack, and allow them to learn in a timely manner. They need to learn through coaching, not constant correction.

How can we turn training into a positive experience? The most powerful learning takes place when there is strong role modeling from parents. Then kids need to know what is expected of them. They need to be shown several times what to do and how to do it by the parent working alongside them. Children need time to practice with room for making mistakes or failing. They deserve praise for their efforts as they go, not just for the end result.

Negative parenting arises when we constantly nag and correct children. It's really important how a directive or comment is said. You can make it positive or negative by the tone you use or by reconstructing the directive. In the examples given above, it would have been much more constructive to have said, "Hitting people does not make things better. Tell Janey what you want instead of just hitting her." "Let me show you how to hold Fluffy so it doesn't hurt him." "Watch Sarah set the table and you can do it just like her next time." "This is how to wash your hands." "Good job, well done." The problem may be our lack of initial instruction. Perhaps we didn't role model the desired behavior effectively or show them what to do. Maybe we didn't give them the time and encouragement to get it right for themselves.

There is a readiness time for children to master certain skills. Potty training, learning to walk and learning to manage a spoon and fork are perfect examples. Young parents often feel pressured because their friends' children are developing at different ages, stages and speeds to theirs. Teen years are the most formative for study. In my teens I was honing up my social skills instead of paying attention to my books! With a house full of small children I don't think it was an effective learning environment for me to really get down to it. It wasn't

until my adult years when I found a goal I wanted to meet (to become a Registered Nurse) that it made sense to really get serious and in the end, it was very satisfying feeling to be a successful adult student.

To be a positive parent you need to use plenty of encouragement and praise. It requires you spending time to understand the way each of your children thinks, appreciating their different styles of learning and their differing responses to particular situations. Kids need to feel valued. Children want to please their parents, yet many feel that they can do nothing right, because that's the way they are made to feel.

We can change from being negative to positive parents by being proactive. Our children will rise to the occasion when they know exactly what is expected of them, and when they reach these expectations, are confident they will be affirmed for it.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.