

Positive Parenting Strategies

Do you struggle at times to create a balance between your career, managing your household, community and social responsibilities, and raising your children? It is a difficult balance for many working parents and is a common source of stress for both mum, dad, and of course the children!

There are however a number of strategies that can be used successfully to ensure that your family is a healthy and happy one. So what is a healthy family? A healthy family is one where everyone is involved in decisions and activities, where there is a high level of communication and mutual respect and where the children are empowered and have a high level of self-esteem. A few strategies to achieve a healthy family balance include:

Create effective family rules

- ▶ Rules hold a family together. They create a foundation for learning, taking responsibility and developing mutual respect.
- ▶ When creating rules, create them from a positive perspective (for example, using your quiet voice in the house!)
- ▶ Have as few rules as possible.
- ▶ Take the time to educate your children about the rules and ask them to reflect the rules back to you using their own words.

Demonstrate effective co-parenting

- ▶ Make the rules together with your partner.
- ▶ Be supportive of each other. The children will be confused if you as parents have conflict over rules or other aspects of parenting.
- ▶ If one of you intervenes in a situation and the other disagrees with the intervention, avoid the temptation to voice your disagreement and undermine the intervention. Discuss it later!

Encourage communication

- ▶ Demonstrate interest in your child's life, and experiences. Talk about school and other interesting daily events. It is in these discussions that your children will learn valuable lessons, and share themselves with you.
- ▶ Encourage your children to talk to you about things that are important to them.
- ▶ Use active listening behaviours (face them and use eye contact) and reflect to them what you hear them saying.
- ▶ When there is an opportunity to teach values to a child in a meaningful way take advantage of that.
- ▶ Schedule regular family meetings and encourage group discussion wherever possible

Be an "active" parent

- ▶ Help your children learn by teaching how to do things "their way". Don't expect them to have the same level of expertise as someone older.
- ▶ Be aware that you are **always** a role model to a child.
- ▶ Demonstrate your love through your actions
- ▶ Develop routines. Routines create an environment that feels dependable and safe to your child.
- ▶ Make time to spend one-on-one time with each of your children – remember the quality of your time is more important than the quantity.

Plan for major events together

- ▶ Involve your children in planning for major events such as holidays.
- ▶ If children are going to attend a school holiday program, let them review the program and look at activities in advance
- ▶ Allocate jobs and responsibility appropriate for age.

As parents and partners, support each other

- ▶ *Affection.* These are things like, saying “I love you”, giving your partner a hug or kiss, enjoying a shared joke, laughing together, saying you enjoy your partner’s company, doing something to give pleasure to your partner (eg bringing them a cup of tea in bed, paying them a compliment).
- ▶ *Shared quality time.* Spending an hour just talking, doing enjoyable activities together, working together on a project, taking a drive or a walk together, going out together as a couple, discussing personal feelings, reminiscing about happy memories.
- ▶ *Respect.* Listening to your partner’s opinion, proudly introducing your partner to others, and thanking your partner for things they do.
- ▶ *Communication of ideas.* Telling your partner about your day, asking your partner about their day, discussing topical events, giving your opinion, and talking about mutual interests.
- ▶ *Support and assistance.* Making yourself available to help or do errands for your partner, doing something to save your partner time or energy.

Strategies if you are not managing

- ▶ Don’t be afraid to ask for help – seek assistance from family, neighbours or friends.
- ▶ Talk with other parents about how they are managing
- ▶ Consider all the support mechanisms available to you such as your EAP, your GP, community groups
- ▶ Remember – parents are not perfect, just parents!

