

PARENTING
Andrew S. Lustbader, M.D.

DO's

1. Build relationship on trust → this is the only way to be able to have faith in your child (and vice versa) before, during, and after adolescence; and is essential for the child developing a strong positive sense of self.
 - ◆ cornerstone of self-esteem
 - ◆ nonverbal vs. verbal (e.g. phone); it's the little stuff that's most important
 - ◆ listening and being involved in their lives
2. Enjoy the relationship with your child(ren) → not only does it make everyone enjoy life more, it allows everyone to be able to communicate at different levels no matter what's going on in their lives.
 - ◆ day to day stuff
 - ◆ talk specifics instead of generalities, name emotions and thoughts
 - ◆ use humor
 - ◆ get "on the floor" with them – do what they want, you can enjoy it too
3. Respect them as you want to be respected; they are separate individuals from you. Make them feel valued → this applies directly to self-esteem and self-confidence in all areas of functioning including school, work, peers, authority figures, lifelong relationships including marriage, health issues, personal happiness.
 - ◆ listening to what is important to them
 - ◆ their perspective will not change because you said so (e.g. a funny looking nose) – but they will want it to, in order to please you
 - ◆ respect kids' friends
 - ◆ tolerating differences of opinion
4. Know what's going on in your child's life → if you don't, anything else you do will be useless. They need to know their thoughts and feelings – whether good or bad – are acceptable to you as well as themselves. They want to please you. If they feel their thoughts and feelings are judged by you, they won't be able to please you. Not only does this cut off communication, but leaves kids feeling alone with what they assume are their unacceptable thoughts and emotions, as well as feeling worse about themselves.
 - ◆ friends, baby sitters, siblings, teachers, media, internet
 - ◆ every day discussion of what goes on in their world and what they take in from the media
 - ◆ preventing the fall and getting hysterical vs. giving them the tools on how to get up
5. Your children will model your behavior → how they see you act in your life, in your relationships, your conduct, and in your behavior, will be at the core of their personality structure.
 - ◆ empathy
 - ◆ it's not what you say it's what they see you do.
 - ◆ drinking, yelling, arguing, hitting
6. For those who don't spend time with their children because work is always pressing and/or those who don't know how to spend time with their children:
 - ◆ Think of your children as a project
 - ◆ Do your other projects with them and have fun -- shopping, errands, cleaning, etc.

DON'Ts

1. Don't build relationship on discipline; even though that's how many parents were raised. ("and we turned out all right") → this leads to alienation and lack of communication in adolescence.
 - ◆ provide choices and alternatives
 - ◆ limits are critical
 - ◆ set limits non-judgmentally; use your relationship to make them happen, not discipline
 - ◆ discipline is a last resort that hurts self esteem
 - ◆ creates a downward spiral in adolescence
2. Avoid at all costs humiliation and shaming → this fortifies a sense of poor self-esteem that only worsens in adolescence.
 - ◆ learned helplessness
 - ◆ Yelling, hitting, sarcasm → feels terrible, models poor behavior, makes them lose a sense of their own stability because their parents have lost their own in the child's eyes.
 - ◆ creates bullies and victims
 - ◆ they will still love you if you say "no"
3. Don't let popular culture, peer pressure, and the media rule → this is how bad things happen, and how the uniqueness of your child gets lost.
 - ◆ avoid exposure to inappropriate movies/media/TV/computer (permits disassociation to violence, and sucks out the brain without the child knowing). It is an unsafe world and your children do need protection
 - ◆ find better "default modes"
 - ◆ just because other kids like it and have it, doesn't mean it's good for them
 - ◆ no TV or computer in the bedroom
4. Don't have expectations higher than their developmental and/or actual abilities → this also fortifies a sense of poor self-esteem and creates a downward spiral of poor performance and poor self-image.
 - ◆ don't compare to what other kids are doing; the developmental range is huge
 - ◆ if you can tolerate their failures, they can too
 - ◆ help decrease the level of competition between siblings and peers
 - ◆ body image, nutrition, fashion magazines
5. Don't avoid mental health → it can turn things around either before or during adolescence.
 - ◆ Decreasing function in four areas (SAFE = social, academics, family, extracurricular)
 - ◆ stigma and other reasons to avoid mental health
 - ◆ "the monster inside I can't control"
6. Don't avoid safety issues. Talk about them as early as possible → they will be ingrained as they move through adolescence and decreases anxiety then and now.
 - ◆ from hair dryers in the bathtub to cigarettes, sex, drugs, alcohol, nutrition, violence, health and cars
 - ◆ don't forget, it's what they see you do, not so much what you say

ENJOY YOUR CHILDREN!