

10 Simple Ways to Improve Your Parenting

Less drama, more love. *What do you have to lose?*

1. Empathize more.

Children don't always need to get their way, but they do need to feel understood. Whatever your child says or does, she has a reason. Even while setting limits, try acknowledging that reason. Instead of *"Turn that screen off right now!"* try *"You really wish you could keep watching, I know. And still, it's time for dinner. Say 'Goodbye Screen.' Okay, let's go."*

2. Tell them what they CAN do, instead of what they can't.

Instead of *"Stop playing with the ball in the house!"* try *"Balls are for outside. Inside, you can throw the stuffed animals into the bathtub."*

3. Get them laughing every day.

Laughter changes the body chemistry, decreasing stress hormones so kids are more cooperative and sleep better. It also increases bonding hormones, so when you laugh with your child, you strengthen your relationship.

4. Say 'Yes' more often.

We're parents, so we have to set limits and say No all day long. So when you can, say yes. Even when you have to say no, can you say it with "Yes" energy? *"YES, it's time to clean up, and YES I will help you and YES we can leave your tower up and YES you can growl about it and YES if we hurry, we can read an extra story and YES we can make this fun and YES I adore you and YES how did I get so lucky to be your parent? YES!"*

5. Spend "special time" every day.

If you want to strengthen and sweeten your relationship with your child, here's your prescription. Just enjoy and admire your child without controlling him. Parents often tell me that their children react to getting this one-on-one time "like they were missing an essential vitamin." They were. Every child needs this tangible expression of your love.

6. Use your pause button to yell less.

Your pause button:

- Stop.
- Drop (your agenda, just for now).
- Breathe.

Now, try a Do-Over: *"Sorry, I was getting frustrated. Let's try that again. It's time to go, and you aren't ready. What do you need to do to be ready? Right! Let's do it!"* How will they learn to regulate their emotions if we don't regulate ours? You're the role model.

7. Turn your screen off when you're with your child.

Many children say their parents' phone is the most important thing in the parent's life. They'll remember for the rest of your life that you prioritized them by turning your phone off when you were with them.

8. Go outside and move with your kids.

Research confirms what your grandmother said. Children really do need daily fresh air, greenery and movement to de-stress and be their best selves. In fact, we all do.

9. Allow emotions, limit behavior.

Of course, you need to set limits. But when we allow emotions, children learn to manage them faster. Just say *"You must be so upset to use that tone of voice. Tell me about it, Sweetie. We can figure this out together."* Your child will start calming down before your eyes.

10. Put yourself back on the list.

You can only be emotionally generous if you take care of you. I know, that's tough, but it isn't sustainable to leave yourself off the list. Start by getting enough sleep and talking to yourself like someone you love. Monitor your well-being as you go through your day. Every day do something that increases your level of joy. You'll see your good mood rub off on your child.