

Bringing up great kids

TIP SHEET

Relationships Australia WA's education team have developed a range of tips to help support you during difficult times. As a free resource, we encourage you to share this with your community.

It's normal to question yourself as a parent at times and wonder if you are doing it 'right'. Effective parenting is an innate skill, but the good news is parents can learn how to be more effectively engaged with their children. The more we understand ourselves and our children the better able we are to parent and support them.

Here are some questions to help you think about what is important about parenting:

1. What values and beliefs are important to you?

How we were brought up has a powerful influence on the way we parent our children. Some parenting practices are passed down without us considering whether they are beneficial or not. What do you want to pass on to your children? Taking the time to reflect on your own experience helps you understand yourself better and guides you to be the parent you want to be.

2. What do you notice about yourself as a parent?

We all experience challenging moments. When you take time to pause and think about what is going on for you and your children, you are more able to stay attuned to their needs and respond in a way that meets both their and your needs. Pausing and taking a few minutes to calm down during challenging moments with your children will enable you to respond rather than react to their behaviour.

3. What do you understand about your child's developing brain?

Young children have limited ability to think and be reasoned with and this is because the sections of the brain responsible for these areas are not yet 'switched on'. What is 'switched on' is the emotional centre. This is why when they are in an emotional state, they can't easily listen to you or be reasoned with. If you can stay calm, this will help your child calm down too.

4. How do you tune into your child's feelings?

Children show how they are feeling through their behaviour. Young children communicate more through behaviours, facial expressions and bodies. As they don't have the words to express themselves, they need you to tune into their emotional cues - what are they telling you they need? Remember, when they 'act out' they are not doing something to you, but are wanting something from you.

5. How does your child experience you?

Children are very sensitive to how you communicate with them. In the first few years of life, they are more attuned to the emotional aspects of communication. They pay more attention to the look on your face and your tone of voice than the words you use. They are more sensitive to the gestures you make, the way you position yourself and the way you hold and touch them.

6. Accept that you don't need to have all the answers

You don't have to know everything as no parent has all the answers. Every parent makes mistakes and learns through experience. Have confidence in what you don't know and find out more about the things you feel less confident in. Parenting requires a willingness to reflect on what we are doing and change the things we are not happy with.

As we journey through these challenging times, please reach out for support and connection amongst your community or if you'd like further support from Relationships Australia WA you can call us on 1300 364 277.

Our Education team are continuing to facilitate Relationship Australia WA's seminars, workshops and courses face-to-face and online.

If you'd like to register your interest in attending a course on **Bringing up Great Kids** or any of our other courses, please email education@relationshipsaustralia.org.au or call 6164 0200.