

Building a Positive Relationship with Your Child the E-Way

Building a positive relationship with your child can begin anytime. Promote balanced growth by following the theme of “Living Today, Preparing For Tomorrow”.

A positive, optimistic attitude on the part of the parent is essential in building a healthy relationship with anyone, but especially with a child. Very few people are interested in having a relationship with a grouch. A good way to begin this process is to choose one of the E’s that you are already doing and commit to increased consistency. Then choose one of the other E’s that you think is most needed and share with an adult (or your child if appropriate) that you want to practice this E. Gradually implement more of the E’s in this way and look for daily opportunities to use them until they are a natural part of the way you relate to your child.

E’s:

- 1) Enjoy. Enjoy your child’s presence. Look forward to being together and to learning from each other. Enjoy your child’s uniqueness. Above all show by your attitude and manner that you enjoy being together. Enjoy watching them discover, learn and grow.
- 2) Encourage. Encouragement focuses on effort and improvement, while praise focuses on the finished product or only on the result of a performance.
- 3) Enlighten. This usually involves providing real life information such as: “Don’t dress goofy if you don’t want to be teased”. “This is how it is”. “This is how it works”. Here, once again, for a child to truly listen to you, he/she must be in a teachable moment. If they are not, don’t waste your breath with your advice, no matter how good it is. If the child cannot be brought to a teachable moment right then by asking a thought provoking question, you’ll just have to wait for a better time.
- 4) Educate. Education involves both teaching and training. It is important to understand and appreciate the difference between these two modes of learning. Essentially teaching is imparting information. Training is more related to repetition. Developing manners, for example involves teaching first, the training. A whole lot of training! Educate children in the use of time and money. It is well known that if a person does not have a plan for time and a plan for money, they won’t make it. Recognize your role as a teacher for your child, take advantage of the opportunities and enjoy the role.
- 5) Edify. Feed and nourish your child mentally and emotionally, but especially spiritually. The child that is not edified, will experience shrinkage mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Pausing with your child to appreciate the grandeur of nature would be but one way to edify both yourself and your child. This E is the “deepest and most profound” of all the E’s.
- 6) Equip. Equip your child by giving them the tools for living. A good way to start is by enjoying, encouraging, enlightening, educating and edifying your child. You can probably come up with some other E’s that fit into this plan of building a positive relationship with your child. I would encourage you to thoughtfully and creatively do this.

How about some Non E’s? Here are three of them that qualify:

- 1) Entertain. It is not the parent’s job to entertain their child, nor is it the child’s job to entertain the parent. Parenting is not a popularity contest. This type of activity quickly undermines the parental role. Family members can learn how to have fun together without one or the other of them constantly being on stage.

2) Enable. Do not do for your child on a regular basis, that which they are fully capable of doing for themselves. Enabling another person has to do with perpetuating a sense of helplessness and in the long run doesn't do anyone any favors.

3) Exploit. One of the most common, and possibly least recognized ways that this can occur in children is when a child is pressured, or perceives pressure to participate in activities such as music or sports and it is more for the selfish gratification of the parent than it is for the benefit of the child. These are activities which can have many benefits for a child, but the problem here is the motivation of the parent. It is good for a parent to know their own heart and mind prior to "pushing too hard".

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