

Positive Parenting

CREATING A POSITIVE HOME ENVIRONMENT

ROUTINES

Children need consistency in their daily lives. Consistency makes them feel safe and secure. It also provides them with stability and predictability. It is the routine of a particular event that is so important not necessarily each individual step. Three examples have been included:

AT BEDTIME

- have a set time for getting ready.
- provide a snack .
- brush teeth, use bath/shower and toilet.
- read story or provide silent reading time.
- give a kiss, hug and turn lights out.

AT SUPPER TIME

- establish a time that will fit your family's schedule.
- involve your children in the meal planning and preparation, perhaps have them take turns.
- get into the habit of eating supper at the table together as a family.
- encourage the rules of etiquette.
- clean up together.

AT HOMEWORK TIME

- provide a quiet place away from noises and other distractions.
- set a consistent time, preferably after supper.
- set a reasonable minimum time limit.
- help only when requested.
- encourage your child to be responsible for his/her belongings.
- keep track of school events and activities on a calendar.

Children need to know what is acceptable and what is not. They need to have limits set and they need to be aware of the consequences when "the rules" are broken. Children learn the limits by testing boundaries set by the parents. The rules should be kept simple and they must be consistent. Remember it is acceptable to tell your child "NO" and if possible let them know why you've said "NO".

Try to be flexible about activities that are important to your child. If possible give them choices. Increase the number of choices you allow your children to make as they develop and mature. As adolescence approaches, hopefully teenagers will be capable of setting many of their own limits and guidelines because of the training they received when younger. Remember to reprimand your child privately (never in front of their peers) if a rule is broken.

Parents should try to work together as a team. Even if you and your partner don't agree on all of the rules you should try to reach a compromise and support one another. It helps to keep a positive atmosphere in the home. Children learn very quickly how to play one parent against the other. They also learn which parent is easy and which one is "the heavy".

Consequences

There are natural and logical consequences. These consequences can be a good way for a child to learn from his/her mistakes. Natural consequences are those that occur as a direct result of doing or not doing something. An example would be that if you leave your bike out in the rain it will rust. Not all situations are appropriate for natural consequences such as allowing your toddler to run out on the road.

Logical consequences are often established ahead of time and are related to the problem. An example would be that if your child is caught riding his/her bike without a helmet then the bike is taken away for a couple of days.

Stress

Children are constantly under stress. Situations that don't appear to be stressful to adults will often cause children to feel pressured or anxious. When routines are disrupted because of a late night or lack of exercise stress is created. These stressful times can cause negative behavioural traits to appear.

Stress can occur when children's lives become too hectic. Belonging to several clubs, sports activities or lessons can cause anxiety and pressure. Children need time to relax and spend quiet evenings at home. It's during these unstructured times that imaginations develop and children unwind.

Limit the amount of TV viewing that occurs in your household. An hour per day is adequate. By limiting the amount of time the TV is on you'll find that communication between family members improves. Children become more creative, interested in reading, doing homework and playing games.

Occasionally, plan a special family activity such as ordering pizza for supper or playing a game of cards.

TIP: A positive environment is one in which children feel safe and secure. They need to feel loved and to be told they are loved. Everyone needs to be hugged. Teenagers especially need a hug when they're feeling out of sorts. When using praise it must be sincere and genuine. Children can tell if the compliment is not deserved. Avoid the use of sarcasm.