

Parenting with "Positivity"



by Linda Aber

I was out for dinner with my 26 year old daughter this week when she lovingly told me that I was her best friend and thanked me for all I had taught her over the years. I felt humbled, gulped back my tears and embraced her, for as a parent one only hopes to ever hear those words. As she recalled specific memories of our lives together, I realized how quickly the childhood/teen years pass, how precious each day of that experience truly is, and the importance of the parent-child relationship. The following article reflects my belief that the parenting philosophy we utilize must be full of love, positivity and connection.

I recently worked with a parent couple and during our first session together, they appeared extremely stressed and conflictual. They described their home life with their ten and eight year old sons as a turbulent battlefield 24/7. Almost apologetically, they admitted that the tools they used (yelling, sarcasm, removal of privileges, time-out for extended periods in their rooms) were making the situation worse. They confided there was little affection or consistency within their family dynamic and it was apparent that nurturance, playfulness and positivity, the key elements of parenting, were lacking from their tool box.

The traditional fear and shame-based consequences they used only notched up the disconnection and mistrust within their family relationships. Granted these methods STOP behaviour but isn't our goal as parents to CHANGE behaviour in an encouraging, positive way?

Probing further, the couple revealed that their early life experiences were devoid of affection and playfulness from their respective parents. "We do what we know" was their honest narrative.

Nothing is more crucial for parents and their developing children than **relationship**. This core dynamic, the parent-child relationship, and how to enhance it is what I passionately teach.

Upon my introduction of Parenting with "Positivity", the parents bombarded me with reasons they doubted they could embrace the change. Excuses ensued, such as, "it takes too much time", "it's too exhausting" and "it feels laughable to praise values like kindness and caring hearts."

After sharing with them that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome, they both agreed they needed an effective approach.

I introduced Theraplay's nurturing activities to help them get in touch with their inner child. Guiding them through bubble tennis and cotton ball races, it was lovely to witness their joyful smiles and giggles. When the session ended, they left with a container of bubbles and cotton balls in hand eager to play with their sons.

When this mother and father realized they were running in circles using parenting methods that set them up for failure, they took a leap of faith and **became the change!**

As a united team, they embraced a parenting philosophy filled with positivity and playfulness that allowed them to set the pace and enrich healthier parent-child attunement.



The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not into fighting the old but on building the new.

- Socrates

Here is a sample of what they learned:

How you communicate with your child is key to shaping desired behaviour. That being said, your greatest asset is what you choose to energize and how you choose to respond.

You can shift your child to positive and responsible choices by building a wide base of successes all around them.

Each time you positively point out instances and validate situations where children are displaying expected values, you are teaching them from the inside out.

- Teach your child important values like showing respect, responsibility, handling strong emotions and making good choices by giving acknowledgement and appreciation when they demonstrate that quality.
- Also notice what your child is doing **when nothing is going wrong** and feed it back with detail. This helps limit setting by giving more appreciation to rules not being broken. Acknowledge when your child is not yelling, arguing or hitting. These powerful successes register internally for the child and go a long way toward teaching the rules.
- Play is a vital adhesive that fosters and strengthens connections with your children. Joined engagement creates a loving, accepting, emotional climate that unites families through fun, surprise, close body proximity, smiles and gentle hugs.
- Play is an exceptional stress re-leaser which allows families to relate moment by moment, in new, healthier, more resilient ways.

Change is scary, change is hard, change may even be inconvenient, but never-the-less change elicits beneficial results. Invest the time to learn heartfelt parenting methods, as your words and actions help mold young minds and lives. Your family life will positively strengthen and flourish.

Perhaps one day in the future, your adult child will thank you, as my daughter did, for all you are doing for them today.

