

## Intense Parenting: 10 Things Every Parent Needs to Know!

Parents of children with special needs find themselves in the most intense parenting circumstances with little outside support. They frequently receive much advice and criticism from those on the outside looking in. In truth these intense parenting circumstances have taught special needs parents many important lessons. These lessons are ones that every parent needs to know to improve relationships with their children. So today we take a moment to share with all parents what our "intense parenting" has taught us.

**1) Have the Right Focus.** Parents must focus on the individual needs of the child instead of on parenting ideals. Focusing on preconceived ideals sets your family up for disappointment and puts unnecessary pressure and strain on family relationships. Having the right focus will keep your family on track and addressing the needs of every member of the family.

**2) Live for People not for Schedules** This is a lesson that many special needs parents have learned the hard way. Our lives and schedules come to a complete halt due to the needs of our children. Yet this lesson is such an important component for all families. Some days we have to stop the world, turn off the computer and turn our attention to our children. When we stop running then we can start enjoying.

**3) Let Go.** Parents carry a lot of weight today that can bog them down in their parenting journey. There is the criticism of others, the power struggles, and our own expectations. Special needs parents have learned to let go of these extra weights. That simple act can lead to exploring new options, thinking out of the box and moving forward in ways that could not be accomplished when weighed down.

**4) Savor the Moments.** Many special needs parents report much joy and satisfaction in little things. They have learned to appreciate each good moment with their children. This is a gift we wish to pass on to every parent. Don't let the little moments pass you by. Every little moment is part of the fabric of life. Wrap yourself in it.

**5) Break from Tradition.** What is your definition of success? It is likely shaped by your values and traditions. While these can be very good they can also prevent you from finding happiness with your child. Allow your child to find success in unconventional ways.

**6) Banish Guilt.** When parents are ruled by guilt they generally don't feel very pleased or happy with themselves, their parenting ability or their children. Don't let your decisions be ruled by guilt. Whether you are a special needs parent or a typical parent there is always something to feel guilty about. Don't let it rob you of joy...say goodbye to guilt.

**7) Begin Fresh.** Give yourself and your child a new start each day. Your child can't change yesterday's actions any more than you can. Don't hold on to old arguments and old hurts. Start fresh each day and look for the best in yourself and your child. Chances are you will find it.

**8) Learn with Your Child.** Recognize that life is a journey to be traveled together. When you take opportunities to learn with your child then this journey together will be full of treasures that both of you will remember. Don't be afraid to let your child know that you don't have all the answers but you are here with them to learn together.

**9) More than Love** The love that bonds a child and parent is one of the most beautiful types of love. But even the strongest love can be eroded and must be worked on and strengthened. When understanding is added to love the result is a stronger relationship. Attempt not just to parent, not just to love but to understand your child and what is truly in their mind and heart.

**10) Become more Compassionate with Others.** It's not easy to stretch out of our comfort zones yet this is what has to happen to increase our compassion. When we become more compassionate towards kids with special needs our lives are blessed. When we become more compassionate to their parents we learn in ways that benefit our own relationships.