

HOT TIPS FOR HAPPY PARENTING

(with skills and philosophies from Parent Effectiveness Training – P.E.T.)

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- Notice the qualities you like in your child. Remark on the behaviour you like (at the same time as [avoiding praise](#).) Let them know! Say at least six positive comments for every negative comment or criticism.
“Wow – look what you’ve done”; “I really appreciate your help”; “thank you”
- Understand what is happening inside you. Don’t blame your child for the way you feel.
- Change the way you think about your child’s behaviour. Try thinking that children don’t ‘misbehave’ - that instead, they behave for a reason. Imagine possible reasons for their behaviour. (tired, hungry, not happy at school etc).
- Respond, rather than react. Stop, think, and then parent!
- Work together to build a positive relationship.
- If you punish your child, consider how that may affect your relationship. How will your child feel about you? Will this lead to resentment or fear, rather than respect? How will you feel about yourself?
- Use lots of preventive messages to help stop problems before they start. Let them know your plans in advance. For example, say, *“we have to leave before your TV program is finished, so I would appreciate the TV being turned off when I ask”*.
- Understand developmental stages, so you have realistic expectations of your child.
- Enjoy your children. Be thankful for them, marvel at them. Delight in them. Have fun with them – play at their level.
- Remember - your children are people, and have feelings and problems, too.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS UNHAPPY

- Recognise the cues and clues that your child is unhappy. Often ‘naughty’ behaviour is simply a signal that things aren’t going well for your child.
- Remember, there is a reason for them to be unhappy. For example, they may need your attention, or something happened at school, or their basic needs (food, water, rest, physical etc) have not been met.
- *Listen* to your children, so they can talk about their unhappiness, and you can understand what is happening for them. Try identifying their feelings, and why they feel that way, in statements such as *“You’re feeling . . . because . . .”*. For example *“Sounds like you’re feeling frustrated because your block castle broke”*. Careful listening can help your children find a solution to *their own* problem.

WHEN YOU ARE UNHAPPY

- Avoid blaming or putting down your child with ‘you’ messages. Examples of ‘you’ messages are: *“you’re just being naughty”; “you’ve been told 1000 times” “you’re old enough to know better”*. Think about how these messages affect your child’s self-worth, and your relationship with your child.
- Instead, use I-messages: *“when . . .(describe child’s behaviour). I feel . . . because . . .(describe how you have been affected)“*. For example *“When I see the toys on the floor, I feel concerned that I might step on them and hurt myself”*.
- Find another word for “angry”. What other feeling is underneath your anger? Often feelings such as fear or frustration, when we feel them strongly, get expressed as anger.
- *Remember to listen to your child if they get upset after your I-message.*

WHEN YOU AND YOUR CHILD ARE BOTH UNHAPPY

- Find out the reason your child is unhappy (use the skill of listening)
- Find out the reason you are unhappy, and let your child know (use the skill of I-messages)
- Both come up with ideas to solve the problem together. *“What can we do so that we’re both happy?”* This is the skill of no-lose problem solving.