

Setting a Child's Learning Foundation Right - The Role of Parents/Carers.

Before reading this article, please take a moment to ask yourself these questions: Who is a parent/carer? How did it feel like being a parent/carer for the first time? What is my role in a child's overall development? How can I as a parent/carer contribute to the success of a child and eventually that happy adult?

There are many definitions of who a parent or carer is. I have simply summed up the definitions of a parent/carer as "Any individual directly responsible for the day to day well-being of a child from birth to the time that the child is able to attain what is called adulthood."

During the early stages of any child's life, from birth to seven years, it is important that the foundation is set right. This foundation will be formed on certain principles such as but not limited to: security, love, ground rules, consistency, predictability and freedom within limits. Parents and carers often shy away from their responsibilities towards the holistic development of their children and thus miss a lot of these important principles while laying a solid foundation for their child/ren. A lot of us directly or indirectly leave the foundation of our child/ren's development to the educational system, the government, family members and household helpers. Agreed we are all facing challenges and pressures for financial sustainability, this is not an excuse for neglecting our primary duty as parents and carers of children who will eventually face and govern the future. According to Bruno Bettelheim in his book "A Good Enough Parent", parents should be able

"To develop their own insights about child-rearing and attitudes appropriate not only to their purposes but also to the person they are and to their child".

Here are some tips on how to set a child's foundation ready for future learning:

1. Be interested in your child/ren's day to day life. Take out time to observe your child/ren individually and note little areas of development in their lives. If you are a couple, take turns in doing this. No matter how busy you are, this could just be for 5 to 10 minutes daily.
2. Talk to your child. A lot of people may say what do I have to say to a baby or a child? From experience as a mother and working with children over the last eight years, babies and growing children can hear and understand your words, feelings and actions as these are means of communication.
3. Spend quality time with your child/ren. Within a week please find the time to do this. It does not have to be a full day.
Fathers please do not see this as solely the responsibility of the mother. A child needs that fatherly figure and it gives them a full sense of belonging.
4. Listen to your children! Do not ignore what they are saying to you. If you do, they could start distancing themselves from you and we wonder why our teenagers don't have the confidence to confide in us as parents/carers. They will find that person who will give them time and listen to them. Please be patient with your child/ren, listen attentively and talk less. Have faith in your child/ren. They are human beings with brains and sometimes they give us the answers we are searching for. Respect them and they will learn to respect you and society.
5. Every child needs a female and male figure in their lives. Where both parents/carers are available, please it is important that each of you make that child feel loved, wanted and important. This does not mean showering them with presents and yielding to their wants to cover up for that time you can't spend with them. You could simply talk to your child/ren about

your life growing up. Discuss issues that concern them. Take a walk or drive with them to somewhere of interest. Get interested in their individual activities and **PLAY** with your child/ren. This contributes to stability in a child's development. It gives the child a secure base, which positively impacts on a child's personal, emotional and social well-being.

6. Have ground rules in your home. Your parenting style would definitely influence your child/ren's development and overall happiness. Is your parenting style **Authoritarian** where you simply dictate and it is one-sided? Is it **Authoritative** where there is freedom within limits and boundaries and tasks are achievable? Is it **Laisser-faire** where there are no boundaries or rules? I would recommend the Authoritative style of parenting as this helps to establish a good foundation for learning, discipline and overall well-being of any child.
7. Set out family time to create that bond of unity, love and respect for each other. This could be time to hear your child/ren read a book, watch TV together, have lunch, breakfast or dinner together, pleasure outings or even going on holidays.
8. Ask your child/ren about their day and tell them about yours. This will help in developing a strong relationship between you and your child/ren.
9. Be consistent, truthful and predictable. Let your **yes** be **yes** and **no** be **no**. Both parents whether living together or not, should reach a common agreement and stick with it. Your children should be able to see you for who you really are. Be that stable role model for them and help shape their future lives to be what they, you and society will be proud of.

Finally, I believe that if you establish the above principles in your home, the foundation becomes just about right for a child's holistic development. Any child in this type of environment is most likely to grow to become confident, independent and happy. It then becomes easy for that child to also absorb learning with good success.

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About Patricia Osobase

Patricia Osobase is a highly proficient and supportive educationist. Her main goal is to ensure that every child and individual she comes in contact with is able to achieve their maximum potential. Patricia has a first degree in English Education from the University of Benin, Nigeria and Masters in Special and Inclusive Education from Roehampton University, London. In addition, Patricia also has Masters in Industrial and Labour Relations from Delta State University, Nigeria. She holds an International Diploma in Early Childhood Studies from the Montessori Centre International, London and a Diploma in Psychology from DCA London. Patricia was a directress at Rainbow Montessori School, London for over six years where she rose to become the deputy manager of the Sherriff road nursery and Special and Education Needs Co-ordinator for the four schools. Presently, she is one of the pioneer parent trainers for the new government programme called CAN Parenting. She also lectures part time at the Rainbow Montessori Teachers College, London. Patricia has recently set up an educational organisation called Happy Achievers Limited which engages in training and working with children. Before joining the educational profession, Patricia worked in the banking industry in Nigeria in various managerial capacities. Patricia is blessed with a lovely daughter.