



Effective Parenting

Now that our children are getting older, how do we know if we are doing a good job as parents?

There is a whole history to your parent-child relationship that began at the moment your youngster was born. To help you better understand the present, try to gain some insights into where you have been as a family. Think back on your experiences with your child when he was a baby, a toddler, and a preschooler. Ask yourself:

- How active a parent were you in those early years? Did you play a major child-raising role in the family, or were there other demands (such as long hours at work) that kept you from being as involved as you would have liked?
- What were your most enjoyable parenting and family experiences during those years?

Since those first years of your child's life, your parenting techniques may have changed. Perhaps you were quite anxious as a new parent but gained confidence as the months and years passed. Ask yourself questions like:

- What have you learned as a parent? What were the hardest skills to learn?
- What were your best traits as a parent of a young child? What were the areas in which you had the most problems? For example, did you find it difficult to relate to your child before he started to talk? Was it difficult for you to set limits when he entered toddlerhood? How did he respond to you in your parenting role?
- What did you want to change about yourself as a parent as your child grew? How successful have you been in making those changes? Keep in mind that as your child grows, you and the entire family need to change too. In essence, you are proceeding through your own development as a parent.

Even if you made mistakes during those early years, you can amend them now. If you missed out on certain family experiences because you were working too hard, you still have many years to enjoy your spouse and children. In general, children are understanding and forgive their parents for shortcomings and faults. And if you weren't there when your child took his first steps or rode his tricycle for the first time, you can be there for other special events to come, like your child's school play and his soccer games.

Your Current Parenting Experiences

Spend some time thinking about how you are doing as a parent during these middle years of your youngster's childhood. This is a challenging time, in which your child is seeking more independence and is questioning the family's rules. And, from time to time, you may have to help him with school-related problems. He will be developing more peer relationships, too, and his interactions with siblings may change.

How well are you parenting your child during this time in his life? In what areas are you doing well? Where do you think you need more help?

Your Current Life Issues

For many men and women, the stress in their lives interferes with their ability to parent. If they are unhappy on the job, for instance, they might return home preoccupied and tense at the end of the day and be unable to handle the tasks of running a family as effectively.

Take a moment to assess how you feel about these and other important aspects of your life.

- Your career and occupation
- Your relationships at work
- Your living conditions, including your home and neighborhood
- Your lifestyle, including time for yourself and leisure activities
- Aging: growing older, slowing down and experiencing changes in your body
- Your relationship with your spouse or partner
- Your relationship with your parents and siblings

- Your friendships

[Back to Top](#)

Evaluate problems in these areas, and how they might be influencing your family life. Whenever possible, find ways to deal with these difficulties in your life more effectively, so they will not interfere with your parent-child relationships.

For example, if you are like many parents, your day is so filled with job and family responsibilities that you have absolutely no "down time," when you become a priority. Keep in mind, however, that most parents are happier people (and thus better parents) when they make time for things they find pleasurable. As your children move through their school years, they will develop interests and responsibilities (from friends to homework) that can provide you with more time for those activities that you find enriching. You do not need to devote every free moment to playing checkers or baseball with your children; in fact, as long as you are also setting aside some time for your youngsters, they will probably feel good knowing that you are pursuing interests that you really enjoy.

Last Updated 11/21/2015

Source Caring for Your School-Age Child: Ages 5 to 12 (Copyright © 2004 American Academy of Pediatrics)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.