

# Parenting Patterns

## A Pattern Language for Growing with your Child

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**Abstract.** *This paper will present the Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child. These patterns were mined through interviews with 5 parents and their children who have a healthy relationship. From the interviews, 22 patterns were mined out. This paper will briefly describe its creation process, along with 6 patterns out of the language: Growing Together, Seeds of Curiosity, Parent-Child Tradition, Thanking the Intention, Satellite Children, and Sharing Interests. The rest of the patterns will be presented as patlets.*

### Categories and Subject Descriptors

•Social and professional topics → Children

### General Terms

Human Factors, Design

### Keywords

Pattern Language, Parenting, Child, Interview

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## 1. Introduction

If you are a parent, you must have been through (or are in the midst of) the struggle of building a good relationship with your child. If you are a new parent or parent-to-be, parenting can seem like a big mystery that must be learned the hard way. Various issues that come up while parenting are most likely situations that you have never faced before, and we all become worried whether or not we are doing things right. Becoming a parent also requires changing your working habits specifically on how you spend your time. With so much change going on simultaneously, many parents tend to raise their children without any plans and not knowing what to do.

During the course of this project, we interviewed parents who appear to enjoy both being a parent and working. There are many cases where children are independent and have respect for their parents, even while their parent(s) are having successful careers doing what they desire. These parents and children tend to see each other as allies who mutually support one another, sharing both joyous and frustrating times. During our interview process, we noticed that not only does the parent introduce their children to the world, but they themselves also learn and grow with the child. From this interview process we pattern mined and created the Parenting Patterns.

Through the creation of the Parenting Patterns, we have reached the conclusion that “growing with your child” is the most important concept of parenting. Hence the *Pattern Language* [Alexander] in this paper is titled the *Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child*. The patterns here are words that give hints on how a parent can interact with their child to grow together. In the following sections, we will first briefly describe the process of creating the patterns, followed by the actual patterns from the language.

## 2. Creating the Patterns

This section will briefly describe the process of creating the Parenting Patterns. The patterns were mined through interviews, which were then grouped through the *KJ Method* [Kawakita].

### 2.1 Mining Interviews

The interviews we conducted for the mining process uses a special method we call the *mining interviews* [Iba and Yoder]. We interviewed 5 parents along with their children, which adds up to 11 people in total. The interviewees included a family where both the mother and the father have careers as company executives, a parent who raised her children abroad where she had trouble understanding the different language and culture, parents who are full of unique ideas on ways of parenting, and a single parent who went through many struggles together with his daughter. By choosing these extreme cases of parenting, we were able to find common yet interesting patterns that all parents can learn from.

We started the interviews by asking the question: “what advice would you give to a person who has just become a parent?” These interviews were very interactive, spontaneous, and covered many other topics. In the *mining interviews*, we ask *why* a certain action is important, and *when* or in what situations the action becomes important. With these questions we can mine not only the solution of potential patterns, but also its *context* and *problem*. The ideas and actions that come out will be written on yellow sticky notes, while the problems are written on blue notes. These notes are spread across a large sheet of craft paper, so that the topics are always visible to both the interviewer and the interviewee. Figure 1 shows a scene from one of the *mining interviews*, and Table 1 shows a short description of the interviews.



Fig. 1. A scene from the *mining interviews*

Table1. A short description of the interviewees

Ataka Family	They are a family of three, father, mother and daughter. Both of parents executives at a Japanese IT firm. The couple moved to the US together, and while each pursuing their careers, they raised their daughter together. Their daughter is middle school student, dreams of being an Architect when she grows up, and is a very hard working student.
Isaku Family	They are a family of four, father, mother and two sons. Though the mother only understands a small amount of English, raised two sons in America until they graduated high school. With so much to overcome, she worked together with her sons to solve the difficulties.
Oshima Family	They are a family of four, father, mother and two sons. Mother is from New Zealand, and married a Japanese man. Her son goes to college in Tokyo, Japan and is an excellent leader of a student group at campus.
Kubonaga Family	They are a family of four, father, mother and two daughters. Mother was a manager at her husband's company, while raising two daughters in Japan.
Kuge Family	They are a family of four, father, mother and three sons. Father works at an IT startup while mother works from home as a designer. Since both parents have design-related jobs, they often invite their children to create with them. The family's life is filled with creative activities such as creating toys together with 3D printers.
Nakano Family	They are a family of three, father, mother and son. Mother is a creative technologist at an ad firm with many award-winning works. She is also a mother of a young son who is experimenting with new ways of parenting with many creative hacks.
Sumi Family	They are a family of two, mother and daughter. Mother is at the frontier of working mothers as she has won the Working Mom of the Year Award in Japan 2014. She is a very talented mother, using her time

	management skills in parenting to keep a healthy balance between parenting and working full time.
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## 2.2 Clustering

The elements that were found in the *mining interviews* were clustered together to form patterns. This process was done through a method called the *KJ Method*, similar to the *Grounded Theory* [Glaser and Strauss] that creates new categories of elements through the grouping of similar elements. The sticky notes from all interviews were spread across a large piece of craft paper. You can see what this process looks like in Figure 2. In this process, we were able to find common patterns from different interviewees. These patterns were written on sticky notes and then grouped by similarity. Once the groups have formed, each of the groups becomes its own pattern. There is also a second round of the *KJ Method* where we follow the same process using the formed groups (the patterns) as the elements. This is done so that we understand the relationships between the patterns, along with the understanding of what the pattern language will convey as a whole. The pattern structuring can be achieved through this process.



Fig. 2. The clustering process using the KJ method.

## 2.3 Writing and Illustrating the Patterns

Once the groups are obtained in the clustering process, each of the groups were written as a pattern. Here, it is important to make the patterns distinguishable from one another. The patterns should also be insightful, empathetic, and persuasive. This process also includes the *pattern illustrating* process, which captures the main message of the pattern, and shapes it into an iconic illustration that conveys the message of the pattern [Harasawa], et al.

## 3. Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child

Through *mining interviews* with many parents and their children, we pattern mined 22 patterns (outlined in section 3.1) that give hints on how to nurture a healthy parent-child relationship where both the parent and the child grows through the process. Through the clustering process described in section 2.2, we found there to be three main groups or categories for the *Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child*. These points are each written as rather abstract patterns (sometimes called umbrella patterns), which each contains more specific patterns under its umbrella. These main groups are:

- Patterns for growing with your child: No.1 *Growing Together*
- Patterns for giving new opportunities for your child: No2. *Seeds of Curiosity*
- Patterns for nurturing a culture with your child: No.3 *Parent-Child Tradition*

### 3.1 The Structure of the Parenting Patterns for Growing with Your Child

Figure 3 shows how the 22 patterns of the *Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child* are organized. There are three main groups or categories, each of which is headed with a categorical pattern, and then followed by patterns that describe more specific actions. The rest of the patterns are introduced briefly in the appendix.

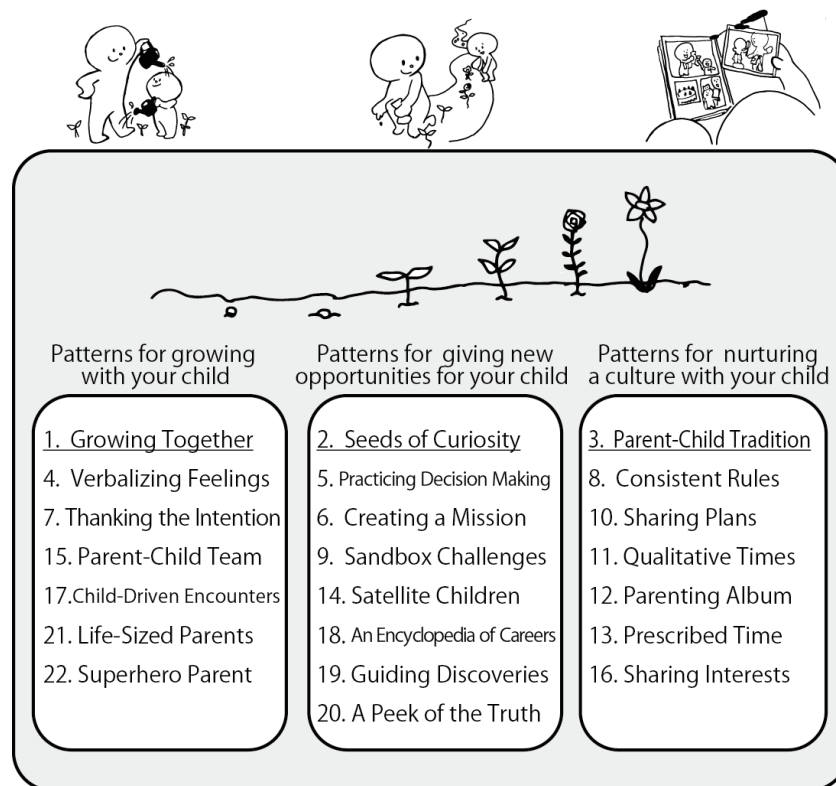


Fig. 3. All 22 patterns from the *Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child* as structure

### 3.2 Some of the Patterns

In this section, we will introduce a selection of six patterns from the *Parenting Patterns*. We will present the three categorical patterns that we mentioned in section 3.1, along with one pattern from each of the three groups in full length. The patterns presented in this section are: *Growing Together*, *Seeds of Curiosity*, *Parent-Child Tradition* as abstract patterns, *Thanking the Intention*, *Satellite Children*, and *Sharing Interests*. The first three patterns are the categorical patterns, and the selection of the three patterns that follow it are specific patterns that best represents each of the categories respectively.

No.1

Categories: Patterns for growing with your child

## Growing Together

Both the parent and the child grow.



Parenting often requires you to worry about many different things. This may include but is not limited to household chores, your child's school, your career, your hobby, etc.

▼ In this context

**When you first have a child, you might feel some uneasiness with everything changing so suddenly. With your life becoming so busy, you start to feel that the relationship with our child is a forced obligation. This can wear on both your body and heart, making the relationship more difficult.**

Raising a child brings many responsibilities, and many times you find yourself overwhelmed. When your life gets very busy, it is often hard to find the time to do personal things in your life. In addition, a parent-child relationship is a kind of relationship that you likely have not experienced before from the parent side. It is a totally different relationship than the relationship you have with your friends or coworkers. In such a situation, communicating with children may sometimes be hard, and some sacrifices may be inevitable. All these things may add up to frustrate you.

▼ Therefore

**See parenting as an opportunity for you to grow with their child.**

Parenting not only brings growth for the child, but the parent also has a lot to learn and grow from the experience. It requires much work and responsibility, but all of it will come directly back to you to make you a strong, sophisticated person. If you face parenting in earnest, it will nurture your sense of understanding and empathizing with people. In addition, your child will give lots of findings and insights that wouldn't have been without them. If you can be fond of these encounters that your child brings, you can make the time you spend together an invaluable experience.

▼ As a result

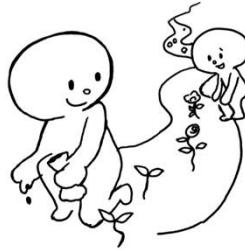
By sharing the mindset of *Growing Together*, your bond as a team will grow much stronger. A parent and child who can grow together will most likely have a never-ending, healthy relationship as *Parent-Child Team*. In addition, by having a positive attitude towards parenting, your life will be splendid with new discoveries every day by *Child-Driven Encounters*. The experience of being a parent will for sure come back to you to make you a deeper, wise, experienced person.

No.2

Categories: Patterns for giving new opportunities for your child

## Seeds of Curiosity

Planting seeds of experiences that may someday bloom.



You are letting your child experience various things.

▼ In this context

**You sometimes become worried that you might be forcing your expectations onto your child.**

No child would exactly know what they want to be when they grow up nor what their childhood would be like. You are letting them experience and see different things, but no parent can be exactly sure what is good for their child. Nevertheless, there are lots of opportunities and responsibilities as a parent to introduce your child to something new. If you hesitate teaching to them, then you will end up doing nothing for your child.

▼ Therefore

**To open up opportunities and possibilities for the child, plant many “seeds” that someday bloom by letting them experience a wide range of things.**

You should not force something onto your child, but you can start out by introducing them to one of your hobbies or expertise. You can then gradually open up their choice until they find something that really fits them. A parent should not force a child down a selected path of careers, but their responsibility is to give them a point to start thinking about their values. By paying close attention to your child’s voice, you can plant many seeds of experiences to let them see the world by taking your child like *Satellite Children*, wherever you go as much as possible. Or, it will be good for your child to see many adults with different careers by *An Encyclopedia of Careers*, so that they can expand their imagination of what they want to be in the future.

▼ As a result

In the course of you introducing the world to them, your child will eventually find something that they like and can be passionate about. They will start to know what kinds of things they like and fits them. Your child’s destiny does not belong to you. The seeds that you give them may not sprout instantly, but no one knows which seed will bloom the most beautiful flower.

No.3

Categories: Patterns for nurturing a culture with your child

## Parent-Child Tradition

The shared experience will create a comfortable place to be.



You and your child do a lot together in your daily lives.

▼ In this context

**When looking back at your memories, you and your child might not remember much about their childhood.**

A strong parent-child bond is not a result of just responding to their health and economical needs. If the child has not much to talk about their family, then they will lack the sense of belonging. Even after they grow up, if they can't recall much about their childhood, they would also have a hard time feeling the bond with you. They might even feel their childhood was meaningless.

▼ Therefore

**Through creating many shared experiences with your child, nurture a unique culture between your child and yourself.**

You can share daily routines or habits as *Consistent Rules*, or make plans that you can execute together as *Sharing Plans* to create values that you can share. This can be anything from cooking breakfast together on Sundays to exchanging letters on the holidays, sharing inside jokes, or toasting with milk every evening. Each event can be something very small and easy, but when you share promises and secrets together, the bits of memories pile up to build a warm parent-child culture. Once you notice the culture starting to form, make sure to take good care of it.

▼ As a result

By sharing a culture between the parent and the child, it will create many commonalities that both of you can relate to. With such a culture, the child would feel a sense of being home when you are together. Even after the child grows up, they will have warm childhood memories to reflect on, along with the sense that they were raised by you as a parent. Some new aspect of the culture may arise while others may diminish along the way. By treasuring each bit of as a good memory, a warm atmosphere will persist in the family.



No.7

Categories: Patterns for growing with your child

## Thanking the Intention

Show gratitude for their intention to help.



Your child may often want to join in on whatever you are doing. This may be from pure kindness, or they might just want to be doing the same thing as their parents.

▼ In this context

**If you decline their offer, your child may feel a sense of betrayal, and would gradually offer to help out less.**

Children, especially when they are young, often want to do the same things as their parents are doing, and will offer to help, but sometimes you will have to decline the offer. A child's help is in many cases unhelpful, resulting in twice the labor.. There are other cases where their help is appreciated, but you prefer to do it on your own since you are in a hurry.

▼ Therefore

**Show your gratitude for their intention of helping, and nurture a caring mind in your child.**

Express your thanks with words on the spot for their thinking of you. Then you can work on the task together, or if you are in a hurry, you can explain to them why it's okay. Once you receive their help, don't forget to tell them that their efforts were a real help.

▼ As a result

Receiving your gratitude is the most valuable reward that a child can want. When such situations recur, your child will start to feel a sense of purpose in being thanked for their actions. This will nurture a thoughtful mind in the child, who will be happy to help people out. As the child grows, they will become willing to help their parents out, enforcing the *Parent-Child Team* between the parent and the child. This is not something limited to inside the home, and the child would become a helpful person towards others.

No.14

Categories: Patterns for giving new opportunities for your child

## Satellite Children

Going around together as a team.



You are scheduled to go someplace.

▼ In this context

### **You might give up going because of your child.**

You worry your child will become an interference with your plans and hesitate to bring them with you. You might also worry spending all your time there taking care of your child even if you did go. This might tempt you to leave your child at home with a sitter, or find someone who would look over them while you are out. Sometimes this is inevitable due to business reasons, but if your plans are for leisure such as going out for dinner with a friend, you start to feel guilt for your child. Then even if you did find a sitter and go, you might not be able to enjoy the event to the full extent. Due to all these reasons, you might just give up going in the first place.

▼ Therefore

### **Try taking your child out with you wherever you go as much as possible.**

If you are to be a planet, your child is a satellite that is revolving around it. If you go everywhere as a team, you both might have something to gain from it. Take your children out to dinner parties and exhibitions that you want to go to. In many cases they will welcome your child, and even might look over them for you while you enjoy. Even invite them to your workplace once in a while. Even when they get older and don't need someone looking after them, invite them to go places with you. Stepping out of the negative cycle is the first step to change.

▼ As a result

The people they meet and the places they go will all become good experiences for your child. By meeting a wide range of people, it will become *An Encyclopedia of Careers*, and they will learn to accept and communicate with different people. As going places together becomes a part of your *Parent-Child Tradition*, your child might be happy to come with you even after they grow older and don't need to stay your child at home anymore. In addition, by having your child with you in different places, it will increase the number of *Child-Driven Encounters*, and will open up new possibilities for you.

No.16

Categories: Patterns for nurturing a culture with your child

## Sharing Interests

Let them present to you about the things they like.



As your child grows, they will start to form thoughts and values that you may not know about. They will start to like things that you may not understand or had and connections to before.

▼ In this context

**If their parents won't understand and accept the things that they like and value, it would create a sense of loneliness and mistrust in the child.**

Your child is a different person from you. You will have different interests, different beliefs, and different values. When this is something you aren't very acquainted with, you don't know what kind of advice you should give. You might even show disagreement to their beliefs from the fear of not knowing exactly what it is. When this happens and their parents don't show much understanding or interest in what the child likes, they might get the feeling of loneliness.

▼ Therefore

**Have your child present to you in their own words about the topic they are interested in.**

Why are they interested in it, what parts do they especially like? Perform a mini interview to them and ask questions that show you have interest in what they have interest in. By finding out not just what they are interested in but also *why* they are interested in it, you can convey the message that you are interested in them.

▼ As a result

You will be able to understand your child better. Your child would be pleased to see that their parents are interested in them. By having them present to you, you might also gain interest in the topic, in which case you can enjoy it together. By reaching out to your child and showing effort to better understand their interests, it will also bring opportunities for you as a parent to grow. In addition, by having them present about the topics and their interests, it would create an opportunity for *Verbalizing Feelings*, which should bring new discoveries to the child

## 4. Conclusion and Further Possibilities

Our hopes are for these patterns to be used by parents as hints for nurturing their relationship with their children. In addition, we hope for the patterns to become part of a vocabulary for many parents to share and talk about episodes and issues that they have about parenting. These patterns may also be helpful for parents-to-be in imagining and planning what their parenthood

would be like once the new family member arrives. Though the 22 patterns introduced in the paper are targeted mainly at parents with young children of up to twelve, we believe the patterns can also be useful for parents with older children. For future work, we are looking into patterns targeted specifically at these different stages of parenting, and also for patterns written from the point of view of the child. Lastly, since these patterns were mined from Japanese families, some of the patterns might be more specific to Japanese culture. As Hong et al says, if different parenting patterns are made for different cultures, we might be able to see cultural differences that exist in parent-child relationships [Hong]. There might also be patterns present specific to a certain age of the child, or patterns for when you have multiple children in the household.

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## Appendix



### Patlets of the *Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child*

Table 2 introduces all 22 patterns from the *Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child* as patlets. It will show the pattern name, along with a short summary of the solution section. This will give the general idea of the pattern.

Table 2. All 22 patterns from the *Parenting Patterns for Growing with your Child* as patlets

No.	Pattern Name	Pattern Illustration	Solution / Summary
1	Growing Together		See parenting as an opportunity for the parent to grow with their child.
2	Seeds of Curiosity		Plant many “seeds” that someday bloom by letting your child experience a wide range of things.
3	Parent-Child Tradition		By creating many shared experiences with your child, nurture a unique culture between your child and yourself.
4	Verbalizing Feelings		Through conversations with your child, help them put reasons for their feelings/actions into words.
5	Practicing Decision Making		Give daily opportunities to make small decisions so they can continue searching for the things they like and value.
6	Creating a Mission		Create settings and stories that would make your child want to do the work.
7	Thanking the Intention		Show your gratitude for their intention of helping, and nurture a caring mind in your child.
8	Consistent Rules		Keep a consistent set of rules for scolding your children, so they can understand what they did wrong, and the consequences for their actions.

9	Sandbox Challenges		Provide an environment where your child can pursue challenges, even if it comes with some risks and responsibilities.
10	Sharing Plans		Make plans of places you want to go and the things you want to do together.
11	Qualitative Times		Even if you can't spend too much time with your children, make the times you can be together valuable and qualitative.
12	Parenting Album		Make a collection of stories from your parenting experience, and write them in a comical tone to digest some stress.
13	Prescribed Time		If things stresses you about parenting look at things with a long vision, and convince yourself that this won't continue forever.
14	Satellite Children		Try taking your child out with you wherever you go as much as possible.
15	Parent-Child Team		See yourselves as a team, and attack difficult tasks for both the parent and the child together.
16	Sharing Interests		Have your child present to you in their own words about the topic they are interested in.
17	Child-Driven Encounters		Being a parent brings an instant connection with other parent. Use it as a chance to meet new people.
18	An Encyclopedia of Careers		Let your child see many adults with different careers so that they can expand their imagination of what they want to be in the future.
19	Guiding Discoveries		When your child asks questions, rather than providing the direct answer, provide them with hints and references so that they can think and make the discoveries for themselves.
20	A Peek of the Truth		When your child does something inappropriate, rather than reflexively scolding them by yelling, let them notice why they are being scolded, and what is really important.

21	Life-Sized Parents		Don't stress out trying to be too perfect a parent. Share your feelings and stories from your past so that your child can better understand who you are.
22	Superhero Parent		Show off once in a while to your child, so you can be a parent for them worth longing for.

