

13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do

Written by Amy Morin, psychotherapist and the author of "13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do."

Raising mentally strong kids who are equipped to take on real-world challenges requires parents to give up the unhealthy — yet popular — parenting practices that are robbing kids of mental strength.

Of course, helping kids build mental muscle isn't easy — it requires parents to be mentally strong as well. Watching kids struggle, pushing them to face their fears, and holding them accountable for their mistakes is tough. But those are the types of experiences kids need to reach their greatest potential.

Parents who train their children's brains for a life of meaning, happiness, and success, avoid these 13 things:

1. They Don't Condone A Victim Mentality

Getting cut from the soccer team or failing a class doesn't make your child a victim. Rejection, failure, and unfairness are part of life. Rather than allow kids to host pity parties or exaggerate their misfortune, mentally strong parents encourage their children to turn their struggles into strength. They help them identify ways in which they can take positive action, despite their circumstances.

2. They Don't Parent Out Of Guilt

Guilty feelings can lead to a long list of unhealthy parenting strategies — like giving in to your child after you've said no or overindulging your child on the holidays. Mentally strong parents know that although guilt is uncomfortable, it's tolerable. They refuse to let their guilty feelings get in the way of making wise choices.

3. They Don't Make Their Child The Center Of The Universe

It can be tempting to make your life revolve around your child. But kids who think they're the center of the universe grow up to be self-absorbed and entitled. Mentally strong parents teach their kids to focus on what they have to offer the world — rather than what they're owed.

4. They Don't Allow Fear To Dictate Their Choices

Keeping your child inside a protective bubble could spare you a lot of anxiety. But keeping kids too safe stunts their development. Mentally strong parents view themselves as guides, not protectors. They allow their kids to go out into the world and experience life, even when it's scary to let go.

5. They Don't Give Their Child Power Over Them

Kids who dictate what the family is going to eat for dinner, or those who orchestrate how to spend their weekends, have too much power. Becoming more like an equal — or even the boss — isn't healthy for kids. Mentally strong parents empower kids to make appropriate choices while maintaining a clear hierarchy.

6. They Don't Expect Perfection

High expectations are healthy, but expecting too much from kids will backfire. Mentally strong parents recognize that their kids are not going to excel at everything they do. Rather than push their kids to be better than everyone else, they focus on helping them become the best versions of themselves.

7. They Don't Let Their Child Avoid Responsibility

You won't catch a mentally strong parent saying things like, "I don't want to burden my kids with chores. Kids should just be kids." They expect children to pitch in and learn the skills they need to become responsible citizens. They proactively teach their kids to take responsibility for their choices and they assign them age-appropriate duties.

8. They Don't Shield Their Child From Pain

It's tough to watch kids struggle with hurt feelings or anxiety. But, kids need practice and first-hand experience tolerating discomfort. Mentally strong parents provide their kids with the support and help they need coping with pain so their kids can gain confidence in their ability to deal with whatever hardships life throws their way.

9. They Don't Feel Responsible For Their Child's Emotions

It can be tempting to cheer your kids up when they're sad or calm them down when they're angry. But, regulating your kids' emotions for them prevents them from gaining social and emotional skills. Mentally strong parents teach their children how to be responsible for their own emotions so they don't depend on others to do it for them.

10. They Don't Prevent Their Child From Making Mistakes

Whether your child gets a few questions wrong on his math homework or he forgets to pack his cleats for soccer practice, mistakes can be life's greatest teacher. Mentally strong parents let their kids mess up — and they allow them to face the natural consequences of their actions.

11. They Don't Confuse Discipline With Punishment

Punishment is about making kids suffer for their wrongdoing. Discipline is about teaching them how to do better in the future. And while mentally strong parents do give out consequences, their ultimate goal is to teach kids to develop the self-discipline they'll need to make better choices down the road.

12. They Don't Take Shortcuts To Avoid Discomfort

Giving in when a child whines or doing your kids' chores for them, is fast and easy. But, those shortcuts teach kids unhealthy habits. It takes mental strength to tolerate discomfort and avoid those tempting shortcuts.

13. They Don't Lose Sight Of Their Values

In today's fast-paced world it's easy to get wrapped up in the day-to-day business of homework, chores, and sports practices. Those hectic schedules — combined with the pressure to look like parent of the year on social media — cause many people to lose sight of what's really important in life. Mentally strong parents know their values and they ensure their family lives according to them.