

Positive Parenting in Difficult Times

Children are amazingly perceptive. They understand that the mood their parents and caregivers are in determines, many times, the sort of day they are going to have. Keeping this in mind we can help them through difficult times by:

Self-reflection: Knowing who I am as a parent

Self-reflection is key to all good relationships, including those with your kids.

1. Do I lose my temper with my kids? Do I feel helpless?
2. How can I increase my patience?
3. What are triggers with my kids? Can I reduce those?
4. Do I do for my kids what they can already do for themselves?
5. How is my mood contributing to any problems that I see in my kids?
6. Are there things that I nag or criticize my child for that I need to improve on myself?
7. Do I carry enough compassion for myself when I'm parenting? What can I do to give myself a break?
8. What did I do for meals today to make me feel better? Happiness rubs off.

Mike McGowan * Michael07@aol.com

My Mood is contagious

Staying calm with your kids is one of the best things you can do to model behavior and build positive relationships. Anxiety is contagious but so is calm

- 1. Realize what you have control over.** Recognize you have control over your response to your child's actions, not over the decisions they make. Before you respond, spend time thinking about the most effective way to respond to your child's behavior. I always ask, "What's in the best interest of my child?" Often the answer to the problem pops right up.
- 2. Work on your triggers.** Be aware of the beliefs that trigger your anger with your kids. We will hold our kids accountable for inappropriate behavior, while also recognizing that much of their behavior is just kids being kids.
- 3. Understand what is "normal".** Try not to be mad at them for going through their natural developmental stages. Young kids have lots of energy and often use it to get into everything in sight. This is necessary and healthy for kids, as aggravating as it is for us. Older kids explore the boundaries and take risks in order to individuate from their parents—another necessary step in their development, although it is scary, worrisome and aggravating for parents to witness. The alternative is for them to be just like us, which means we would be just like our parents. I'll let that sink in for a moment!
- 4. Practice good self-care.** Do what you can to calm and soothe yourself. Get enough rest, take care of your health, work on your adult relationships, pursue your goals and interests.
- 5. Communicate your feelings** Manage your stress by acknowledging it and naming it. You can say something like, "I'm feeling annoyed right now. I'm going to take my own timeout, breathe, and think about how I want to address this problem." By doing this, you will be calming yourself down and modeling for your children how to better regulate themselves.
- 6. Remember the big picture.** Remind yourself that the most influence you will have with your children is in building a positive relationship with them.