

Seven Things Every Parent Should Know

Building Attachment • Guiding Behavior • Nurturing Faith • Growing Together

Parenting is one of the most important and complex roles a person can hold. While every child and family is unique, decades of research point to a handful of foundational principles that make the greatest difference. These five truths can guide you — not toward perfection, but toward connection.

1

Relationship Comes Before Everything Else

Connection is the foundation of all influence.

The most powerful tool you have as a parent is your relationship with your child. Before your child can receive your guidance, correction, or teaching, they need to feel genuinely loved, safe, and known. A strong relationship is not a reward for good behavior — it is the soil in which good behavior grows.

- Make time for your child every day — even 10 focused minutes matters
- Show interest in what interests them, without an agenda
- Repair quickly when you make mistakes — repair builds trust more than perfection
- Say “I love you” often, and in ways that match how they receive love

2

Secure Attachment Shapes Everything

How children are attached shapes how they grow.

Attachment is the deep emotional bond between a child and their caregiver. Children who are securely attached — who trust that their parent will be present, responsive, and safe — are more confident, more resilient, and better equipped for healthy relationships throughout life.

- Respond consistently to your child’s needs, especially in early years
- Offer comfort when they are hurt, scared, or overwhelmed — without judgment
- Be predictable: children feel safe when they know what to expect from you
- When they come to you, stop and give them your full attention
- Reconnect after conflict or distance — repair is part of secure attachment

“Children need at least one adult in their life who is irrationally crazy about them.”
— Urie Bronfenbrenner

3

Guide Behavior — Don't Just Manage It

Discipline means to teach, not to punish.

The word “discipline” comes from the Latin word for teaching. The goal is not to control your child’s behavior through fear or force, but to help them develop the internal skills to regulate themselves, make good choices, and understand why those choices matter.

- Stay calm when correcting — your regulated nervous system helps regulate theirs
- Name the behavior, not the child: “That choice was unkind” not “You are unkind”
- Explain the why behind your expectations — children follow rules they understand
- Use natural consequences when possible: let life teach when it safely can
- Follow through on what you say — consistency is more important than strictness
- Look for the need behind the behavior: most misbehavior is a form of communication



Key insight: *Children who feel connected to their parents are more likely to cooperate — not because they fear consequences, but because they want to maintain the relationship. Connection is the most effective behavior strategy there is.*

4

Teach Accountability and the Power of Repair

Taking responsibility is a skill — model it, then teach it.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is the ability to own their mistakes, make things right, and move forward without shame. Accountability is not about punishment — it is about teaching children that they have the power to repair relationships and restore trust. Children who learn this skill carry it into every relationship for the rest of their lives.

- Model it yourself — when you make a mistake, say so: “I was wrong. I’m sorry. Here’s what I’m going to do differently.”
- Separate the child from the behavior — “You made a hurtful choice” not “You are a bad person”
- Teach the three steps of repair: acknowledge what happened, express genuine sorrow, and ask what would help make it right
- Avoid shame-based correction — children who feel ashamed hide mistakes; children who feel safe own them
- Celebrate repair when you see it — “I noticed you went back and apologized. That took courage.”
- Let natural consequences do the teaching when possible — but always stay in relationship through them

5

Validate Feelings While Holding Limits

Children can feel big things and still have boundaries.

One of the most common parenting myths is that validating a child's feelings means accepting any behavior that comes with them. It doesn't. You can fully acknowledge what your child feels while firmly holding the limits around what they do. This combination — emotional validation plus clear structure — is the heart of what researchers call "authoritative parenting," the approach most consistently linked to healthy child outcomes.

- Name what you see: "I can see you're really frustrated right now."
- Avoid dismissing feelings: "Don't cry" and "It's not a big deal" close the door
- Hold the limit with warmth: "I know you're angry, and we still don't hit."
- Help them name emotions — children who can name feelings can manage them better
- Model your own emotional regulation — they are always watching how you handle hard moments

6

Your Presence Is the Most Powerful Gift

Being there matters more than doing it perfectly.

Children do not need perfect parents. They need present ones. Research consistently shows that the single greatest protective factor in a child's life is at least one stable, warm, and consistent adult who is genuinely there for them. You do not have to get everything right. You have to show up, stay engaged, and keep coming back.

- Put the phone down during time with your child — undivided attention communicates worth
- Create small daily rituals that belong just to the two of you
- Be curious about your child's inner world — ask questions and listen without fixing
- When you mess up, say so: "I'm sorry. I want to do better." Modeling repair is powerful
- Remember: your child is not looking for a perfect parent. They are looking for you.

7

Weave Faith Into the Fabric of Daily Life

Faith is caught more than it is taught — model it in the ordinary moments.

Children absorb faith not primarily from formal instruction, but from watching how it lives in you. When a parent prays honestly, speaks of God naturally, and returns to Scripture in real moments — not just at church — faith becomes something their child can touch and trust. A consistent family worship habit, however brief, anchors the entire household in what matters most.

Integrating Faith Throughout the Day

- Pray naturally and openly — before meals, at bedtime, when hard things happen, and when good things happen
- Talk about God in everyday moments: a beautiful sunset, a hard day at school, a answered prayer, a question without an easy answer

- Model what it looks like to bring your real struggles to God — let your child see that faith is not just for easy days
- Practice gratitude together — naming what you are thankful for builds a posture of trust in God's goodness
- Let children see you read Scripture for yourself — faith that is only performed for others loses its power

Simple, Short Family Worship

Family worship does not need to be long or elaborate to be meaningful. Consistency matters far more than perfection. Even 5–10 minutes together can shape a child's relationship with God in lasting ways.

- Keep it short — 5 to 10 minutes is enough; children engage more when worship fits their attention span
- Include everyone — let children read a verse, choose a song, or say the prayer; participation builds ownership
- A simple structure works: a short Scripture reading, one question to discuss, and a prayer that includes each person by name
- When you miss a day, simply start again — guilt-free consistency over time matters more than an unbroken streak
- Tie worship to a natural rhythm — morning, bedtime, or mealtime — so it becomes part of the family's daily heartbeat

A Word of Encouragement

You will not do every one of these things perfectly every day. That is not the goal. The goal is a relationship — imperfect, honest, warm, and consistent. That relationship is enough. It is more than enough. It is everything.