

# The Parenting Journey

Raising a child is an exciting journey. But like any journey, it presents many challenges. We get tired. We lose our direction. Yet there are things we can do to make the journey more successful.

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## Welcome to Wellness

**1 Be healthy.** When we take good care of ourselves, we can be better parents and set a good example for our children. We should try our best to eat well, get plenty of rest, and exercise regularly. We should also make time in our lives for things we love to do.

**2 Keep learning and growing.** Continuing to learn and explore enriches our lives and shows our children the value of lifelong learning. Let's be on the lookout for something new to learn.

**3 Build strong relationships.** We are strengthened by our friends and family. In addition, when our children see us forming and nurturing healthy relationships with good people, it teaches them lessons about the importance of relationships.

## Live in Loveland

**4 Show love effectively.** Loving is the most important thing we do for our children. Notice how your child likes to be loved. Some children want to be held. Some want to talk or play or just be with us. Some want to hear the words, "I love you, Dear." Love children the way they want to be loved.

**5 Listen with your heart.** Listening is an important way to show love. Children like it when we listen to them and try to understand their feelings. When children are upset, sensitive listening provides emotional first aid. In contrast, giving advice when they are upset just makes them feel frustrated or dumb. When a child is disappointed, we can show understanding by saying, "I'm sorry that didn't work out."

**6 Show kindness.** Kindness builds relationships and brightens the world. When we say and do unkind things, we should tell our children we are sorry. If our children see us making the effort to be kind, they will look past our mistakes and learn to be kind to others.

## Enjoy the View at Insight

**7 Understand development.** It takes a long time to learn how to grow up. Some parents rush their children, expecting them to walk, talk, or share before they are able. We should be patient with children and learn about realistic expectations for children.

**8 Understand your child.** Every child is unique. We should study each child's strengths and preferences. We can learn what each child likes to do. We then can focus on their strengths and give them opportunities to develop and use them.

**9 Understand children's circumstances.** Sometimes children get into trouble because they are bored, tired or confused. We should help them find interesting things to do. When children are upset, we can help them calm down by holding them, rocking them, or listening to them. We should help them feel safe in a challenging world.

## Find your way to Character Heights

**10. Teach good ways to act.** When we yell at children they become angry or scared and don't understand what we are trying to say. A gentle, but firm request works best. When they face a difficult task, we should help them get started. When children are upset, we should talk calmly with them or give them a few minutes alone to settle down.

**11. Make sensible rules.** Without rules, life would be a mess. But sometimes we make too many rules or silly rules. Good rules help children learn to work well with other people. We can make a few simple rules and show they are important by enforcing them consistently.

**12. Establish consequences.** When we are frustrated with children we may be tempted to spank them. But hitting isn't good for children or for us. Instead, establish consequences to teach important lessons. Positive consequences (like noticing and commenting on good actions) teach children to repeat the actions. Negative consequences (like removing privileges) teach children to avoid misbehavior.

**13. Establish routines.** Routines can help children know what to expect and how to behave. A bedtime routine teaches children to brush their teeth, get ready for bed, enjoy books, and express affection. We should work with our children to create routines that help them feel comfortable and safe.

## Don't Miss Discovery Point

**14. Give choices.** Children learn from making choices. We should allow children to make choices for which they are ready. Children can choose what they wear. They can choose among chores. Parents can help children choose from options that are safe and sensible.

**15. Learn from mistakes.** We all make wrong turns along the journey. Children will make lots of mistakes even when trying their best. When our children make mistakes, we can help them think about what they have learned. By being patient and understanding, we can provide a safe environment for learning.

**16. Encourage a love of learning.** We want our children to understand the value of learning. We can help by showing our own love of learning. We can read together. We can visit interesting people and places. We can talk about the things we learn.

## Settle in at Reunion Springs

**17. Show our values.** We should talk about what is important to our families. We should tell stories and share our values. We show our values by dedicating ourselves to things we care about. We can beautify the neighborhood, help others, or share goodness. We should find a project that we care about as a family and spend time making our neighborhood a better place.

**18. Make your community child-friendly.** We can help teachers and others appreciate and support our children. We can work with neighbors, churches, businesses and schools to provide good experiences for children.

**19. Enjoy time together.** We should recognize the good things our children do. We can learn together, talk together, laugh together, and have fun together even when we hit a bump in the road or run into a detour. There is no journey like parenting!

The journey of parenting can be tiring and frustrating. But nothing is more satisfying than seeing our children become good people. Enjoy both the journey and the destination! Happy traveling!

Learn more to help you on your parenting journey by visiting [www.arfamilies.org](http://www.arfamilies.org), visiting your county extension agent, or by reading a good book on parenting such as:

Haim Ginot's *Between Parent and Child* (2003, Three Rivers Press).  
John Gottman's *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child* (1997, Fireside).  
H. Wallace Goddard, *Family Life Specialist*, Steven A. Dennis, *Family Life Specialist*

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