

parenting the crazy ride



In This Book...

*positive parenting *parenting goals
*the many faces of nurturing *from infancy to
adulthood *role modelling *sep-education
*discipline *chores *social skills *self-care
*and a whole lot more!

DR KEMI OWONIBI

parenting: the crazy ride

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"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for.
Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and
the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks,
finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be
opened."

"You parents — if your children ask for a loaf of bread,
do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish,
do you give them a snake? Of course not!
So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your
children, how much more will your heavenly Father give
good gifts to those who ask him."

"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you.
This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the
prophets."

MATTHEW 7v7-12



WELCOME TO PARENTING ENJOY THE RIDE!

Many words have been used to describe parenting. Some see it as the best thing that ever happened to them, some think it's the worst, while some others will never touch it with a long stick!

More and more people are opting out of parenting in today's world and those who do settle for the bare minimum number of children because parenting doesn't come cheap; it takes a lot from you – physically, mentally, financially, and in every other sense of it.

Parenting is foremost one of the most selfless things you will ever do, it can be a frustrating learning experience, but it is also a rewarding life experience, most of the time.

Parenting is also one of the most unpredictable things you will ever venture into; it doesn't come with a user manual, it doesn't have a replacement or an exchange policy, and definitely, no refunds! When you become a parent, your life changes at the snap of a finger. You just have to live with it and make the most of the situation.

Parenting is a cocktail of love, joy, excitement, frustration, anger, elation, exhaustion, chaotic chaos, beautiful chaos, pain, humiliation, heartache, angst, anxiety, and lots more. And no, you don't get to pick and choose!

Indeed, parenting changes your life forever!

Parenting is saying, “*What the heck was I thinking?*” and “*I wouldn’t have had it the other way*” in the same breath. It is a fulfilling, enduring, exhausting, maddening, challenging, thrilling, and insanely satisfying life experience.

Parenting is also dynamic; your kids will not remain babies or toddlers forever. They grow every day. Just like you the parent also grow every day. This creates an ever-evolving situation, with each day creating a new challenge and bringing a new blessing.

Perhaps one of the strangest things about parenting is that most parents are not prepared for it. Where do we get the manual for parenting, when each kid comes with their uniqueness and specific requirements? No, there is no ‘one size fits all’ mould for parenting.

This book serves as a guide, an encouragement, a motivation, and one that walks us through the broad spectrum of what parenting entails, talks us through the forever-changing terrains and shows us how we can safely and sanely navigate this crazy ride we know as parenting.

In this book, we shall consider positive parenting, parenting goals, raising your children from infancy to adulthood, the different life stages and the accompanying psychosocial development, the many faces of nurturing, prioritising the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, role modelling, sex education, discipline, chores, social skills, self-care, and a whole lot more!

Indeed, you are in for a treat!

Once again, welcome. And enjoy the ride!



Parenting is one of the oldest professions of mankind, and it is also one of the most researched topics in life and in psychology. And strangely, it is one of the most accident roles of humankind – for example, once you pop a baby, you become a parent, and whether you are ready for it or not, you are expected to take up that role.

So, what do we understand by parenting? Are there definitions for it? Actually, yes. Many definitions have been postulated for parenting.

Parenting is the process of raising children and providing them with the protection and care they require to ensure their healthy development into adulthood.

Parenting is the process that promotes and supports the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood.

Parenting or child rearing promotes and supports the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood

Going by these definitions, one can easily deduce what huge responsibilities lay on the shoulders of anybody who has or wishes to have a child or children. It is a lifelong profession; one you are not allowed to retire from.

Parenting is a lifestyle of giving, raising, providing, promoting, supporting, and lots more. In short, it is a lifetime of nurturing your child, from infancy to adulthood.

The needs of the children evolve as they grow and develop, and you as the parent should be that constant person in their lives perceiving what those needs are and providing your children with what they need per time, or at least, outsourcing them as need be.

It is unfair and unacceptable to have children in your life and be unable to provide this nurturing.

It is important to note at this point that parenting is not limited to the biological birthing of a child. Parenting refers to the intricacies of raising a child and this is not exclusively for a biological relationship. The process of parenting involves and affects biological parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, and all other forms of parent figures.

REFLECTIONS

What does parenting mean to you?



WHY DO WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT PARENTING?

The outcome of parenting depends on the specific parent-child relationship – whether it is healthy or toxic, friendly or hateful, good or bad, pleasant or strained.

With this in mind, and for us to achieve the desired goals, we need critically examine the kind of relationship that exists between the two generations – the parent and the child.

A high-quality parent-child relationship is critical for the healthy growth and development of their children.

We need to talk about parenting and talk about it over and again because:

- Parents need to be constantly reminded of what their roles and responsibilities are.
- It promotes in us the use of positive parenting practices and the use of positive language, planned discipline, and family routines.
- It encourages nurturing behaviour.
- It increases and enhances the knowledge of the needs and the development of one's child/children.
- It helps parents to develop communication styles that are positive, appropriate, uplifting, and acceptable by their child or children

- It helps parents to feel less stressed
- It helps parents to pay attention to the little details that makes the difference between good and great parenting.

Thus, regardless of what we knew previously about parenting, we must continue more. Your children have grown from where they were yesterday, so you as the parent need a refresher's course, to know where you are and what else or what more to do.

REFLECTIONS

How would you describe your relationship with your child or each of your children?

healthy or toxic, friendly or hateful, good or bad,
pleasant or strained, indifferent or conflictual, or others
(specify)



PARENTING: NO MANUALS, NO STANDARDS

What are the ideal methods of parenting?

The short answer is NONE!

The reality is that there are no manuals for parenting; this means that there are no standards! This makes parenting extremely complicated. And that's even though it's one of the most researched topics in psychology!

There are recommendations, yes, but there are no gold standards because every method and style of parenting has its faults and flaws.

Furthermore, based on geographical, social, economic, racial, and cultural differences, it is impossible to have an ideal style of parenting that fits all.

Look at these factors for example.

- Standards of morality differ. For example, the dress code for your children or how this should change with age, the manner your children should talk and behave, the ideal way of showing respect all differ across the globe.
- There are issues regarding how much religion to expose kids to. Some believe that children should be exposed to faith early while others believe that exposing children to religious beliefs is a form of child abuse! So, should you keep them religiously neutral until they can make their choices? Or should you indoctrinate them in your way of religion early?

- Abuse versus discipline. This is a big thing. How do you discipline your child without spanking? And even if you don't spank, your children may still think that the way you address them is emotionally abusive. So how do you go about discipline in a positive manner?
- Cultural expectation. When building obedience in your children, are you robbing them of their self-esteem? Are you forcing them into submission or are you too liberal? Do you teach them to look into people eyes during communication? Note that this builds confidence in some cultures while it means defiance in other places. Do you tell them to look a bit down in shyness? Should you teach them to kneel versus curtsy, prostrate versus bow as a sign of respect?

Due to these and other extreme differences in the standards of morality across the globe, parenting styles must be tailor-made in a manner that is socially and culturally acceptable and adaptable.

REFLECTIONS

Do you have any manuals that you use to raise your children? If yes, are they helpful?

What standards of morality do you use to raise your children?

Do you think children should be exposed to religion early in life or wait till they are older?

Do you believe children benefit from spanking or you will never spank your child?

Do you consider cultural expectations while raising your child or do you borrow from other cultures as your standard?



PARENTING CLASSES ARE FEW & FAR BETWEEN

You see, parenting is quite common; however, parenting classes are rare. Indeed, we are in dire need of masterclasses on parenting!

How much preparation did you have as a parent?

Many of the pre-wedding counselling all borders around different subjects, but rarely on how to raise children.

Many of our couples' seminars touch on many things, but rarely on the nitty-gritty of parenting. Many of our gatherings will rather focus on praying for children than teach parents how to do the parenting.

So, on many occasions, the issue of parenting is left to suffer. We tend to leave that subject to some natural instincts; we tend to believe that once one becomes a parent, your instinct will set in, a maternal or paternal instinct or a natural desire and an instant capacity to spontaneously know how to nurture the children right.

We do not prioritise issues about raising children. Issues on parenting. Parents are left to pick up the skills by the way, and figure it out somehow.

The end product is negligence is that we have generations and generations of parents who are not prepared for children, who don't know what to expect, and who do not know how to raise children.

Many parents do not know what to look out for.

They just become parents and life continues. You will see parents who are surprised, shocked even, that children want to eat every day, and that children want food like three to four times each day!

This is not good enough.

REFLECTIONS

Where do you get your parenting inspiration from?
Have you ever signed up for or attended any classes,
workshops, or seminars on parenting?

If yes, were they helpful?

Have you ever read any books on parenting? If yes, were you able to implement the lessons on your parent-child relationship?

PARENTING: KNOW WHAT YOU SIGNED FOR!

In today's world, the terrain we live in has changed; it does not give you many chances for errors, and it does not allow for random, unintended 'visitors', particularly the types that will stay permanently with you for years.

Thus, you need to know what you are signing for, way in advance! You need to do your feasibility study, plan and budget for it before you jump into it. Otherwise, you will end up driving yourself crazy!

I. EVERY CHILD YOU HAVE MUST BE PLANNED.

One of the most important aspects of parenting is that every child must be planned!

It is very irresponsible to have a child that you have no plans for. Yes, indeed, sometimes, despite all precautions, you still fall pregnant and have a child that you do not plan for, but that should be an exception and not a norm.

- If you have no concrete plan in place, then defer it.
- If you are not physically, mentally, emotionally, or financially ready, defer it.

- If you think your marital situation is not optimal, defer it.
- If you are going through a divorce, or you are separated, or perhaps your relationship or entanglement is complicated, consider deferring having a baby.
- If you are in an abusive or violent relationship/marriage, be it physically, emotionally or financially, defer it.
- If you cannot singlehandedly cater for the child in case of the unexpected, defer it.
- While singleness is not a contraindication to having children, it is advisable to be sure you will have unreserved support from your partner, or be ready to support yourself before committing to having a baby with that individual.
- If you are dealing with major addictions, whether alcohol or drugs, that might not be a good time to have a baby.
- If you are going through major health issues or any chronic diseases, be it physical or mental, or you have concerns regarding some genetic disorders, it is recommended to consult your healthcare worker before having that baby.
- If having that child will significantly interrupt your stability and adversely impact the quality of your life, defer it.

II. THE PURPOSE OF HAVING CHILDREN MUST BE WELL-DEFINED.

Before you have that child or that extra child, ask yourself why.

There was a time that people had children to help them with their farms and plantation; so, they had many children and large families to cater for the manual labour or supervise the hired hands. That was a purpose, and it guided their actions.

One of the commonest reasons many have children is because it is the next culturally and socially expected thing to do. You are now adults, or you are now married, or your older child is now two years old and needs a sibling, or you want to have four children just like your

parents had four children. Your desire to have children or to grow your family is thus legitimate. However, you must ensure that you are ready and that you have made preparations for it.

Some people have children because they hope that these kids will become their retirement plans. However, this has proven to backfire severe times; this is because kids born into poverty, or in numbers that you cannot cater for, the kids are likely to be poorly raised because of poverty in the family, and they may never have enough to take care of their parents in old age! This is a sure way to transmit poverty down your generation and a wrong premise for having children!

As a parent, it is your duty to make plans for your own retirement, You do that by making changes, and by starting right away. Make financial plans and lifestyle choices that will ensure that you are not stranded in the years when you are not as physically productive as in your younger years.

We need to be aware and beware of all these wrong premises for having kids. You must rather delay and have children only when you are ready.

REFLECTIONS

Do you have any well-defined reasons for having children?

Do you think it is your children's responsibility to take care of you in the future?

Are you making and concrete plans that will ensure that you are financially secured after retirement?

Do you think you are ready to have a child or another child now?

What are you doing to prevent having children if you are not ready to have them?



THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PARENTING

There are issues around capability that we must talk about.

Parenting is not cheap!

And having children when you are not financially capable of doing so is one of the surest ways to poverty and instability, not just for you as the parent, but for the children as well.

Before you jump into parenting, or before you have that next child, ask yourself this vital question: are you ready to handle the financial implications of being a parent?

Children feed every day and multiple times in a day.

Boxes of cereal and milk finish at the snap of a finger, almost immediately after opening them.

Children change clothes sizes every season, and the previous year's clothes will not fit this year. Their shoe sizes also change every year, sometimes, multiple times in a year.

At the beginning of every school year, you need to buy supplies for back-to-school, which involve new lists of schoolbooks, textbooks, and stationery, and new school uniforms. And no, they cannot use the ones you bought last year.

The fear of school fees is the beginning of wisdom, and yes, there is a price increase every year.

There is a strange contraption known as a lunchbox. You are stuck with it for eighteen years. And you must pack sandwiches, fruits, snacks, water, and a box of juice in there every school day.

There are miscellaneous fees, for medical check-ups, extramural activities, clubs and societies, just name it.

We have not even started talking about rent, transportation, and entertainment. They want fast food. They want to go to the cinema. They want designer labels. They want the best schools in town. They want digital devices. They want swimming classes, piano lessons, karate classes, coding lessons, robotic classes, dance lessons, and so forth.

And God helps you if your child or children are high maintenance, perhaps because of their physical, health, or mental issues.

Even a day-old baby who is on exclusive breastfeeding will cost you a lot of money.

Have you checked how much diapers cost these days? And did you realise that baby milk costs more than regular milk? Plus, if you don't want your baby to develop terrible abdominal cramps or colic, you need to buy the anti-colic bottles, which costs three or four times the regular baby bottles!

And by the time your baby is a month old, all the baby onesies and other clothes you got at the baby shower are now too small, and you must be ready to buy new ones!

This is a big deal, and this is just the tip of the iceberg. These are all things that gulp money every single day. Are you ready for the financial demands?

REFLECTIONS

Make a list of the major expenditures on your children on a monthly basis

Then categorise these expenses into major groups

- Housing expenses including shelter, rent/mortgage, and utilities - gas, electricity, water, Wi-Fi, cellphones etcetera
- Food expenses - stuffs you buy at the groceries stores, restaurants, eat-at-home and lunch boxes
- Educational and childcare expenses - school tuition, books, fees, and supplies
- Transportation expenses - including personal and public transportation
- Clothing expenses - including diapers, shirts, pants, dresses, and suits; footwear; and clothing services such as dry cleaning, alterations, and repair
- Healthcare expenses
- Miscellaneous expenses - including wants, personal items, entertainment etcetera

At the end of the exercise, you will realise more clearly where your money is going



PARENTING IS NOT STATIC

Parenting is a dynamic experience. Your children grow every day. You will not be the parent of a toddler child for life. One day, they will grow to school age, and the next day, they are teenagers, and the following day, they are leaving for college!

You need to be that constant support figure in their lives, and you need to move with them. As they grow, you need to understand the needs of your child at that stage of their development, and how you can be there for them.

Parenting is not static; there are many phases to it, and yeah, it is a constantly changing ride!

The other side of the coin is that as the children grow, you are also growing. You also have your life issues to deal with. You have to grow your career, work on your marriage, make some money, develop your hobbies, deal with your challenges, handle your health situations, and so forth.

Oftentimes, your growth and development are in constant conflict with your child/children's needs and development.

You don't have the time to attend the parent-teacher meetings or school galas. You are not catching up with their different grade's tasks. They have homework which you must help them with while you are busy cooking on one hand and studying on the other hand. You have to answer their zillion questions while you also brought work home.

In your heart of hearts, you want to be a good parent, just like you have always dreamed of, but you have the issues that you are dealing with; for example, your business or job is demanding, or you are just tired, or unemployed, or widowed, or a single parent, or studying, or those other zillion reasons, all of which are valid.

Regardless of what personal issues you are dealing with, you must find a balance. And this is sometimes a tough bone to crack!

REFLECTIONS

Have there been times you could not show up at your children's events in the past year?

If yes, what were your reasons?

Are there times when your growth/activities and your children's progress/activities are conflicting? for example, you have to travel and they have to go to school.

If yes, how do you think you can fix that conflict?

TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN?



‘Parenting is not for everyone’. Have you heard that before?

Well, to an extent, that is true, and to an extent, wrong.

I believe that everyone who wishes to have children has the right to procreate or adopt. It will be unacceptable, totalitarian, unethical, and impractical to decide who should or who should not have children, or why and when they choose to or not to. So, that is not the point of this conversation.

Also, inasmuch as we are making efforts towards conservation and saving the planet, we need children, we need to repopulate the earth.

“Then God blessed them [mankind] and said,

“Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it.

Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.” Genesis 1v28

The popular mandate is to be fruitful and multiply.

Many parts of the world now have a shrinking younger population and predominantly aged population. The nursing homes are full, more carers, nurses and medical practitioners are being hired for geriatric (elderly) care. In fact, there are countries that now produce more adult diapers than baby diapers!

Most western countries now have an average of fewer than two children per household. This is understandable as it is very expensive to have children in today's world.

Deliveries are expensive, and much more expensive when they are complicated. Raising these children also take lots of work, lots of your time, and lots of your money. Thus, more and more people are opting out of having children or raising children. Many are not ready for the responsibility known as children.

However, the problem with an 'ageing world' is that when you have more elderly and fewer young people, i.e., a low fertility rate with an increasing life expectancy, you lose entire generations of the productive age group.

There are fewer working-age people to do the work to sustain the economy and the development of the nation, because most of the citizens are too old to work, and the nation will also lose the resources needed to take care of the elderly population.

This is a vicious cycle. There is a supply shortage of qualified workers, making it more difficult for businesses to fill in-demand roles, and making it difficult for countries to sustain their economies. To compensate, many countries look to immigration to help keep their labour forces well supplied, but how sustainable is that?

So, we need children.

The converse is the case in the Low- and Middle-Income Countries (i.e., the LMICs). In many cultures of the LMICs, particularly in Africa and Asia, fertility is a big deal. Everyone is meant to have children, that goes without saying, and most importantly, to have their own biological children.

A person is considered incomplete until he/she has procreated.

The problem is that having children under the tripod of poverty, illiteracy, and diseases only potentiates that vicious cycle. Thus, the premise on which having children is based in these cultures needs to be reviewed.

For example, many people have children as their retirement plan; they want someone who will take care of them when they are old. However, the world has changed, and oftentimes, what you sow is what you reap. If you birth children into poverty or instability, they grow up in that toxic situation, and that is what they give you back. And you only succeeded in perpetuating the cycle of generational poverty.

It is a sad reality that many adults today, including the young agile adults and those in the middle-age still depend on their parents for day-to-day sustenance; they still live in their parents' homes, and still spend their parents' salaries or pension, because they are unable to survive on their own.

Thus, every adult wanting to have children should have an honest assessment of themselves and then make a deliberate and informed decision based on that. Pregnancy should not be a sudden discovery, but an occurrence that is deliberately planned and provided for.

When you have children only when you are ready, you are doing yourself, and the child, and the world a lot of good! You will be giving that child/those children a better chance in life; they will enjoy a good life, a head start, and an advantage over their peers. You will also be in a good place – physically, mentally, and psychologically, and perhaps careerwise – to handle the demands that come with parenting.

However, when your premises for having kids are flawed, you are only creating problems for yourself, the kids, and the system.

REFLECTIONS

What is your ideal picture-perfect family size?
In your opinion, what are the factors that determine
that number of children?
Do you think it is okay to choose not to have children?



THE GOALS OF PARENTING

The primary purpose of parenting is to raise fully functional adults who can take care of themselves and make a positive contribution to society.

According to *American Psychology Association*, parenting practices around the world share three major goals:

- ensuring children's health and safety,
- preparing children for life as productive adults, and
- transmitting cultural values.

These goals can be further subdivided into three categories, and these are

- the survival goal,
- the economic goal, and
- the cultural goals.

As parents, you need to teach your children the skills they need to make good choices in life. You need to support your children's strengths and weaknesses and empower them to be successful.

You do not want your children to be liabilities, but you want them to be able to contribute positively, and to be a part of the solution – for themselves, your family, your community, and the world.

That is the target, and that is the goal.

How you go about it, however, is individualised. Your daily actions and activities should be geared towards achieving these goals.

It is important to pause as a parent and ask yourself pertinent questions:

- What are your parenting goals?
- At what point will you say you have succeeded as a parent?
- What are your driving motivations for raising your children?

If you do not have goals or focus for raising your children, stop whatever you are doing, and develop your S.M.A.R.T goals for each of your children.

By ‘goals’, we are not talking about random generic musings, but goals that are unique to your specific parent-child relationship.

Thereafter, you need to come up with the ‘how-tos’ of achieving these goals. If you do not know what you want to achieve as a parent, you will not know or when to get there. You need clarity of purpose.

Of course, life is complex, and you may not have the full picture or things may swerve away from your original intentions, but you need to develop a ‘sort of’ map or a guide that you will be working with. When you have goals in place, then you will know how to channel your energies and resources towards achieving those goals.

Furthermore, your parenting goals don’t always have to be long-term vision; you can set parental goals on a short-term or medium-term basis as well. They can be things you intend to do on daily basis. And they can also be goals you aim to achieve in the next couple of years or decades.

REFLECTIONS

What do you think are the greatest achievement of any parent regarding their children?

At what point would you say that you have done a good job as a parent?

PARENTING: HOW TO SET PARENTING GOALS



Consider some approaches you can take towards setting the vision for your children:

- Let the goal be consistent with your personal and family vision. Make goals that get you closer to whom you want to be as a parent or what you want for your family
- Take the time to write out your goal. If you're creative, you can draw or design it as you will. Put it somewhere you will see it often. Note that unwritten goals might be forgotten, while written goals provide a constant reminder of what you are working towards.
- Write your goals in the present tense – create those goals and write them as if you are already doing it or it is happening. Once they are registered in your brain, your actions and feelings will follow.
- Make your goal reflect what you are going to do differently, rather than what you want to stop doing. Make them positive rather than negative.
- Break it down into small chunks and identify the small steps you will need to take that will make those goals achievable.

- Make your parenting goals be time-sensitive – give yourself a timeline, a date you would like to complete this goal or a specific time of day you are going to be implementing those goals.
- Update your parenting goals regularly. See how well you have done, or how well you are doing. Note the milestones that have been achieved. Then, modify, adjust or update them as required.
- Celebrate the little things. You may not be the best parent in the world, and you do have your limitations. But learn to celebrate the little steps and the little successes you have achieved towards achieving your goal as a parent. Pat yourself on the back, put a gold star on the calendar, tell a friend, spoil yourself. Celebrate every win!
- And don't forget, make your parenting goals S.M.A.R.T

Beyond these, we should also keep in mind that parenting is a vital aspect of your family life. And the roles of the family is also deeply entrenched in parenting.

The primary function of the family is to ensure the continuation of society, both biologically through procreation, and socially through socialisation, building the community, contributing to the economy and the wider global goals.

Thus, you as the parent are the incubation, a responsibility that should not be taken lightly.

REFLECTIONS

What do you think is the function of your family?
Get a book and write out your parenting goals for each of your children.



THE MANY STAGES OF LIFE BY AGE

Your children's needs change by age, and you should be aware of this. This will be further explored in other parts of this book in terms of their neurodevelopmental requirements and needs. But first, we shall be considering the different stages of life by age.

- PREBIRTH: POTENTIAL

This is potential. The child is either not yet conceived or not yet born. The child who has not yet been born could become anything!

- INFANCY: 0-1 YEAR OF LIFE. HOPE

These are BABIES. They are totally dependent

- NEONATES: 0-28 DAYS OF LIFE

These are newborn infants from 0-1 month. Some have extended it to the first two months of life.

- TODDLER: 1-3 YRS. VITALITY

In this stage of life, toddlers are developing fine & gross motor skills, vision, hearing, speech and social skills. and they have begun to explore the world and mark their territories.

These groups of toddlers also include the so-called '*terrible twos and threes*' and the '*threenagers*'. They are often angry and frustrated, and they throw terrible tantrums if they don't have their ways, hence those nicknames.

- PRESCHOOL: 3-5 YRS. PLAYFULNESS

These are also called early childhood. In this stage of life, you can expect to see some tremendous intellectual, social, and emotional changes. Their biggest trait is playfulness. It is however noteworthy that, broadly speaking, early childhood extends from 0-5 years.

- CHILD/CHILDHOOD: 5-12 YEARS.

They are also called School-aged children or Grade-schoolers. The childhood stage can be subdivided into Middle Childhood (6-8 years; imagination) and Late Childhood (9-11 years; ingenuity).

In this stage of life development, children are in one of the most dramatic growing stages of their lives. These are also some of their most active years physically and mentally.

They move through imagination and ingenuity, and they develop creative inspiration. They acquire a wide range of social and technical skills as well that enable them to be successful in solving problems independently.

- THE TWEENAGERS: 9-12 YEARS.

These are the preteens transitioning into teenagers. They explore their community and world and begin to develop unique identities separate from their parents.

- TEENAGERS: 13-19 YEARS. PASSION

Children are in one of the most dramatic growing stages of their lives. These are also some of their most active years physically and mentally.

- PUBERTY. 9-13 YEARS.

Puberty is the process of physical changes through which a child's body matures into an adult body capable of sexual reproduction. It is initiated and controlled by hormones in the brains and in their gonads:

i.e., ovaries in the girls and testes in the boys.

This period covers the onset of secondary sexual changes in the body, and it marks the beginning of adolescence. Puberty can be quite uncomfortable for your children because they are going through those awkward changes in their bodies.

For the girls

- They begin to have breast development or breast budding until it reaches the adult size and shape
- They begin to grow coarse and curly hair around their genitals
- They grow thick bushy hair under their armpits.
- They also have growth spurts i.e., the highest growth rate
- They can also develop acne because of the hormones
- Their bodies begin to accumulate fat, mainly around the breasts, hips, and thighs, giving their bodies that hourglass feminine contour.
- Internally, their uterus gets bigger.
- They begin to bleed from their uterus through their vagina every month, a process known as menstruation. Or period.

For the boys:

- There is the enlargement of their testicles, almost doubling.
- The skin of the scrotum darkens, enlarges, and hangs down from the body.
- They experience a growth spurt, with the arms, legs, hands, and feet growing faster than the rest of his body.
- Their body shape begins to change; their shoulders broaden and they gain weight and muscle.
- They have a crack in the voice and it will become deeper.
- Dark, coarse, curly hair will also sprout just above his penis and on his scrotum, under his arms and in the beard area.
- Their penis and testes will get larger
- Erections will become more frequent, and ejaculation – i.e., the release of sperm-containing semen – will also occur.

It is noteworthy, that for both boys and girls, these physical body changes that they experience are often also accompanied by emotional consequences.

- ADOLESCENCE: 10-19 YEARS. PASSION

This is the period following the onset of puberty during which a young person develops from a child into an adult.

Note that the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines

- 'Adolescents' as individuals in the 10-19 years age group,
- 'Youth' as the 15–24 years, and
- 'Young People' between the age range 10-24 years.

- ADULTHOOD:

This is life after the age of 18! It can be subclassified into young adults (18-39 years), middle-aged adults (40-59 years), as well as senior adults (60 years and above).

- YOUNG ADULT: 18-21 YRS. ENTERPRISE

In these early stages, the young adult is ready to go away to a college/university/higher education or take a job far from home. They begin to build a social support system from the ground up while being able to acclimatise themselves to a drastically different environment.

- YOUNG ADULT: 18-39 YEARS. ENTERPRISE

Adulthood is filled with many changes, but it does have increased stability compared to the teenage years.

Young adults are enterprising; they focus on accomplishing their many responsibilities, including finding a suitable mate and possibly getting married, establishing a family/home, establishing a circle of friends, getting a good job.

Young adults generally follow society's scripts for creating a life. This is the time when families and careers are being established.

- MIDDLE-AGED ADULTS: 40-59. CONTEMPLATION

Some believe that middle-aged adults are the happiest.

Adults in their middle ages establish themselves by taking a break from worldly responsibilities to reflect upon the deeper meaning of their lives and then forge ahead with a new understanding.

They have found success and financial stability, their families are growing/grown, and their children are teenagers and young adults.

Middle-aged adults generally have less uncertainty in life and are more focused on their established life.

- SENIOR ADULTS: 60YEARS+ BENEVOLENCE/WISDOM

These are the Golden Years.

The mature adults have raised families, established themselves in their work-life, and become contributors to the betterment of society through volunteerism, mentorships, and other forms of philanthropy.

They represent the source of wisdom, helping the younger ones to avoid the mistakes of the past while reaping the benefits of life's lessons.

The sixties and beyond can potentially be the prime years of your life; however, to enjoy these years to the fullest, you need to be at your healthiest.

SUMMARY

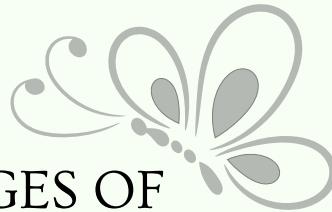
As you can see, many of the stages of development overlap, but by the time your children have fully transitioned into young adulthood, the young individual gains a considerable amount of independence, and the parent can have some respite from their parenting job. Well, that's a job well done, and the outcome of that new adult will be a result of how well they have performed as parents.

You can support your children in their current stage of life.

You can also reflect on the stage of your own life in comparison to those of your children.

REFLECTIONS

What stage of life are you at currently?
What stages of life are your children are at the moment?
How do you think you can support your children in their current stage of development?



ERIK ERIKSON'S STAGES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

In addition to their physical development, it is also important to understand other deeper components of your child's development.

Knowing the stage of your child's development can assist you to understand their needs at that stage and facilitate their success at that stage of their psychosocial development.

Many such theories have been postulated, one of which we shall be considering in this book.

Erik Erikson was an ego psychologist. He developed the *eight stages of psychosocial development*. We shall be considering his theories because this classification has emerged as one of the most popular and influential theories of development.

For all the eight stages of Eric Erikson's psychosocial development, a virtue is developed if that individual succeeds at that stage. If they fail, the converse will happen. However, there is still the hope that they can catch up in the future. Below are the eight stages:

- STAGE 1: 0 - 1½ YRS. TRUST VS. MISTRUST.

Infants must learn that adults can be trusted as adults meet the child's basic needs for survival. Success at this stage brings hope of support in any crisis while failure brings a sense of fear.

- STAGE 2: 1½ - 3 YRS. AUTONOMY VS. SHAME & DOUBT

Here, the toddlers begin to explore their world.

Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of will and confidence, while children are criticized, overly controlled, or not allowed to assert themselves begin to lack self-esteem.

It is critical at this early stage that parents allow their children to explore the limits of their abilities within an encouraging environment (i.e., tolerance of failure).

- STAGE 3: 3 - 5 YRS. INITIATIVE VS. GUILT

Here, preschool children are capable of initiating activities and asserting control over their world through social interactions and play and make purposeful choices.

Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of purpose, while failure results in a sense of guilt. Too much guilt can make the child slow to interact with others and may inhibit their creativity.

- STAGE 4: 5 - 12 YRS. INDUSTRY VS. INFERIORITY

Here, school-age children begin to compare themselves with their peers to see how they measure up. If children are encouraged and reinforced for their initiative, they begin to feel industrious, i.e., they feel competent and confident in their ability to achieve goals. If this initiative is not encouraged, if it is restricted by teachers or parents, then the child begins to feel inferior, doubting their abilities. The inferiority complex might develop into adolescence and adulthood.

- STAGE 5: 12 - 18 YRS. IDENTITY VS. CONFUSION

Here, the adolescent's main task is developing a sense of self.

They struggle with questions such as "Who am I?" and "What do I want to do with my life?"

During adolescence, the transition from childhood to adulthood is most important. The individual wants to belong to a society and fit in.

Children are becoming more independent, and begin to look at the future in terms of career, relationships, families, housing, etcetera.

During this stage, adolescents also search for a sense of self and personal identity, through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs, and goals.

There might be a sense of role confusion and identity crisis if they fail this stage. However, if they succeed at this stage, it will lead to the virtue of fidelity, which involves being able to commit oneself from a place of self-acceptance.

- STAGE 6: 18 - 40 YRS. INTIMACY VS. ISOLATION

In early adulthood, the focus is intimacy. After they have developed a sense of self in adolescence, they are ready to share their lives with others in intimate relationships

Successful completion of this stage results in happy relationships and a sense of commitment, safety, and care within a relationship, and leads to the virtue of love. Failure will lead to avoiding intimacy, fearing commitment and relationships and will ultimately lead to isolation, loneliness, and sometimes depression.

- STAGE 7: 40-65 YRS. GENERATIVITY VS. STAGNATION

In middle adulthood, the social task is generativity.

Generativity involves finding your life's work and contributing to the development of others through activities such as volunteering, mentoring, and raising children.

Middle-aged adults give back to society through activities such as raising their children, being productive at work, volunteering, as well as becoming involved in community activities and organisations.

Through generativity, middle-aged adults consolidate and develop a sense of being a part of the bigger picture.

Success at this stage leads to a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, and the virtue of care.

Conversely, failure results in shallow involvement in the world, feeling stagnant and unproductive, and disconnected and unininvolved with their community and with society as a whole.

- STAGE 8: 65+ INTEGRITY VS. DESPAIR

Here, people in late adulthood reflect on their lives and feel either a sense of satisfaction or a sense of failure.

Individuals who reflect on their lives and regret not achieving their goals will experience feelings of bitterness and despair.

Success in this stage will however lead to the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom enables a person to look back on their life with a sense of closure and completeness and be able to accept death without fear.

Late-life is however characterized by both integrity and despair as alternating states that need to be balanced. Even for the wise!

IN SUMMARY

Knowing what stage of psychosocial development of your child affords you the opportunity to be able to support them to achieve success in their different aspects of development.

REFLECTIONS

What stage of psychosocial development are you at currently?

Can you say that you are succeeding or failing?
What stages of psychosocial development are your children are at the moment?

Are they coping well or do you think that they are struggling?

How do you think you can support your children in their current stages of psychosocial development?



THE FAMILY APGAR

The Family APGAR is a questionnaire used to determine self-reported family dysfunction. It serves as a way of subjectively objectively determining if your family is functional or dysfunctional.

Health practitioners often use the Family APGAR in the context of clinical practice for assessment of satisfaction of a person with social support he/she gets from the family, and in the management of the family in trouble

The term APGAR is an acronym that is applied to the functional components of Adaptability, Partnership, Growth, Affection, as well as Resolve.

- SCORING

Each of these five functional components of The Family APGAR questionnaire is scored 0, 1, or 2, leading to a maximum score of ten and a minimum score of zero.

- A score of 7-10 is good, meaning your family is highly functional.
- A score of 0-3 is a severely dysfunctional family.
- The middle score (4-6) signifies a moderately dysfunctional family.

The Family APGAR is relevant to our conversation because the degree to which your family is functional or otherwise affects the individuals within the family, and particularly, the children.

The Family APGAR Questionnaire

Score _____

Date: _____

COMPONENT	RELEVANT OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	ALMOST ALWAYS (2)	SOME OF THE TIME (1)	HARDLY EVER (0)
A: ADAPTATION	I am satisfied that I can turn to my family for help when something is troubling me			
P: PARTNERSHIP	I am satisfied with how my family talks about things with me and shares problems with me			
G: GROWTH	I am satisfied that my family accepts and supports my wishes to take on new activities or directions			
A: AFFECTION	I am satisfied with the way my family expresses affection and responds to my emotions such as anger, sorrow, and love			
R: RESOLVE	I am satisfied with the way my family and I share time together			

REFLECTIONS



Using The Family APGAR, how will you rate your family?
 IS your family highly functional or severely dysfunctional?
 Or is it somewhere in the middle, neither functional nor dysfunctional?



YOUR CHILDREN NEED NURTURING

Nurturing is the act of encouraging, nourishing and caring for someone or something. Thus, having a nurturing relationship with your child is to raise your child in a caring, loving, trusting and emphatic home.

Nurturing is an action word! Other words for nurturing include: to bring up, care for, provide for, rear, parent (verb), stimulate, cultivate, feed, tend, boost, and advance.

Your children need nurturing as they grow from infancy into adulthood.

We do understand infancy to begin at the point when the child is born, however, it is unclear at what point the role of parenting ends.

Well, in reality, it never does.

Technically, the maximum limit of 'childhood' is considered to be eighteen years. However, it is an obvious fact that not many eighteen-year-olds can survive independently. Thus, you as the parent are unable to retire from your parenting role and responsibility just yet when your child hits eighteen.

In fact, you are more likely to be an active parent throughout life. You will always be your child's parent, and your child will forever be your child, regardless of age!

You see, unlike other animals, children are born helpless, and they need someone to nurture them. Now, nurturing comes in different ways and meet different needs.

Without nurturing, children cannot survive on their own; they cannot fend for themselves; they cannot guide themselves; they cannot take care of themselves. They need someone to provide for all their needs for many several years. They need someone to teach them what to do and show them how to behave.

They need examples. They need help.

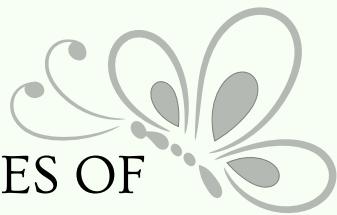
And the parents are the ones with the primary responsibilities to provide these for them. Thus, the role of being a parent should not be taken lightly if we are to have a good quality of adults in the future.

It begins now!

REFLECTIONS

What aspect(s) of nurturing do you think your children need the most?

What aspect(s) of nurturing are you deficient in providing for your children?



THE MANY FACES OF NURTURING

The wise King Solomon says:

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it." ~ Proverbs 22:6

Now, raising, training, and nurturing a child can come in different ways. For the purpose of this book, I have grouped the different components of nurturing into the following subcategories:

- Physical
- Emotional/Mental health
- Educational
- Financial
- Material
- Entertainment
- Others.

As parents, you must balance the provision of essential needs for your children with being the consistent person in their lives, and creating a positive role model, while at the same time, you are creating a structure – rules, boundaries, and limits for your children to live by!

This takes lots of practice.

In the pages that follow, we shall be considering some of these aspects of nurturing in more detail.



THE PROVISION OF PHYSICAL NURTURING

Physical nurturing includes meeting the day-to-day basic physical needs of the child. These needs include the basic human needs for

- healthy balanced meals,
- appropriate adequate clothing, and
- safe shelter.

Other essential physical needs include

- warmth
- clean water for drinking and bathing/sanitation
- physical exercise
- plenty of fresh air
- a safe environment
- time and space to play
- a healthy amount of sleep and rest
- a reasonable amount of independence and freedom, to mention but a few.

Very importantly, you must ensure

- the provision of adequate health care
- protection from violence, exploitation and abuse
- protection from environmental pollution
- exercise for strength-endurance-coordination, and
- opportunities for the development of athletic potentials.

These are all physical needs that you must prioritise. It is your responsibility as the parent to make provision for the physical needs of your child/children.

REFLECTIONS

One of the most important aspects of physical nurturing is feeding your children.

It is also one of the most expensive.

And sometimes, you don't even know what to feed them with.

A Meal Planner might be helpful

However, many of the meal planners on the internet are not very helpful. In an attempt to sound perfect, healthy, and balanced, they are loaded with meal options that are impractical, not available, or inaccessible.

So, do you have a Meal Planner?

If not, try making one now, using food items that work the best for you.

If you struggle with meal plans, use these tips:

Rather than having a rigid impractical 'foolproof' meal plan, you can categorise meals instead into 'breakfasty', 'lunch' and 'suppers'.

Throw in meals that can work into these categories. Then pick and match any of them each day or each week. It is also helpful to draw your meal plans in collaboration with the children. They know what they like to eat!

Below are some printable ideas:



OUR MEAL PLANS

BREAKFAST



LUNCH



SUPPER



LUNCH BOX



SNACKS



AVAILABLE
MEALS/
FOOD ITEMS





OUR WEEKLY MEAL PLANS

Week # _____

Dates: _____

 Motivation Monday GratiTuesday Wellness Wednesday Thoughtful Thursday Feel-good Friday

OUR MEAL OPTIONS



Supper



Lunchbox



THE MENTAL WELL-BEING OF YOUR CHILDREN

In today's world, it has become of utmost importance to pay close attention to the mental and emotional wellbeing of your child, regardless of age, from infancy to adulthood. Your children need love, acceptance, emotional support and a sense of safety.

Mental well-being can be defined as a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community

Emotional well-being is the ability to produce positive emotions, moods, thoughts, and feelings, and adapt when confronted with adversity and stressful situations.

Specifically, the mental health of your children refers to the way those children think and feel about themselves and the world around them.

BASICS FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Things that parents can do to help keep children, adolescents, and young adults mentally well include the following:

- Build trust. Your child will feel lost if he/she cannot trust you
- Foster relationships

- Unconditional love from family
- Develop the self-confidence and high self-esteem of your child
- Be consistent
- Teach stress management
- Establish healthy habits
- Create the opportunity to play or mingle with other children
- Ensure that teachers and caretakers are encouraging and supportive
- Provide safe and secure surroundings
- Give appropriate guidance and discipline

WARNING SIGNS

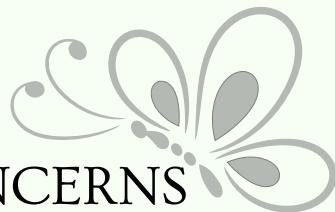
You should be concerned if your children have problems with their emotions and behaviour. These are some of the warning signs that you might notice.

- A decline in school performance
- Poor grades despite strong efforts
- Regular worry or anxiety
- Repeated refusal to go to school
- Repeated refusal to take part in normal kids/teens' activities
- Hyperactivity or fidgeting
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums
- Depression, sadness or irritability

In all cases of warning signs, you should promptly seek help, preferably professionally.

REFLECTIONS

Do you have any concerns about your child's mental health?



MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS OF YOUR KIDS & TEENS

Mental health issues are quite rampant among children and adolescents in today's world, and you should find ways to support your child where and when necessary.

In addition to the general mental health and emotional wellbeing of your child, some children and adolescents suffer from some specific mental health issues, which you cannot afford to dillydally with.

Some of the specific mental health conditions that affect children and adolescents include the following:

- Neurodevelopmental disorders such as:
 - attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD),
 - autism spectrum disorder,
 - specific learning disabilities,
 - intellectual disability (also known as mental retardation),
 - conduct disorders,
 - cerebral palsy, and
 - impairments in vision and hearing.
- Conduct Disorder – behavioural problems
- Grief – coping with loss or family disruptions
- Depression – feeling of sadness and hopelessness that is not going away.

- Suicide – thoughts of death/dying
- Bipolar Disorder – depression and high energy alternating.
- Psychosis – hearing voices or seeing things that aren't there
- Substance use – drinking and using drugs, both prescription and illicit drugs

In all cases of mental health issues, it is important to seek professional help.

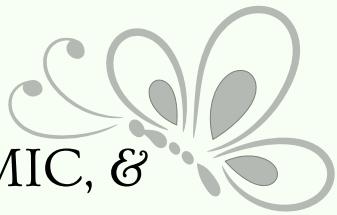
Please note that most of the time, the help is multidisciplinary, in the sense that many professionals will need to come on board, as and when necessary. These groups of professionals and interest groups include (but are not limited to) the following:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General practitioner/• Family doctor• Paediatrician• Psychiatrists• Psychologist• Psychometrist• Occupational therapist• Physical therapist• Community health workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nursing care• Counsellors• Teachers• Special education services• Family resource centres• Protection and advocacy groups & organisations• Self-help• Support groups |
|---|--|

Managing these mental health concerns might go on for several years. Sometimes for life! You must bring out your strength and resilience and be there for your child/children as they go through those challenges. It bothers them too.

REFLECTIONS

Do you think it will be helpful to pick up your phone and make an appointment to see a professional for help?



SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, & CULTURAL NURTURING

This section involves the different aspects of socioeconomic and cultural nurturing that you should cultivate in your children. Your children should be introduced to your community life in an age-appropriate fashion

An approach to this upbringing includes the following:

- Knowledge of and respect for one's language, religion and culture
- Stable social and economic environment
- Access to appropriate guidance and support
- Access to quality education
- Play and friendships
- Freedom from discrimination and prejudice
- Meaningful empowering work, and
- Opportunities for service.

It is important to note that very few countries and school curricula prioritise entrepreneurial skills development, technical and vocational skills training, and business development services that equip kids and teens with occupation-specific and business management skills.

The onus is on you as the parent to create such opportunities for your children. it may be in the form of apprenticeship, volunteering, participation in community services, etcetera.

Equally important is the need to help your children to appreciate their cultural heritage, local languages, local fabrics and fashion, local arts and artefacts, even the myths and folklore, and so forth.

They all form a part of who we are as a people, and we should be proud of this heritage.

The world has changed tremendously in the past few decades, and sadly, many cultures have lost their beauty and riches in the process.

Many individuals have learned to demonise or hate their cultural heritage because they have embraced foreign cultures and religions. This is particularly so for many of our African cultures and languages where kids, teens, and young adults cannot speak their local languages and dialects, and they believe that their culture/tradition is idolatry.

This is not right.

REFLECTIONS

How do you think you can develop entrepreneurial skills in your children?

How would you help your children to harness their creativity and personal experiences?

Are there any existing entrepreneurship programmes in your locality where they can undergo training, coaching and mentoring?

How are you helping your children to value and appreciate their cultural heritage?



PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The psychological upbringing of your child includes intellectual, emotional, and volitional nurturing. To develop the psychological wellbeing of your child/children as a parent, you need to consider and create the following for your child/children:

- Opportunities to make choices
- A sense of belonging and identity
- A stable and loving family environment
- A sense of worth, being valued by others
- Age-appropriate information and stimulation
- Models for problem-solving and critical thinking
- Opportunities to be listened to and taken seriously
- Being able to contribute to or positively affect your world, and
- Opportunities to develop cognitive talents and creative potentials.

Kids and teens often have a hard time controlling their emotions; they are usually honest with expressing their feelings, not minding how it might affect others.

It is your role to raise them to be emotionally intelligent.

This is achievable by helping them to cultivate the five components of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Being able to identify and label how they feel and be able to communicate it with empathy might be a good way to start.



RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

You need to nurture your children to explore, understand, and appreciate the nature of life, humankind and the universe. And of what lies beyond time and material world, as well as the possibilities to connect with the infinite and ultimate.

Almost all cultures around the globe believe in a Supreme Being or at least acknowledge the sovereignty of one or more Sovereign(s) – whether God, gods or even Mother Nature. There is an unending thirst within most mortals to connect to something or Someone beyond our physical realms.

It is a great practice to expose your children to the knowledge of that Almighty One. And to help them grow a relationship with Him (or Her/It/Them). For example, as a Christian and believer in Jesus Christ, it is great to expose your children and adolescents to a relationship with Him, as well as to the knowledge of the Scriptures.

The world is becoming increasingly secular, and in many societies around the globe, the role of religion has diminished, whether as a model for governance or standard for morality.

Religion also has other problems, for example, it has been abused by bigots, its arguments are often flawed, sometimes even delusional, and may conflict with science, it claims of having the exclusive truth, it curtails freedoms, it instils fear and feelings of guilt, it blurs the line between reality and fantasy, and so many other issues.

However, religion has also been proven to be beneficial!

These may include high moral standards, fewer vices, less use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, as well as lower rates of depression and suicide. It also gives meaning and purpose to life, promotes physical and psychological well-being, reinforces social unity and stability, and brings greater hopefulness and life satisfaction.

The dilemma is that in the world currently, a lot of parents were raised with a religion, and even if they are not so religious themselves, they feel a sense of duty or an obligation to do the same for their children or at least give them an idea of some God.

In view of all these, it is good to expose your children to a balanced and age-appropriate view on religion.

It is important to avoid traumatising them by forcing them. Note that forcing your children into religious practices that they do not feel connected or committed to can damage their overall outlook on religion and can make them resent their family and their parents.

REFLECTIONS

How can you train your children to be emotionally intelligent?

How would you assist your children to be self-aware and self-regulated?

How much religion do you expose your children to?

Do you think religion is safe for children?

Or Would you rather that your children settle for a moderate view or a secular outlook on religion?

PARENTING: SEX & SEXUALITY EDUCATION

Sex education is the instruction of issues relating to human sexuality, including emotional relations and responsibilities, human sexual anatomy, sexual activity, sexual reproduction, age of consent, reproductive health, reproductive rights, safe sex, birth control and sexual abstinence (*Wikipedia*).

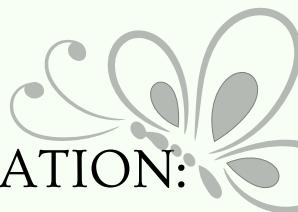
Sex education helps young people to gain the information, skills and motivation to make healthy decisions about sex and sexuality throughout their lives. Such knowledge also enables young people to protect their reproductive health, well-being and dignity.

The gap between the sexual education that kids and teens receive and the sexual activity they perform indicate that these kids and teens go searching for information from someplace, perhaps online, or from peers, and many other sources.

Well, they do not have to look too hard to find it; issues around sex are a staple subject of news, entertainment and advertising.

It is everywhere!

And while sex education is offered in many schools sometimes as part of the curriculum, don't count on classroom instruction alone. Sex education needs to happen at home as well.



PARENTING & SEX EDUCATION: BREAKING THE ICE

The reality is that children are exposed to information about sex from sources such as school, friends, and the media at a much earlier age than many parents expect. So, they know, it's just that we don't know how much they know.

An approach is to ask them what they know and listen to them!

Discussing sex education with kids should form a part of the everyday conversations that parents have with their kids and teens.

And as children grow into adolescence, it becomes even more relevant.

Open communication is key. Not just about sex, but also about the changes that occur in their lives and within their bodies.

Take advantage of any and every opportunity with your kids and teens to start the conversation and to keep the conversation going. It may be an advert, movie scenes, or the kid may ask you random questions. Use those opportunities to ask them what they know and to present your health education talk.



PARENTING & SEX EDUCATION: ADDRESSING TOUGH TOPICS

Conversations around sex education should not be limited to the hectic, uncomfortable topics of sex and body anatomy. There are many issues that can be addressed during such conversations.

These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Love
- Abstinence
- Safer sex
- Self-esteem
- Dating, relationships and friendships
- Effective communication
- Decision-making
- Risk behaviours
- Respect for others and oneself, diversity,
- Personal rights and responsibilities, and so forth.

SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR SEX EDUCATION AT HOME.

- Be honest and be direct.
- Teach them the ACB of sex – Abstinence. Use condom. And Be faithful/exclusive.
- Go beyond just the facts to address the subjective aspect of things, like feelings and emotions

- Clearly state your feelings about specific issues, such as oral sex and penetrative sexual intercourse, including vaginally and anal sex. Explain that oral sex isn't a risk-free alternative to intercourse. Every form of sexual activity is risky.
- Let them know that sex is for adults because of the risks and responsibilities attached to it. Tell them the importance of delaying sex until such a time that they can handle the responsibility.
- Teach them that every form of sexual activity has its risks. And clearly state those risks. Present the risks objectively, including emotional pain, heartbreaks, sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy and their implications and consequences.
- Teach them about healthy relationships as well as toxic and abusive relationships and let them know that teens who are in abusive relationships are at increased risk of long-term consequences, including poor academic performance, binge drinking and suicide attempts. The emotional impact of unhealthy relationships may also be lasting, increasing the likelihood of future unhappy, violent relationships.
- Teach them the importance of consent and the need to avoid violent or forced sexual interactions. Explain that no one should have sex out of a sense of obligation or fear. Any form of forced sex is rape, whether the perpetrator is a stranger or someone your teen has been dating. The age of sexual consent should also be mentioned.

It is important to understand that sex education is not a way of encouraging your kids and teens to be engaging in sexual activities. Rather, sex education aims to develop and strengthen the ability of children and adolescents to make conscious, satisfying, healthy and respectful choices regarding sex and relationships, as well as protect their emotional and physical health.



DISCUSS & MODEL HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Ignorance is dangerous, and these kids don't know how to protect themselves. They are going to take risky lifestyle or sexual choices and practices if they are not told about the danger in it. So, this had to be said, even if they are uncomfortable conversations.

Teach them about consent, communication, boundary setting.

Let them understand that '*private is private*'. Thus, certain parts of their bodies are called '*private*' for a reason. It means nobody is allowed to touch those '*private areas*'. They too should be responsible and should not touch anyone with their '*privates*'.

Teach your kids and teens abuse prevention, boundaries and when to say no, safe and unsafe touch, and whom to tell if someone crosses that boundary.

Avoid setting rules; it is more effective for them to generate their own ideas of what choices they want to make, and then you both can talk about the pros and cons of their theoretical and practical choices.

SEX EDUCATION: RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOUR

If your teen becomes sexually active – whether you think he or she is ready or not, or whether you approve or not – it becomes even more important than ever to keep the conversation going.

Stress the importance of safe sex, and make sure your teen understands how to get and use contraception.

Talk about keeping a sexual relationship exclusive, not only as a matter of trust and respect but also to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections.

Teach them about dual protection. Dual protection simply means the use of the condom, and in addition, other contraceptive measures. This will prevent risks of sexually transmitted infections, and HIV, as well as unwanted pregnancy.

IN SUMMARY: SEX EDUCATION

With your support and adequate education, your teen can emerge into a healthier and sexually responsible adult.

Don't have '*That Conversation*' just once, rather let it be an ongoing thing, and more importantly, get them to engage in the conversation.

Also, remember that as your children grow into adolescence, they take in information at their own pace. So, you need to factor that as you talk with them.

REFLECTIONS

Assess yourself: How well have you fared with sex education at home?

Do you have any concerns regarding your child's knowledge of sex education?

When do you think your child is old enough to have a romantic relationship?

When do you think your child is old enough to have sex?
Have you discussed those ideas with your child?



PARENTING STYLES & HOW THEY AFFECT YOUR KIDS

Generally, there are four known styles of parenting.

- Authoritarian/Assertive Parenting
- Authoritative/Aggressive Parenting
- Permissive/Indulgent Parenting; and
- Uninvolved/Neglectful parenting.

A certain lady, known as Diana Baumrind, who was a clinical and developmental psychologist, coined the first three styles of parenting i.e., the authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive/indulgent styles. Later, Maccoby & Martin added the neglectful/uninvolved parenting.

Some others simply classify parenting into Permissive, Assertive, and Aggressive styles.

My classification is oversimplified as the parents who know what they are doing and the parents who really do not have a clue what they are doing!

However, for the purpose of this book, we shall be focusing on the four classifications, their pros and cons, as well as their impacts on the children as they grow and develop.



1. AUTHORITARIAN (AGGRESSIVE) PARENTING

This is a strict approach to parenting. Authoritarian parents focus on obedience; they are not interested in negotiating.

- They believe kids should be obedient; seen and not heard.
- They don't consider their child's feelings. Instead, they make the rules and enforce the consequences with little regard for a child's opinion.
- When it comes to rules, you believe it is either their way or the highway. If the child dares questions, the answer is, "Because I said so, and you must listen to me!"
- They make the decision for the kids/teen and don't allow them to get involved in problem-solving challenges or obstacles.
- They punish instead of discipline the child for their mistakes; they're invested in making kids feel sorry for their mistakes rather than teach a child how to make better choices,

EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

They tend to follow rules much of the time, but their obedience comes at a price. They are at a higher risk of developing self-esteem problems because their opinions aren't valued. They may also become hostile or aggressive; rather than think about how to do things better in the future, they focus on the anger they feel toward their parents. They also grow to become good liars in an effort to avoid punishment.



2.AUTHORITATIVE (ASSERTIVE) PARENTING

Authoritative parents aim to strike a balance between being firm but also warm and supportive.

They validate their children's feelings, and rather than forcing the children to follow rules, they will discuss rules and expectations as a family and agree upon the discipline measures.

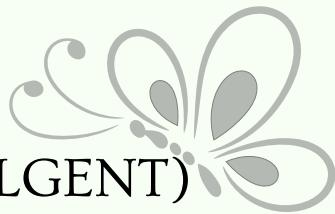
They negotiate, but they're still clear on who's in charge, and they will hold kids accountable when they don't do what's expected.

Assertive parents put a lot of effort into creating and maintaining a positive relationship with their children; they explain the reasons behind the rules, and they enforce rules and give consequences while also considering the children's feelings and opinions. They also invest time and energy into preventing behaviour problems before they start.

Authoritative parents use positive discipline strategies to reinforce good behaviour, like praise and reward systems.

EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

They are most likely to become responsible adults who feel comfortable expressing their opinions. They tend to be happy and successful. They're also more likely to be good at making decisions and evaluating safety risks on their own, and quick thinkers who can creatively develop solutions.



PERMISSIVE (INDULGENT) PARENTING

Permissive parents are warm and nurturing but tend to be lax or inconsistent in the rules and discipline department. They usually act more like a friend than a role model, so kids tend to take advantage; they have a lot of freedom and aren't always monitored closely.

Children of permissive parents don't tend to have many chores or responsibilities, they can get away with not doing their chores, and their days usually aren't very structured.

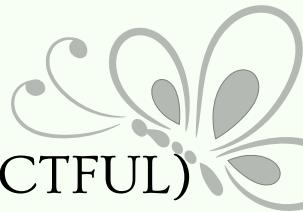
HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE AN INDULGENT PARENT

- They set rules but rarely enforce them.
- They think your child will learn best with little interference from you.
- They are lenient, they're quite forgiving, and very often let things slide.
- They often only step in when there's a serious problem.
- They don't give out consequences very often. When they use consequences, they may not make those consequences stick.
- If they withdraw certain privileges and a discipline measure, they easily give privileges back if a child begs or they may allow a child to get out of time-out early if he promises to be good.

- Permissive parents usually take on more of a friend role than a parent role.
- They often encourage their children to talk with them about their problems, but they usually don't put much effort into discouraging poor choices or bad behaviour.

EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

The children may exhibit more behavioural problems because they are rarely being pressured and they don't appreciate rules or authority. They're also at a higher risk for health problems and poor lifestyle and dietary choices because the parents do not enforce certain lifestyles, and the children are allowed to do what they like. They also don't want to study, and they want to do only what they feel like doing.



4. UNINVOLVED (NEGLECTFUL) PARENTING

Uninvolved parents are not involved; they provide little supervision and are not able to meet their kids' emotional or physical needs.

Uninvolved parents expect children to raise themselves. They don't devote much time or energy to meeting children's basic needs. There are few rules and instructions for the children, and the children often do not receive much guidance, nurturing, and parental attention.

Uninvolved parents tend to have little knowledge of what their children are doing and often lack knowledge about their children's development. They don't spend much time with the children, they don't ask the child about school or homework, and sometimes, they don't even know where their child is.

This is not always intentional. for example, a parent with mental health issues or substance abuse problems may not be able to nurture their children consistently. Something, they are simply overwhelmed by life challenges, work schedules, bills, etcetera.

EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

The parents are absent. So, the children feel let down and alone, and they are likely to struggle with self-esteem issues. They exhibit frequent behaviour problems, they may perform poorly in school, and they rank low in happiness.



WHAT KIND OF PARENT ARE YOU?

- Authoritative/Assertive parenting places high demands on their children but also provide high support
- Authoritarian/Aggressive parenting places high demands on their children but they provide low support
- Permissive/Indulgent parenting places low demands on their children but they provide high support, while
- Neglectful/Uninvolved parenting places low demands on their children and they also provide low support.

If you have to make a choice, be an authoritative parent.

If you can't be assertive, be permissive within reason.

Remember that it is more important to support your children at all times rather than placing unhealthy demands on them.

Authoritative Assertive	Permissive Indulgent	Authoritarian Aggressive	Neglectful Uninvolved
High Demanding	Low Demanding	High Demanding	Low Demanding
Responsive Supportive	Responsive Supportive	Punitive Unsupportive	Punitive Unsupportive
High Love Warmth	High Love Warmth	Cold Unaccepting	cold Unaccepting
High Limits Boundaries	Low Limits Boundaries	High Limits Boundaries	Low Limits Boundaries



EFFECTIVE PARENTING & POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING

Your children are watching what you do and say all the time.

Your children spend a lot of time with you, thus, they learn a lot from you, and your lifestyle and choices impact them as well.

Your attitude towards sports, academics and other spheres of life impacts your children's choices too.

Your choices of friends help in determining what kind of people your child will be friendly with or will hang out with.

Your lifestyle choices influence your children's choices.

This is because you inspire them!

Therefore, you have a big responsibility to be a good and positive role model for your kids. It is not enough to nurture or provide for your kids; it is equally important to be a good role model for them.

Being a role model means that your children are looking up to you for inspiration, and somehow, they want to strive to become more like you. Thus, being a good and positive role model will help shape their outlook on life as well as their future. This requires a lot of effort, forethought, and self-control for most parents. It is something you must do consciously and deliberately.



HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE & POSITIVE ROLE MODEL FOR YOUR CHILDREN

- Begin early
- Build strong relationships with your children
- Be open about your life – let them know your story, your strengths and weaknesses, mistakes and successes. Do not hide who you are as a person to your children.
- Walk the talk and be the best version of yourself. Continue to improve yourself. Try new experiences and broaden your horizons. This teaches our children to never stop growing.
- Review your behaviour and attitudes – how you handle stress, how you treat people, how you take care of yourself, how you celebrate special occasions, deal with competition, responsibilities, loss, mistakes, and adjust as necessary.
- This implies that you must model through your actions.
- Model through your words as well – your tone, the way you speak, and what you speak about. Show self-control. Let your moderation be known to all!
- Focus on positive virtues you can model for your children – resilience, good work ethics, courage, compassion, respect, generosity, and so forth.

- Be affectionate and be a good listener. Let them know that they can talk to you at any time.
- Be positive and encouraging. Being positive in your outlook is one of the best gifts that you can give your children.
- Be very forgiving of mistakes – be forgiving of your mistakes and theirs. Let them learn not to dwell on mistakes; mistakes are bound to happen.
- Set goals. You may encourage your child to come forward with their dreams, aspirations and goals, and work together with your child towards achieving them.

REFLECTIONS

Add to the list.

In what other ways do you think you can be a positive role model for your children?



THE SEVEN TRAITS OF EFFECTIVE PARENTING

There are more than seven traits of effective parenting, but these are the few highlighted ones. You can add your own.

1. LOVE.

Love your kids, unconditionally. Let your children understand that you truly love them, both in words and action. Everybody responds to love. Understand one of your children's love languages.

2. RESPECT.

Respect teaches us not to treat others as unimportant. Respect is reciprocal. Respect your children, apologise if you are wrong, and watch your language.

3. INTENTIONALITY.

Be intentional about talking about and living out our values and priorities consistently as a family. And not allowing other influences into our home, particularly when they are negative influences.

4. SETTING LIMITS AND BOUNDARIES.

This includes setting boundaries according to your family values. You need to set boundaries for media, behaviour, relationships, godly living and vibrant faith, and not let culture determine what is healthy for our family.

5. GRATITUDE.

Cultivate a lifestyle of gratitude. Appreciate the blessings you have received and appreciate one another.

6. GRACE AND FORGIVENESS.

Be quick to forgive and let go. Mistakes happen all the time. Learn to let it go.

7. ADAPTABILITY.

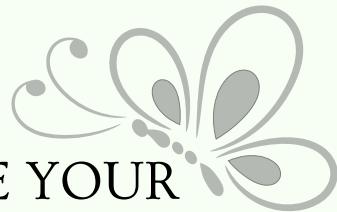
This flexibility and resilience, grown in difficult circumstances, allows a family to face both hardships and joys together, as they grow deeper in their faith. Teaching adaptability helps our children find peace and contentment regardless of whether they have plenty or they don't have enough.

REFLECTIONS

But the fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, and self-control.

Against such things, there is no law.

Galatians 5v22-23 (BSB)



HOW TO DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN (I)

When it comes to discipline, is sometimes hard to remain positive you are angry, you are upset, and you just want to lash at them. However, it is important to deliberately practice positive discipline and avoid punitive measures.

Setting limits and being consistent are the keys to good discipline. Be kind and firm when enforcing those rules. Focus on the reason behind the child's behaviour. And make discipline an opportunity to learn for the future, rather than to punish for the past.

It is important to know to discipline your children as opposed to 'punishing' them.

THE THREE Fs OF DISCIPLINE

The "3 Fs" of Effective Parenting and discipline measures have been identified. Discipline should be Firm, Fair, and Friendly!

1. FIRM:

- Consequences should be clearly stated and then adhered to when inappropriate behaviour occurs.
- Your children should over time be aware that there are consequences for bad behaviours

2. FAIR:

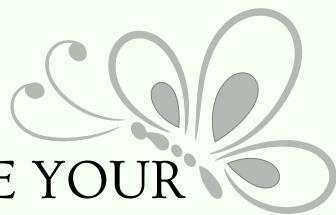
- The punishment should fit the crime.
- Also, in the case of recurring behaviour, consequences should be stated in advance, so the child knows what to expect.
- Harsh punishment is not necessary. Using a simple Time Out can be effective when it is used consistently every time the behaviour occurs.

3. FRIENDLY:

- Use a friendly but firm communication style when letting children know they have behaved inappropriately and let them know they will receive the 'agreed upon' consequence.
- Encourage them to try to remember what they should do instead to avoid future consequences.
- Work at 'catching them being good' and praise them for appropriate behaviour, as opposed to 'catching them doing wrong'.

REFLECTIONS

How do you usually discipline your children?
Do you think those methods are effective and appropriate for your children?



HOW TO DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN (II)

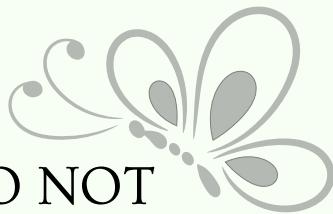
It is helpful for you and your children to agree upon measures of discipline, which they understand as consequences of their behaviour. Of course, these measures should follow the three Fs of Firm, Fair, and Friendly, and should be appropriate for their age and body build.

Some measures of discipline ‘agreed upon’ include

- You can ground them, say for the rest of the evening
- You can ‘banish’ them to the room
- Take away say their electronic gadgets
- Give them a book to read – which is for their good
- Do extra homework
- Put them in the naughty corner – for time out
- No Wi-Fi
- No extra lunch money for school the following day
- Put them on ‘detention’
- ‘Demerits’ for bad behaviour and ‘merits’ for good ones.
- Let them miss out on the ‘good job’ sticker.

These are very simple measures. However, it is interesting to see how these simple forms of discipline truly impact the children and their behaviour. But you must be steady, consistent, and firm.

They know you love them, and they understand that the reaction from you is a direct response to their action.



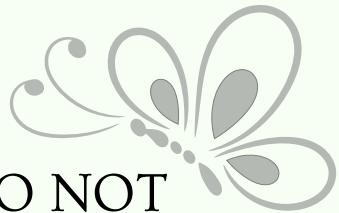
DISCIPLINE (III): DO NOT SHOUT AT YOUR CHILDREN.

Don't Shout at Your Children.

One of the things many parents do wrong, whether as a form of caution or discipline, is to shout at their children. However, this is not helpful, both to you and to your children.

Helpful tips may include the following.

- Make a firm decision beforehand that you won't shout at your children unless it is a reflex action regarding their safety.
- Decide beforehand what you'll do if you start to become angry
- When you become agitated, take a few deep breathes or walk away from the situation if necessary
- Avoid using threats
- Analyse why the child is behaving that way. You can now both negotiate your way around the conflict. For example, why is the child engaging in risky sexual activities? Why is the child rebellious? Why is the child making wrong friends and joining the wrong companions?
- Analyse the role you have to play in the conflict or the situation – whether as the cause or as the solution. And then react accordingly. That is more effective than getting yourself worked up and yelling at them.



DISCIPLINE (IV): DO NOT SPANK, NO MATTER WHAT

To spank or not to spank has generated lots of controversies over the years. To some parents, spanking can bring about short-term compliance by their children, which in turn brings about much-needed relief for the parents.

However, this method doesn't teach the child right from wrong. It only teaches the children to fear external consequences, which is not right. The children in turn become smarter by avoiding getting caught or they grow angry and more rebellious that you are hitting them. This gets worse as your children become adolescents and teenagers.

Spanking your children is modelling to them that they can resolve issues by violence. It also talks more about you as a parent that you have not developed the skill to have an engaging and more rewarding way of instructing and disciplining your children without having to resort to physical manhandling.

Besides spanking, there are many better alternatives that you must explore. Some examples have been listed above – redirection, reasoning, removing privileges, time-in, timeouts, etcetera. You will soon realise which non-punitive discipline method works best for your child or produce the most results and stick to it.

CHORES-E-ALL: ALLOCATING CHORES TO YOUR CHILDREN



Everybody wants to feel needed, including your children.

One of the ways to achieve this is by allocating chores to them; it gives them a sense of contributing to the growth of the family.

In this context, chores simply mean household tasks – the errands, or duties to perform within the household. Common examples are cleaning, cooking, sweeping, vacuuming, doing laundry, and so forth.

It is important to note that chores are partly about responsibility and partly about learning household tasks. Beyond that, it will also give you some time to relax and rest as parents when there is a division of labour among the members of the household.

Sometimes, parents don't know what kind of chores to allocate to their children, or how to go about it. However, every child in the family should be made to start doing chores, even from as early as the second year of life!

Your children are capable of doing much more than parents might think. That they don't do it doesn't mean that they can't!



HELPFUL GUIDES FOR CHILDREN & CHORES (II)

First, we will consider some pertinent guides when it comes to children and chores:

- Start early; don't delay until they are a certain age. Kids can do a lot if you tell them and guide them on how to do it.
- Don't insist on perfection. Don't go into an 'OCD fits' because they have not done their chores perfectly. Don't throw a tantrum if they don't do it perfectly. They will learn. (*OCD means obsessive-compulsive disorder).
- Don't be inconsistent. Let your children understand that they are expected to perform and complete those certain chores regularly, not occasionally, definitely not when it suits them. Don't create an impression that if they don't do it, someone else would.
- It is helpful to create a chore-chart, preferably, a colourful chart, and stick it to a place where they can see it. It will serve as a soft and constant reminder of what they need to do.
- You can also make a list of the tasks and chores the family needs to accomplish and ask each kid to pick the ones they prefer or what they like to do. With this, you can then create your chore chart.

- It may also be helpful to rotate the chores, particularly when the children are about the same age group and can perform similar chores. That way, they all have a taste of it.
- You can further split them into daily chores, weekly chores, and monthly chores, all to spice things up.
- Sometimes, it might be helpful to give incentives. Very importantly, you must be generous with praise and compliments. Appreciate them for their efforts and let them know that they are valued. Beyond that, you can also give them rewards for a job well done, it may be in form of cash, gifts, passes, and other forms of incentives. It's all about giving them a sense of belonging and appreciation.

We shall consider some age-appropriate chores for children in the pages that follow.

Below is a printable chore chart you can use for your children. You can make a list of chores for each child, and it is ticked once done.



CHORE CHART FOR _____

CHORES TO BE PERFORMED	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
e.g. TAKE THE TRASH OUT							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							



AGE-APPROPRIATE CHORES FOR KIDS & TEENS

TODDLERS AGES 2 AND 3

Toddlers can perform simple tasks. They are excited because they are good with copying what the adults and the older ones are doing.

- Dust
- Put their toys away
- Assist in making their beds
- Help a parent clean up spills and dirt
- Pick up playthings with your supervision
- Take their dirty laundry to the laundry basket
- Pile up books and magazines on shelves or tables
- Fill a pet's water and food bowls (with supervision)

PRE-SCHOOLERS AGES 4 AND 5

Pre-schoolers are trying to help; they do a lot of roleplays, and they are learning at the same time. Their coordination has increased, and they can remember an average of three steps instructions per time, and they now understand the need to follow through with such.

A chore chart may however also be a helpful prompt.

- Get dressed with minimal parental help
- Make their bed with minimal parental help

- Bring their things from the car to the house
- Set the table with supervision
- Clear the table and utensils with supervision
- Help a parent prepare food
- Help a parent carry in the lighter groceries
- Match socks in the laundry
- Sort laundry into whites and colours before wash
- Answer the phone with parental assistance
- Be responsible for a pet's food and water bowl
- Hang up towels in the bathroom
- Dust and Clean floors with a dry mop

PRIMARY SCHOOLERS

School-age children can learn more complex and more physically demanding tasks; they are also learning more complex skills, and they can take in more instructions and function with minimal supervision.

A chore chart or task list may be helpful; this may also be the time to start making them responsible if they fail to perform or to complete their tasks.

PRIMARY SCHOOLERS AGES 6 AND 7

- Make their bed every day
- Brush own teeth
- Comb hair
- Choose the day's outfit and get dressed
- Write thank-you notes with supervision
- Be responsible for a pet's food, water and exercise
- Vacuum individual rooms
- Wet mop individual rooms
- Fold laundry with supervision
- Put their laundry in their drawers and closets
- Put away dishes from the dishwasher

- Help prepare food with supervision
- Empty indoor trash cans into the kitchen trash
- Answer the phone with supervision

PRIMARY SCHOOLERS AGES 8 TO 11

- Take care of personal hygiene
- Keep bedroom clean
- Be responsible for their homework
- Be responsible for their belongings
- Write thank-you notes for gifts
- Wake up using an alarm clock
- Wash the dishes or load the dishwasher without assistance
- Wash the family car with supervision
- Prepare a few easy meals on their own
- Clean the bathroom with supervision
- Rake leaves
- Learn to use the washer and dryer
- Put all laundry away with supervision
- Take the trash can to the curb for pick up

HIGH SCHOOLERS

As children migrate to middle and high school grades, now as teenagers and adolescents, they begin to do nearly all the household chores you allocate to them if you teach them how to do it. Remember that the focus now is to prepare them for adulthood and independent life. They need these basic skills for survival.

HIGHSCHOOLERS AGES 12 AND 13

- Take care of personal hygiene, belongings and homework
- Write invitations and thank you notes
- Set their alarm clock
- Maintain personal items, such as recharging batteries

- Change bed sheets
- Keep their rooms tidy
- Help deep clean kitchen (appliances and cabinets)
- Change light bulbs
- Empty vacuum cleaner / change the bag
- Dust, vacuum, clean bathrooms and do dishes
- Clean mirrors
- Prepare an occasional family meal
- Mow the lawn with supervision

HIGHSCHOOLERS AGES 14 AND 15

- Responsible for all personal chores for ages 12 and 13
- Responsible for library cards and books
- Do assigned housework without prompting
- Do yard work as needed
- Babysit younger siblings independently (for short periods)
- Prepare food – from making a grocery list and buying the items (with supervision) to serving a meal – occasionally
- Wash windows with supervision
- Care for pets independently (including walks)

HIGHSCHOOLERS AGES 16 TO 18

- Responsible for all personal chores for ages 14 and 15
- Responsible to earn spending money
- Responsible for purchasing their clothes
- Responsible for maintaining any car they drive (e.g., petrol, oil changes, tyre pressure, etc.)
- Do housework as needed
- Do yard work as needed
- Prepare family meals – from grocery list to serving it
- Deep cleaning of household appliances, such as defrosting the freezer, as needed

POINTS TO NOTE

It is important to note that children mature at their own pace, and you cannot compare any two children because they are different, their interests, skills, and talents differ, and their natural abilities and physical strength also differ.

It is just fair to relate to each child according to their abilities. Your organisation skills as a parent will be reflected in how you guide your children with their chores.

Household responsibilities teach children important life lessons related to duty, cooperation, community and hard work. People who learn such lessons early in life are more likely to become well-adjusted adults.

Successful parents make household chores a part of the family's routine and culture. This sets children up for future success

REFLECTIONS

Draw a chore chart for each of your children.

It may be helpful to ask them to choose what they want to do and only interfere if there is an argument

You can rotate the chores among them every day or every week.

Even if you have a helper, still draw a chore chart for your kids and teens.



POSITIVE PARENTING: GIVE YOUR CHILDREN A SENSE OF SECURITY

Children who have a strong sense of security early on in life go on to perform better, while those who don't feel safe at home carry with them that same sense of insecurity wherever else they are, and they limit themselves and their abilities.

HOW TO GIVE YOUR CHILDREN A SENSE OF SECURITY

- Provide for them the basic life necessities
- Show affection toward them, prove to them by your words and actions that you love them, unconditionally.
- Appreciate them and treat your children with respect
- Acknowledge their feelings. Don't shut them up when they want to express their feelings. When they are afraid, listen to the content of their fears. When they are happy, celebrate with them. When they are in love, ask support questions.
- Apologise to them when you are wrong. "I'm sorry", 'my bad', 'I didn't realise'. These simple words can make a world of difference.
- Be approachable
- Don't let them feel alone

- Never slam the door on them, whether literally or figuratively
- Don't dump your burdens and insecurities on them
- Give them your full attention when you're with them
- Remind them that you love them unconditionally
- Keep your promises. Let them know that you are a person of your words. When you make a promise, keep it! If for some reason you are unable to do that, let that be the exception and not the norm
- Be dependable and trustworthy
- Set consistent boundaries and adjust them in consistence with their growing ages.
- Let your arms be open at any time for them to find peace and solace. Regardless of their choices, mistakes, performance, and any other life situation, let them understand that you will never push them away.
- Let your children know that they can always come home.
- Let them understand that no matter what they are going through, and no matter where they are, home is always a haven for them, a place of safety, and they can always come back home, without any reason to be afraid.

When your children feel safe at home, they can conquer anything.

REFLECTIONS

Do you think your children feel safe at home, with you? You may ask them how they feel so that you see things from their points of view.



POSITIVE PARENTING: HELP YOUR KIDS & TEENS DEVELOP THEIR SOCIAL SKILLS

As parents, it is your responsibility to help your children develop healthy social skills. Teach them how to behave in public and as well, in private. It forms part of their emotional intelligence.

The world needs more love, more kindness, more compassion and empathy, and less discrimination, less selfishness, less violence, and less hate.

We need these soft skills regardless of our differences and our choices, and you have succeeded as a parent when your children are bringing joy, and kindness, and beauty into the world by the way they live their lives.

Below is a list of some of the social skills you must teach your children to develop:

- SHARING

Teach them statements like '*there is love in sharing*', '*sharing is caring*' and '*it's more blessed to give than to receive*'. Learn them always remember to share, and to always leave something for those less privileged. Let them always see value in thinking about the other person and always be willing to help.

- GIVING FEEDBACK

Let them always think of what to give back and how they can make their communities and their world a better place.

- ACCEPTING DIFFERENCES

Train your children to learn to respect and accept other people that are different from them – in terms of skin colour, race, religion, lifestyle choices and so forth. We all cannot be the same.

- ASKING FOR HELP

Let your children understand that it is okay to ask for help when needed and not to be stranded by trying to figure it out. Nobody knows it all. And it is a blessing to receive as well.

Other soft skills include:

- Complimenting others
- Being polite
- Helping others
- Identifying others' feelings
- Respecting others' rights and property
- Seeing things from others' perspective
- Resolving conflicts
- Disagreeing respectfully
- Managing negative emotions
- Cooperating
- Making eye contact
- Listening
- Not interrupting

Well-groomed children are precious gems. The more parents work on raising kind and compassionate children, the better our world will become.



POSITIVE PARENTING: TRAIN YOUR KIDS & TEENS TO BE INDEPENDENT

As you raise your children, it is important to have the future in mind. You want your children to be able to survive on their own; thus, you must set time aside to build in them the skills and the capacity that will enable them to achieve that feat.

- Don't do things for your children that your children should do themselves.
- Let your children make age-appropriate choices
- Let your children deal with the natural consequences of their choices. Sometimes they might fail, but the point is for them to be able to manage that perceived failure and to make the best of it.
- Resist the urge to be a helicopter parent or to supervise their children so closely that they cannot make independent choices. Don't allow your children to become the centre of your universe.
- Guide your children without controlling or micromanaging them. The point is to guide and coach your children, without being controlling.

- Help your children to develop resilience and perseverance.
- Encourage them to take on manageable challenges
- Emphasise progress over perfection
- Emphasise effort over outcome.
- Let them make mistakes safely
- Focus more on contribution and less on achievement. This will prevent the unhealthy sense of competition and promote the sportsmanship spirit.
- Model for them what it means to be gritty or resilient. Talk about the challenges you face and what you're doing to overcome them. They will always remember your strength, and that will encourage them to never give up.
- Show them that you're continually taking risks and getting outside your comfort zone
- Teach your children to view challenges positively. Let the face challenges with the attitude that even though it might be hard, there is also the fun part of every challenge. And that they are also going to learn a lot through the process of overcoming these challenges. This is particularly important as they grow into adolescence.
- If possible, let them have a gap year.

REFLECTIONS

Allow their children to make their mistakes when they are still under your loving guidance and under your corrective and nurturing eyes.
It's a jungle out there, with all sorts of wild beasts!



POSITIVE PARENTING: A GAP YEAR: YAY OR NAY?

Your child has just completed his/her high school education, and you cannot wait to shove them into a higher institution of learning; you have a list of the dream universities, and in the next few years, you are the parent of a child who is a university graduate.

Congratulations.

Only one tiny detail; once they step out of the university walls, they are now already full-grown adults who will be required to get a job, start fending for themselves, and start living independently.

That is a huge jump, and the child never gets the chance to take a break between adolescence and adulthood. And sadly, once you become a fully-fledged working adult, holidays are much harder to come by.

So, should your child take a gap year?

Simply put, a gap year is when you take a year off. It is something like a sabbatical break, in this case, when you take some time away from studies to do something else that is not necessarily academically inclined.

(One can also take a gap year from work. Also, a gap year doesn't have to be a full year, it can be any time frame, such as a semester or a couple of months.)

I'm a huge advocate for taking a gap year between high school and college. There is absolutely no need to rush. Let your children take time out between completing their secondary school education and starting their university (tertiary) education.

It is not mandatory though, and it is a decision that should be acceptable to both the adolescent and the parents after weighing the pros and the cons.

Some of the benefits of taking a gap year for the adolescent:

- You prevent or recover from academic burnout, and thus you are able to perform better academically when you get back to college/university after you have taken the much-needed rest.
- You can also explore the world and have the time of your life
- It gives you time and the opportunity to pursue other passions; you can learn new skills and develop new hobbies at your own pace and away from the pressures of the academic environment
- It gives you time to reflect; you are able to find your place in the world or at least have a better idea of what you should be doing with your life.
- This can also help increase job satisfaction in the future
- It is an opportunity to cultivate lots of priceless soft skills, including cross-cultural communication, problem-solving skills, adaptability.
- It is an opportunity to learn a new language, meet new people, do new things.
- You, very importantly, become more financially aware and understand the value of money
- It can also give your CV a more impressive look when you mention the activities you embark on during your gap year
- The life experience during your gap year can make you better prepared for university, and life outside the four walls of the college.

- It gives you the opportunity to work and make some money

Some disadvantages

- You will be a year behind, so you'll no longer be on the same educational timeline, and you might miss out on graduating together with them
- You risk losing your academic momentum.
- You risk wasting a lot of valuable time and having unnecessary delays

Overall, having a gap year is quite rewarding; it can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but it can also be quite expensive, because of travelling, vacationing, learning new things and so forth. But I believe that it is worth it.

I will recommend that parents should consider giving their kids the opportunity for a gap year after high school and plan ahead with the child towards making the most of that time doing what will be the most beneficial for the young person.



NOTE TO PARENTS: TAKE CARE OF YOURSELVES!

Every parent must endeavour to manage themselves effectively.

You need to take practical steps towards your physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. A happy, healthy, and content parent is what your children need for their own wellbeing as well.

1. START WITH SELF CARE

- Practice self-care.
- Look after yourself by getting enough sleep which translates to eight hours a day, eating a healthy balanced diet, and do more exercising.
- Build community and relationships. Don't be an island.
- Create time for relaxation and recreation.
- Remove any negative coping mechanisms like excessive alcohol consumption or stress eating.
- Reduce your stress level. Understand what causes you stress and how to not let it consume you.
- Practices like meditations, breathing exercises, and gratitude.
- Invest in your look and wardrobe.
- Take good care of yourself.

2. KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

This is quite important, and those numbers become more relevant the older you get.

- Know your waist circumference.
- Your blood pressure.
- Your blood sugar level.
- Your cholesterol levels.
- Your body mass index (BMI) and abdominal circumference.
- Your haemoglobin/packed cells level. and so forth.

Those numbers can save your life in the literal sense of it. Do your regular checks, very importantly.

3.DO THE SCREENS

Screenings are medical tests that are used to check for diseases and health conditions before they manifest as signs or symptoms. There are lots of screening tools that you can participate in for your health promotion and disease prevention. These include:

- Cervical cancer – do your cervical screens e.g., pap smear, HPV screening
- Breast cancer – breast self-examination for check for lumps, genetic testing for genetic changes e.g., BRCA and TP53, HER testing
- Diabetes. Check your blood sugars level routinely
- High blood pressure. Monitor your blood pressure
- High cholesterol. Do your cholesterol levels
- Overweight and obesity. Check your BMI
- Colorectal cancer. Do colonoscopy and check blood in stool when older than 50years
- Prostate cancer in men. Do prostate-specific antigen (PSA) or digital rectal examination (DRE performed by health workers)
- Screen for depression
- Osteoporosis.

4. INVEST IN A SOCIAL NETWORK

Adult life can be quite demanding sometimes, and you are trapped in a predictable motion between work and home and parenting and other hectic activities. That is not good for your health.

- Make friends (and maintain those friendships)
- Engage in small talk. You don't have to be serious all the time. See what you have in common with every person, keep the conversation going by talking more about that interest.
- Reach out. Set yourself a goal of contacting one or two friends each week, show them you care and value your relationship, and plan to do something fun together or just a catch-up for a coffee. We lose friendships when we don't keep in regular contact.
- Call for help when needed. Don't be shy to be vulnerable or ask for the certain help you need. We all need someone to lean on.

5. HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SPOUSE

If you are in a marriage, it goes without saying to have a good relationship with your spouse. Marriage and parenting are two different ballgames, However, they should both be given the seriousness they need. Furthermore, a healthy relationship with the couple will be for the benefit of the children both in the short term and in the long run. Sadly, lots of families are getting fragmented these days because of the high prevalence of divorce, separation, domestic violence, and other marital crises. Having a good relationship with your spouse is a blessing as it models positivity to your children.

6. MEET NEW PEOPLE

It is good practice to get out and meet new people, particularly people from your community, people you see frequently. Start up a conversation with them, even if it's just someone who says hello and asks how your day is, or you are the first to break the ice.

You don't have to be close friends withal the new people you meet; besides, not everyone needs close friendships. However, by meeting new people, you will build plenty of low-key friendships and acquaintances. These types of relationships can make all the difference to improve your social wellness.

7. FIND A COMMUNITY GROUP

It is always good to be a part of a community. Don't be an island. Engage. Join a community.

It might be a neighbourhood community, or religious group, or an interest group, school group, a sports group, volunteering group, gym community, book club, coffee group, and so forth. But find a group and join it. It is one of the easiest ways to meet new people.

If unsure of what group to join, find something you are interested in, so you'll have that in common with your new group. Then actively search for the group or individuals in that group that value what you like. You may not be close friends, but at least you will have lots of acquaintances.

8. WORK ON YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

We all need to improve our communication skills.

Good communication skills, with children, spouses, friends, and other individuals help to cement healthy relationships.

The reality is that many people struggle with communication, and these poor communication skills make it difficult to socialise and build a rapport with both the old and the new people in their lives. For some, it's how they were born or how they were wired. For some others, it is due to a lack of confidence or practice.

If you struggle with communication, you can learn how. Take up courses that can improve help with communication skills.

9. KEEP ON WORKING ON YOUR PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND SOCIAL WELLNESS

Whatever your age or stage of life is, don't take relationships for granted. Value the friendships you have and keep developing new ones. Your physical and mental health will thank you for it and your quality of life will reflect it.

Manage your stress effectively. Stress is a fact of life, but that it should never become a way of life. It is vital for parents to manage their stress effectively.

Stress affects you, but it affects your children as well!

REFLECTIONS

- *Make a list of local community groups that you might be interested in.
- *If unsure, you can check your local directory sites. You can easily find them online
- *Sign up for a class on communication skills or you can check sites like YouTube for free tutorials
- *CONSULT your healthcare workers to recommend which health screenings might be beneficial to you.
- *Make it a point of duty to call at least three of your 'friends' every single week
- *Make a list of things you would like to discuss with them in advance. Remember that they don't have to be serious or heavy topics.



MORE HELPFUL TIPS ON POSITIVE PARENTING

It has been an amazing time learning more about parenting.

Parenting is an individual thing, and it's unlikely that someone will be able to answer all nagging parenting issues. However, I believe we have been able to cover some bases and answer a lot of questions on parenting. I have also learned so much from introspection, reading and researching for this book.

And now, as we round up this book on the crazy ride called parenting, we can spend some time focusing on some generally helpful tips to make parenting more fun and easier to handle.

- Focus more on your children's positive behaviour than negative behaviour. The more parents scold or reprimand, the more the bad behaviour gets repeated. And the more parents compliment, the more the good behaviour gets repeated.
- Teach your children the three magic words: *Thank you. I'm sorry. And Please.*
- Keep things in perspective and remember your parenting goals. Invest your time and resources towards achieving those goals.
- Communication. By keeping an open line of communication, you'll have a better relationship with your child and your child will come to you when there's a problem.

- Reflect on your own childhood. Many of us want to parent differently from our parents. This requires lots of intentionalities, otherwise, we will do just the same things our parents did, and we are likely to get the same result. Reflecting on our own childhood is a step towards understanding why we parent the way we do. That way, we can take note of the things we'd like to change and how we'd like to do things differently.
- Take a shortcut towards effective parenting by learning from others, and more importantly, by learning from experts. Parenting is one of the most researched topics. So, it is helpful to read books on parenting, attending workshops and seminars on parenting, and utilising findings in the latest psychology and neuroscience research. However, understand that these avenues for learning and scientific knowledge are not a one-size-fits-all strategy. Every child is different. Use methods that work best for your child.

Parenting is the biggest responsibility one can take up. The future of your children is in your hands, and that is a big job at hand. The journey is tough but rewarding as well.

As you see your children grow and become these amazing, caring, sensible, and responsible adults, you will feel content with yourself, and satisfied with a job well done.



30 INSPIRING QUOTES ON PARENTING

- 1.“A child seldom needs a good talking to as a good listening to.” ~ Robert Brault
- 2.“As your kids grow up, they may forget what you said, but they won't forget how you made them feel.” ~ Kevin Heath
- 3.“By loving them for more than their abilities, we show our children that they are much more than the sum of their accomplishments.” ~ Eileen Kennedy-Moore
- 4.“Childhood is a short season.” ~ Helen Hayes
- 5.“Children should have enough freedom to be themselves – once they've learned the rules.” ~ Anna Quindlen
- 6.“Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.” ~ Robert Fulghum
- 7.“Encourage and support your kids, because children are apt to live up to what you believe of them.” ~ Lady Bird Johnson
- 8.“Having a baby is a life-changer. It gives you a whole other perspective on why you wake up every day.” ~ Taylor Hanson
- 9.“Hugs can do great amounts of good – especially for children.” ~ Princess Diana
- 10.“If we don't shape our kids, they will be shaped by outside forces that don't care what shape our kids are in.” ~ Dr Louise Hart

- 11.“If you raise your children to feel that they can accomplish any goal or task they decide upon, you will have succeeded as a parent, and you will have given your children the greatest of all blessings.”
~ Brian Tracy
- 12.“It is better to bind your children to you by a feeling of respect and by gentleness than by fear.” ~ Terence
- 13.“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”
~ Frederick Douglass
- 14.“It just occurred to me that the majority of my diet is made up of the foods that my kid didn’t finish.” Carrie Underwood
- 15.“Loving a child doesn’t mean giving in to all his whims; to love him is to bring out the best in him, to teach him to love what is difficult.” ~ Nadia Boulanger
- 16.“Parenthood... it’s about guiding the next generation, and forgiving the last.” ~ Peter Krause
- 17.“Parents need to fill a child’s bucket of self-esteem so high that the rest of the world can’t poke enough holes to drain it dry.” ~ Alvin Price
- 18.“Say ‘no’ only when it really matters. Wear a bright red shirt with bright orange shorts? Sure. Put water in the toy tea set? Okay. Sleep with your head at the foot of the bed? Fine.” ~ Gretchen Rubin
- 19.“Success for me is to raise happy, healthy human beings. ~ Kelly LeBrock
- 20.“The best way to advise your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.” ~ Harry S. Truman
- 21.“The most important thing that parents can teach their children is how to get along without them.” ~ Frank A. Clark
- 22.“The quickest way for a parent to get a child’s attention is to sit down and look comfortable.” ~ Lane Olinghouse
- 23.“The thing about parenting rules is there aren’t any. That’s what makes it so difficult.” ~ Ewan McGregor

- 24.“The well-being and welfare of children should always be our focus.” ~ Todd Tiahrt
- 25.“There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots, the other, wings.” ~ Hodding Carter
- 26.“There really are places in the heart you don't even know exist until you love a child.” ~ Anne Lamott
- 27.“There's no way to be a perfect mother and a million ways to be a good one.” ~ Jill Churchill
- 28.“We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future.” Franklin D. Roosevelt
- 29.“You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.” ~ Franklin P. Adams
- 30.“Your kids require you most of all to love them for who they are, not to spend your whole time trying to correct them.” ~Bill Ayers

REFLECTIONS

Which ones of these quotes resonate the most with you?



15 POPULAR BIBLE VERSES ON PARENTING

- 1. 3John 1:4: “I could have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth.”
- 2. Colossians 3:21: “Fathers, do not aggravate your children, or they will become discouraged.”
- 3. Deuteronomy 6:6-7: “And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.”
- 4. Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.”
- 5. Isaiah 54:13: “I [the Lord] will teach all your children, and they will enjoy great peace.”
- 6. Luke 1:17: “He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.”
- 7. Proverbs 1:8-9: “My child, listen when your father corrects you. Don’t neglect your mother’s instruction. What you learn from them will crown you with grace and be a chain of honour around your neck.”

- 8.Proverbs 13:24 “Those who spare the rod of discipline hate their children. Those who love their children care enough to discipline them.”
- 9.Proverbs 17:6: “Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged; parents are the pride of their children.”
- 10.Proverbs 22:15: A youngster’s heart is filled with foolishness, but physical discipline will drive it far away.”
- 11.Proverbs 22:6: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.”
- 11.Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (ESV)
- 12.Proverbs 29:15 “To discipline a child produces wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by an undisciplined child.”
- 13.Proverbs 29:17: “Discipline your children, and they will give you peace of mind and will make your heart glad.”
- 14.Psalm 127:3: “Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.”
- 15.Psalm 127:4-5: “Children born to a young man are like arrows in a warrior’s hands. How joyful is the man whose quiver is full of them! He will not be put to shame when he confronts his accusers at the city gates.”

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REFLECTIONS

Which ones of these verses resonate the most with you?

parenting: the crazy ride



Many words have been used to describe parenting.

Parenting is a cocktail of love, joy, excitement, frustration, anger, elation, exhaustion, chaos, pain, humiliation, heartache, angst, anxiety, and lots more. And no, you don't get to pick and choose!

Your children grow every day; the days are long, and the years pass by rapidly. They are born one day, and after a few blinks, they are off to college! You are also on a constant move, trying to strike a balance between managing your life and parenting your children.

That is where "Parenting: The Crazy Ride!" comes in! It is a book on parenting, one that accompanies you through every point of your parenting journey – from cradle to adulthood – acting as a guide, an encouragement, a motivation, and a quick reference.

From one parent to another, I hope the content of this book will provide answers that you have always hoped for.

I wish you the very best in your journey as a parent, and blessings over your children!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kemi Owonibi is a mum, doctor, writer, and author.

She writes inspirational contemporary romance fiction, including the intriguing "Being Mrs Stevens", "After Lights Out", "Beyond the Winding Path", and "A New Day".

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