

Parenting Children

Being a parent is one of the best, worst, funniest, saddest, easiest, hardest, and most boring yet most interesting roles you will ever have. You have an enormous amount of influence and it generally comes with little or no formal training. The good news is that if you are finding the going tough, there is probably plenty you can do differently.

It may be helpful to keep the following points in mind:

- Look after yourself. If you are not able to look after yourself with rest, nutrition, enjoyable activities and rewarding relationships you will not be able to offer the best of yourself to your children.
- Be a good role model. Your children will take much more notice of what you do than what you tell them to do.
- Make sure you know your child. Know what activities they like, what food they like, what their hobbies are and provide lots of opportunities for them to enjoy these activities with you.
- Spend time with your children. Children learn about themselves through their relationships with other people, particularly their parents. It is important that they explore, relax, challenge themselves and have fun with their parents.
- Be clear with your children about what you expect of them. Clearly spell out which behaviours are acceptable and which behaviours are unacceptable.
- Notice, comment on and praise your child for good behaviour. This is just as important as providing a negative consequences for disrespectful behaviour.
- If your children are behaving badly try to understand what they are trying to achieve through their behaviour. Teach them how to ask for what they want in ways other than behaving badly. You turn bad behaviour into a learning opportunity when you provide a clear non violent consequence and discuss with your child what they could have done differently.
- Be comfortable with saying no when you need to, and stick to it.
- Know what stresses and upsets your child. Talk with them about their worries and help them to problem solve what can be changed and accept what can't be changed.

- Remember that as the adult you need to be in charge. You need to set the limits and to stick to them. Never use violence, threats, put downs or intimidation to achieve this.
- Stay connected to other parents. Parenting is a tough and confusing job. Share your frustrations, wisdom and ideas with your friends. This job is too important to try to go it alone.

Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor. You can find more information about Life Supports services by visiting www.lifesupports.com.au.