

ADDRESSING REAL ISSUES FACING FAMILIES TODAY CAN PROVE TO BE A PROBLEM, HOWEVER A FEW TOP TIPS CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Raising a child can be one of the hardest, most responsible and satisfying tasks a human being can face. It is also the job for which people receive the least formal training. Most parents wish their children to grow up into well-rounded, confident and happy individuals, who are able to make their own decisions and go on to become responsible and successful citizens in society.

But does it always happen that way?

Mark Shields Explains



Each person's knowledge of how to bring up a child usually comes from their surroundings and their own upbringing. This may result in patterns from the parent's own social experiences being repeated and passed on to their children.

"Children should be encouraged to value themselves for who they are as people rather than what they own." Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury..

A poll carried out by the BBC in 2008 found that:

90% agree children are now more materialistic

69% agree violent video games make children more aggressive

90% believe Christmas advertising puts pressure on parents to spend more than they can afford

60% believe there should be a government ban on junk food advertising

BALANCE OF WORK AND FAMILY

If you're feeling overworked and finding it more challenging than ever to juggle the demands of your job and the rest of your life, then you are not alone. A large number of people are finding it difficult to achieve balance in their lives because of the pressure of impending cutbacks or redundancies where they work. The fear of being next in line for the "chop" results in them working more hours to keep their boss happy. The key is to focus your time and attention on the things you can control.

You are not the only one dealing with challenges in your day. Look through your child's eyes from time to time and make time for your children too as actions do speak louder than words.

FIVE WAYS TO REBALANCE YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. Build downtime into your schedule
2. Drop activities that sap your time or energy.
3. Rethink your errands.
4. Exercise.
5. Remember that a little relaxation goes a long way.

'BUSY'NESS

Experts are just beginning to study the effects of involvement in extracurricular activities on children. In the past 20 years there has been a decline of up to 12 hours per week in children's free time, specifically outdoor activities and playing. In the same time frame,

there has been an increase in structured sports time and a five-fold increase in watching television (more than three hours per day). On the other hand some parents sign their children up for too many after school activities and try to "keep up" with their peers which can equally impact upon the parents stress levels and time constraints.

Consider these tips to balance scheduled activities and family time:

- Set family nights on your calendar. No one can schedule anything on family night. Make a special meal, play a game, tell stories, anything to create cohesiveness among family members.
- Resolve to eat dinner together at least three to five times a week.
- Schedule leisure time. Give children the opportunity to play, create and imagine.

Here are some guidelines regarding how much a child can handle:

- 3 to 5 years old: One or two activities per school term.
- 6 to 8 years old: Two or three activities per school term.
- 9 to 12 years old: Three to four activities per school term.

FINANCIAL PRESSURES

When families with young children encounter financial adversity, those children are more likely to suffer from depression as teenagers. If you give off negative vibes about your job or your financial situation, then your children may take away the message that hard work does not pay off which can lead them to slack off with their studies at school.

HOW TO DISCUSS FINANCES WITH YOUR CHILDREN

- Honesty (within reason) is the best policy, but do not share your fears.
- Explain the situation on a 'need to know basis'. Be heard – but not overheard!
- Be consistent; emphasise familiarity, continue with the comfort of simple routines.
- Distinguish what you want from what you need.

LACK OF DISCIPLINE

Parents who struggle with a lack of discipline do not intentionally set out to spoil their children; more often it is that they are too tired to teach their children how to behave well.. Sadly, there are many parents who don't understand the consequences of the lack of discipline until it is too late. Discipline is needed to raise balanced, healthy individuals.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT

A lack of discipline can lead to a lack of healthy conflict. If a child never has reason to disagree with her parents because all they ever do is praise the things she does right, then she fails to gain

an understanding of righteous anger. She does not learn that if she misbehaves there will be bad consequences; instead she is only ever shown good consequences.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION

Lack of communication leads to misunderstandings and unhealthy relationships, and can make one feel lonely and isolated. According to psychologists, such people tend to withdraw from social activities and are often emotionally vulnerable. Lack of effective communication can affect your relationships with your family members, friends as well as at your work place.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Ask about their school, friends, and studies. Take interest in their sports or art activities. You may find when asking what your child did today the response is "Can't remember or don't know", do not be put off by this and continue to discuss perhaps what you did that day. Shower them with your love, attention and time. It will make them emotionally secure.

DIVORCE

Divorce may increase the risk that children will suffer from psychological and behavioral problems. Troubled children are particularly likely to develop problems with anger, disobedience, and rule violations. School achievement also may suffer. They may become depressed, anxious, or become perhaps overly responsible children who end up caring for their parents instead of getting cared for by them.

HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH SEPARATION AND LOSS

- Let them know what is happening as soon as the loss, separation, or change seems definite. The child's feelings and concerns should take precedence over almost everything else.
- Allow them the time to ask questions and answer as honestly as possible.
- Reassure them that their feelings and subsequent reactions to separation and loss are normal.

If you are finding your children's behaviour a challenge or it is becoming increasingly difficult to communicate with them, you may find a Life Coach can help you find a solution in order to restore calm back into your home and family life.

If you would like to discuss any issues raised in the article or would like to book a free consultation contact Lorraine Hocquard at the Life Practice Jersey

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