



What Parents Need to Know About

POSITIVE PARENTING



EXCELLENCE
IN ORTHODONTICS

Famous psychiatrist Carl Jung once said, “If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.” He was pointing out that parents often have issues with behaviors that their children have, yet parents may be doing things to bring about that behavior or they may be repeating parenting style patterns they learned from their own parents. If a cycle is being repeated and it’s not based on positive parenting, it may be a good time to consider the benefits of taking a more optimistic approach.

If you spend any time on social media, you are bound to have come across people posting things such as they were raised by parents who spanked them, yet they turned out just fine. Well, that may be so, but there’s a host of research that backs up the fact that taking a more positive approach to parenting provides a wide variety of benefits. Because of this, there has been a movement to try and get more people to focus on positive parenting. It tends to go along with the old saying that you can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar.



The Focus

Positive parenting is a style that has become increasingly popular among parents and child care centers alike. It's something that parents with kids of all ages can use, from infancy through the teen years. Positive parenting is just what it sounds like: it's taking a more positive and optimistic approach to raising kids. Positive parenting focuses on helping kids feel loved, safe, and nurtured, but at the same time it teaches them right from wrong and how to make their way successfully through life.

Most parents who hear the words discipline and punishment tend to think they are one and the same, yet psychologists offer a different explanation. According to the University of Minnesota, discipline is the process of teaching kids the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, while punishment merely has a goal of inhibiting the unacceptable behavior. They report that discipline should be a positive force that focuses on what kids are allowed to do, while punishment tends to have a more negative focus, such as spanking, isolation, or a withdrawal of privileges.

Both of the approaches let kids know that the behavior is unwanted, but taking the discipline route instead tends to be more effective when it comes to teaching them *why* you don't want the behavior and showing them acceptable alternatives. Punishment brings about a harshness that lets them know they are doing something wrong, but it doesn't focus on giving them a healthy alternative or letting them know why it's wrong to do. In the long run, most experts tend to agree that taking a more positive approach to parenting creates more desirable outcomes.

Getting a Divorce?

According to the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, half of all marriages end in divorce today, and many of those families have children. They report that children in divorce situations may be afraid, confused, not feel safe, and be emotionally hurt by the divorce.

Divorce is also a time when parenting may be affected, as parents are stressed and focusing on the marital issues. They advise that parents be open in discussing the issue with their kids so they understand what is going on, that it's not their fault, and that they are still safe and loved. Try to be positive in letting them know that they are still loved, safe, and will be involved with *both* of their parents.

During a divorce it's even more important for a parent to try focusing on positive parenting in order to lessen the stress of the situation.

Why Go Positive

Most adults know that being positive in life is associated with more happiness, more confidence, and a host of other benefits. But they don't always see how taking that same approach to their parenting style can be beneficial. The good news is that moving toward a more positive parenting style can bring about great changes in kids and help them develop in a healthy way that has lifelong benefits. Positive parenting is believed to help grow kids who are more peaceful, are more confident, have fewer behavioral issues, are less aggressive, and who have a better relationship with their parents. Plus, kids end up happier, are more empathetic, and are usually less stressed when their parents take a positive approach to raising them.

Although many parents today were part of a generation that believed in spanking, there has been growing concern among psychologists regarding whether or not

it's actually a good practice. According to the American Psychological Association, a growing body of research has shown that spanking and other such physical forms of punishment can pose serious risks to children. They report that physical punishment that causes pain, including spanking or hitting, can lead to increased aggression, antisocial behavior, physical injury, and mental health problems.

On the other end, being a positive parent and taking an optimistic route to parenting means that you are being clearer, more thought out, and are using a more skillful approach to teaching kids right from wrong. The mission is to teach them what is acceptable behavior, not to make them feel pain or feel bad about themselves. A positive parenting approach not only tends to have better outcomes, but it strengthens relationships and helps kids develop a healthy self-image.



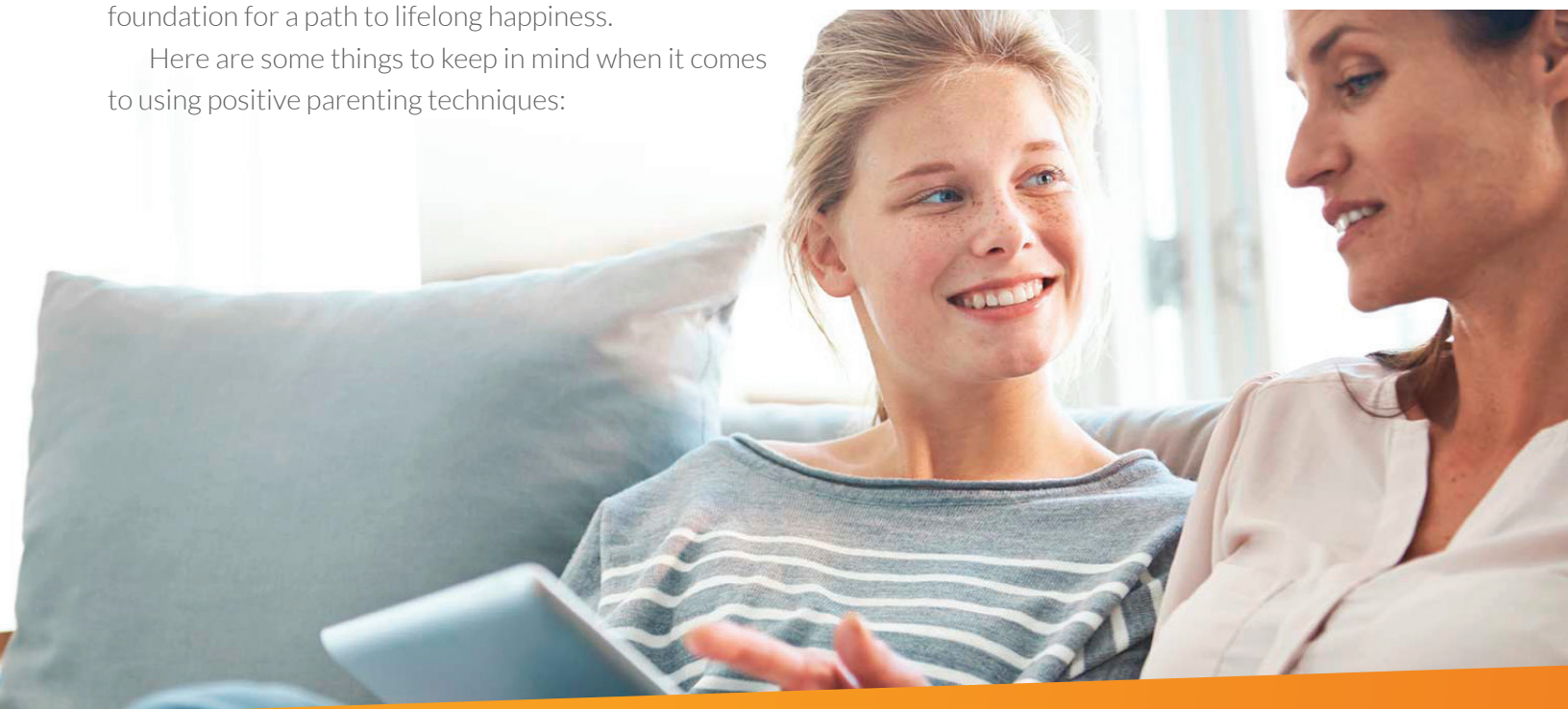
Positive Examples

It's easy for parents to hear about the benefits of positive parenting, but the reality of it is that it may leave many of them wondering how on earth it's done. After all, it's pretty difficult to be positive if your teen comes in past curfew, talks back to you, or blows off their homework and brings home unacceptable grades. Your first reaction may be a negative response. Perhaps it involves yelling, grounding them, and taking away their prized possessions. But there's a good chance that once you try that approach you will see that it doesn't really work to bring about the desired behavioral changes you are seeking, and it can be damaging to your relationship. Both of you may walk away feeling bad about yourself and the tension between you.

Taking a positive approach to parenting will still address the issues. Kids don't get a pass on their behavior just because you are using positive parenting. Quite the contrary. Positive parenting is going to hold them accountable, but it's an approach that is going to be more honest and optimistic and will break the cycle of negative reactions. This parenting style is positive, yet firm, so that kids learn right from wrong and at the same time you create a strong emotional connection that lays the foundation for a path to lifelong happiness.

Here are some things to keep in mind when it comes to using positive parenting techniques:

- **Catch them doing good more often.** It's easy for parents to pick out the mistakes kids make, but they don't always catch them doing good and offer feedback on it. When kids get praise for good behavior, they are more likely to want to exhibit more of it. Give them praise when there is a genuine reason to do so.
- **Avoid being overly critical.** Even if they have brought home a grade in math that you feel is below their potential, rather than being overly critical and criticizing them, let them know you are happy for the effort they made, but you really believe that if they apply themselves a little more that they are capable of doing even better.
- **Help your child develop a healthy self-image.** This will go a long way in helping them be more confident, avoid bullying, be more willing to try new things, and be socially engaged.
- **Try to avoid overreacting.** It's easy to overreact to situations, but it tends to distract attention from the real matter. In parenting, it is important to pick your battles so you don't end up having a disagree-



ment with your kids about everything. Some things are simply not worth having a battle over, such as what they are wearing if it is not completely inappropriate.

- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Try letting your child tell their side of the story before jumping to conclusions and taking the negative route. Perhaps they have a good reason for why they were late for their curfew, why one of their chores didn't get done, or why they may have not done so well on a test. Respectfully give them a chance to tell their side as you hear them out.
- **The punishment should always fit the crime.** There are times when a teen may need a consequence for their actions, but there are also times when there are natural consequences that should be enough. For example, if they don't study for a test and get a poor grade, then that is their natural consequence, and they will have to deal with the fallout that comes from that. On the other hand, if they blow off curfew and come in late for no good reason, then perhaps they have to come in two hours earlier the next time, or they have to miss going out for a week.
- **Be clear about goals and expected behavior** with kids so they know what is acceptable and desired. Be honest and direct and help guide them in the right direction when making decisions, but try to let them ultimately make some decisions on their own. This will help them feel good about their choices and will build confidence and help with developing a healthy self-image.
- As difficult as it may be for some parents, it is important to **try to respect a teen's privacy** to a certain extent, and to **let them know their opinions are respected**. Even if you may not agree with them, you still respect the right for them to have and express them.

- When kids do something that parents don't approve of, it's important to **separate the child from the behavior** so that they understand it's the *behavior* you don't like, rather than them. Use statements that express that you didn't care for their choices or behavior, rather than making statements that lead them to feel like they are a bad person. They need to understand that they can be a good person and still make some poor choices.
- **Become someone who forgives people for the mistakes they make.** Many people hold onto mistakes that others make—or even ones they make themselves—and then use them as fuel every time they get upset. Everyone makes mistakes at some point. Forgive people for their mistakes, give second chances, and move on with a smile. That's what helps everyone feel better and be able to learn from what led to the mistake in the first place.
- If there are behaviors that need to be changed, **work with your child to set goals to help make it happen**. By discussing it and setting concrete goals, you will both have something to measure the changes by to see if progress has been made. They will also feel good and build confidence by being a part of setting those goals and then working to achieve them.

Parenting styles play a big role in the development of a child's self-image. How kids are talked to, especially when parents are angry or upset with them, is going to help lay the foundation for how they see themselves in the world. Kids who are confident and have a healthy self-image are usually going to do better in school, be more social, experience less bullying, and will have the confidence that it takes to successfully make their way through life. Kids of all ages, including teenagers, are sensitive, and even teasing them at times can damage their psyche and lead to lower self-esteem.

Making the Switch

If you have been practicing positive parenting up to this point, you can feel good knowing that your style is leading to a beneficial outcome. If you think there are some changes you can make in order to become a more optimistic parent, that's a good thing. It's never too late to make the switch. Make the decision to become more optimistic and focus on the positives more than the negatives. For some people it may seem like a challenge at first, but it can certainly be done.

There are plenty of ways that parents can become more positive, which will in turn help them become more optimistic in their parenting style. Keeping a gratitude journal, making a point to pick out the positives each day, getting plenty of exercise, and even doing things such as daily meditation practices can help. The benefits will help people become calmer, less stressed, and keep their mental health sharp. Many people have negative messages they play over and over in their head. By ditching

those, they can replace them with positive ones, which will keep their mind focused on more optimistic things.

Having a positive outlook doesn't mean that you never get upset or that you never experience negative emotions. But it does mean that you know how to deal with them in a calm manner and are able to bounce back quickly when you do experience them.

Parents set an important example for their kids in how to behave if they don't care for someone's behavior. They are always watching and learning. Parents can set a positive example by being someone who is resilient, which means that they bounce back quickly when there are difficult situations or issues that make them upset. Optimistic parents who engage in positive parenting tend to raise kids who grow up to be more resilient and positive, too, which is always a good thing.



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