

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS



JULY 2014

Purposeful Parenting: Be Their Inspiration and Motivation

"Relationships are built on mutual appreciation, and there is no better way to show that appreciation than to tell someone how much you care." – David Niven, Ph.D.

July is National Purposeful Parenting Month, which strives to build strong, positive and healthy relationships with your children. One of many goals is to emphasize healthy communication skills and support their growing independence.

Purposeful parenting can occur by modeling the behaviors we want our children to learn. Research varies on whether modeling alone is sufficient however, there is mounting evidence that suggests that positive parenting practices, such as monitoring your children's activities, encouraging open communication, helping your children develop goals and planning how to meet them can be helpful to counteract negative influences. In addition, taking the time to provide consistency, structure, accountability, along with unconditional love, support and understanding can increase the likelihood that your children will make healthy decisions.

At times, it can be very challenging to put aside other responsibilities.

However, these moments can open up a lifetime of communication. These are the moments when you are letting your children know through your actions and words that they come first, despite the many other things that need to be done. Try to remember that load of laundry or other responsibilities will still be there in 15-20 minutes, however, your child's desire to openly communicate what is taking place in their world may not be.

Regular communication at an early age can help make communication easier as your children become older. Children are more likely to open up about issues they are facing, such as peer pressure or dating, when they feel like they are being heard and understood. Studies have shown that parents, who work hard to have positive relationships with their children, are more likely to have children who have a higher self-esteem and less likely to suffer from depression.

As a parent, one of your goals is to be your child's biggest supporter. The reality is that children learn some things by seeing what is around them and by being taught the differences between right and wrong. However, children must also be given the opportunity to learn firsthand, to make mistakes and learn from the

consequences. No matter how good an example you set and what values you teach your children, they will make mistakes. It's all about being engaged in your child's life and making a positive impact on their everyday experiences.

One of the great responsibilities you have as a parent — and one of the greatest gifts you can give to your children — is to teach them to develop their gifts fully and to build their lives around whatever it is that fulfills them.

To celebrate Purposeful Parenting Month, parents can do a variety of simple and easy things to create a more positive and loving home life.

- Tell your children you love them, and do it often.
- Celebrate the uniqueness of your family and all family members.
- Create a safe environment for the entire family.
- Grab every opportunity to spend unstructured time together.
- Plan fun family activities. Turn off the TV.
- Establish your own family traditions.

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