

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

Are the alarm bells ringing?

Parents need to remember that it is important to go with their gut instinct, particularly when the alarm bells ring.

Sometimes we can think too much about our parenting!

We can obsess, ponder, ruminate and just plain worry about things so much that what was once a molehill suddenly becomes a mountain of gigantic proportions.

Parenting is one of those activities we can think a little too hard about, at the expense of our gut instinct.

This may sound strange coming from someone who spends his working time advising and educating parents, but we can think a little too hard about getting parenting right.

But we can't ignore our gut instincts, which can guide us to what our kids need.

Recently I was talking with a mother who was concerned that some teasing her daughter was receiving at school had gone too far. She wasn't sure whether to let it go or intervene and make the child's teacher aware of the situation. **She didn't want to be the 'overprotective mum'.**

I am all for standing back and letting kids fight their own battles but if kids can't cope then it's time as a compassionate, caring adult to intervene.

My response to this worried mum was quite simply, "What is your gut reaction? What does your instinct tell you to do?"

Mum knew her daughter well and felt that the situation was 'just not right.' Trusting her instinct she decided to tactfully, but forcefully intervene in the best interests of her child.

In this case, the alarm bells were ringing and fortunately mum was listening.

Sometimes the alarm bells ring but there is no one listening. This can happen for many reasons including, busyness of our own lives; focusing on one child that needs assistance; or simply because kids become expert at keeping things to their chests.

Here are five times when gut instinct can be a great parenting guide:

1. When kids want more **independence** but you are unsure whether to give it ("my instinct tells me that you are not ready to do that safely").
2. When kids mess with the **truth** (you know when they are telling mistruths).
3. When kids act **out of character** and you think "something is up."
4. When kids are trying to **manipulate** you or a situation ("hang on, that doesn't feel right").
5. When kids suddenly **treat you poorly** ("this is so unusual for him/her").

Working with thousands of parents over the years I have learned that we need to ponder what is best for kids. Well-considered strategies are important.

But there are also many times when we need to go with our gut feel, particularly when we hear the alarm bells ringing.

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