

INSIGHTS

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Enjoy being a parent

Bringing up children is hard work. Here's how to enjoy the journey.



Raising kids is supposed to enrich our lives, yet parents are frequently outscored by singles and childless couples on many well-being and happiness scales.

Perhaps it's a case of the rewards of parenting being long-term, rather than in the present.

Those bundles of joy that you bring into the world come with some significant challenges as well. Genetic lottery plays a part. Some kids are easier to like and get along with than others. Most kids will push their parents' buttons to some degree. However, some kids delight in annoying their parents more than others.

Most parents have terrific long-term goals for kids, such as making a contribution to the community and being successful in future work and relationships. We also want our kids to like us when they grow up.

But we want peace at home, which means we want our kids to get on with each other more and argue less. We also want our kids to do as we say the first time and to help around the house without accompanying sulks or tantrums that so often greet a reasonable request. This type of cooperation makes parenting enjoyable rather than just tolerable.

Here are some tips for achieving harmony and enjoying your role as a parent:

1. Improve your parenting skills

Getting cooperation from kids isn't as hard as most parents think. Firmness, good communication techniques and a determination not to be a martyr are the keys. Consider attending a parenting course, reading some books or working alongside a trusted friend to improve your child-management skills.

2. Check your expectations

Most parents are focused on raising happy kids and will do so at the expense of themselves. I support this view in the short-term, but putting kids first at your own expense is not a great long-term strategy for raising kids.

If you want your kids to be happy and to thrive then you come first. You need to get some joy, if for no other reason than that your state of mind rubs off on your kids.

3. Maintain your own interests

Most parents will agree that time away from kids helps them enjoy being with their kids. However, parents are hardwired to put kid's interests before their own. There's nothing wrong with that, but we do need to maintain some interests or hobbies of our own. It's amazing how you can put up with more mundane parenting moments when you have something to look forward to!

4. Build regular down-time into family life

When I ask parents how they are faring, I usually get one response. "I'm busy." It seems we try to fit so much into our days that there isn't a lot of fun to be had in parenting. Fun, rest, relaxation and flow have been squeezed out of our lives in the pursuit of more. When you strip fun and enjoyment from any activity then anxiety always increases.

Don't be a family that's always on the go. Make sure you have some down-time so family members can relax and have the chance to connect. And don't be afraid that your kids may become bored. Boredom gives kids opportunities to keep themselves occupied.

5. Have some fun with your kids

One way to increase parental enjoyment is to inject a little fun and levity into your parenting. If that means more time playing with your kids, just for fun, then so be it. Spend time doing more of what you enjoy with your kids and parenting satisfaction levels will improve.

Okay, so the house may end up messier than you'd like, and the garden unkempt but you may just end up with a smile of your face, and happier kids as well.

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