Helpful Tips for Parenting Success

Even under the best of circumstances, parenting is tough!! Especially where you might have negative role models or no role models, it’s a hard gig to do alone. Here is your first newborn, and you are floundering, just trying to keep your head above water and figure this “thing” out.

After 43 years of clinical practice working with children, teens, and their parents, after successfully launching my own two children into their adult worlds, and after receiving the blessings and gifts back from them of six grandchildren…after all of this, I have a few helpful tips for parenting success:

1. Always start where your child is.
2. Allow at least 5-10 minutes of transition both at the beginning and end of changing circumstances.
3. Earn respect with active listening, healthy boundaries and direction.
4. It’s not only about the outcome. Sometimes the process is key.
5. Building character and developing a growth rhythm sets the tone.
6. Be aware of developmental stage influence.
7. Be aware of school and social influence.
8. Start with your child’s strengths and help them use what works to impact their weaknesses.
9. Re-frame failures to be also blessings in disguise.
10. Draw on and draw in other resources in your children’s lives.

These helpful hints are offered to give you guidance both on a daily basis, as well as in hard times. The goal of each is to be in the moment with your child. Focus on your relationship with him. Filter out all the noise. These helpful hints apply both when your child is showing an emotional fever, and also when you are just hanging out together and you sense a teachable moment coming your way.

One of the epic phrases and door-openers I’ve developed over the years is this,

“Gosh, son. This isn’t like you. What else is going on?”

It’s an elegant phrase that provides a stop sign for current activities, bringing both you and your child back to the mindful present. It also affirms your child’s positive qualities, against the backdrop of what he’s just gotten himself into. And it acknowledges that there is more here than meets the eye. Life is complicated, and he’s stuck in it right now.

If, per chance, your child gives you a blank stare, or shuts down for being asked a meaningful question, take this “essay question” and make it “multiple choice.” If you get, “I dunno,” or, “Leave me alone,” you know him and his circumstances well enough to offer several options, as to what might be bothering him. With multiple choice options, he is likely to give you something you can further explore with active listening. With your awareness of these helpful hints, teachable moments can abound.