

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



Give your parenting a spring clean

With spring in the air there is no better time for a little parenting spring clean to make sure you are on track to raise happy, confident and resilient kids.

Every parent I know wants to be the best parent they can be. Yet despite the best intentions it's easy to develop poor parenting habits that don't do our kids any favours.

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Here is a checklist of **10 parenting ideas** designed to help you put some **psychological muscle** on your kids:

1. Encourage effort and improvement more than results:

Descriptive praise is better than generalities. Better still, as kids get older focus your comments more on effort, improvement and contribution than on results. And don't make your kids reliant on what you think about them as their source of self-esteem.

2. Get kids to help without being paid: A little payment for jobs is okay, but don't go overboard. Teach kids what's in it for **'we'** not **'me'**. By the way, the use of rosters is a great way to get kids to help.

3. Balance free time with organised time: For learning reasons (*kids learn a lot when play and activities are self-directed*) and mental health reasons make sure kids have plenty of **MOOCH** time.

4. NO deals with kids: If you bribe kids to behave well you teach them that they get what they negotiate. That's hard work in family life. Better to give them a treat after they've behaved well as a show of appreciation rather than make their good behaviour contingent on a reward, also known as bribery.

5. Train your kids to speak for themselves: Give your kids the words they need to speak for themselves in all situations including when they are not with you.

6. When kids can, they do (make lunches, get themselves up, etc): Sometimes we do things for kids that make us feel like a mum or a dad. Your job is to make yourself redundant as a parent so teach your kids to do/make/speak for themselves and work your way out of a job. **NB:** *You will never become redundant as a mum or a dad.*

7. Don't give them things just because they ask: Character is built through impulse control. Resist giving them what they want even if you have the capacity to do so. **Waiting, saving** and **goal-setting** are admirable skills that are developed through scarcity.

8. Give kids a chance to sort out their fights and squabbles: The default mechanism for most sibling conflict is compromise. We've just got to give kids a chance to work things out themselves. There are legitimate times to get involved but we need to know what we are doing and why.

9. Use consequences to develop responsibility: Don't rescue kids when they leave that school lunch at home, when they are late for school or they are less than pleasant to another child. *Allow consequences to teach your kids the important lessons of life.* You mess up sometimes but you can make up and/or move on – and you can learn from the experience.

10. Put the camera down – be in the moment: Make sure your mind is where your body is and be fully present when you are with your kids. Take more mental pictures than photos and build their family memories.

This checklist is designed to stimulate some thinking and conversation about your current child-rearing practice. It's not intended as a template for good parenting. It may even stimulate you to do less of some things and more of others. Incremental change is how we become better at most endeavours, including raising children.

