

Blog Summaries: The A - Z of Great Parenting

The A-Z of Great Parenting

A is Attention

Give your child attention. **Attention** is time and energy. Don't get involved in the (often rationalising) debate between quality time and **quantity** time. The truth of the matter is that that only through **quantity** time can you create quality time. How can you be efficient with a child who has homework concerns? Whose love-life is falling apart? Who feels nobody understands him or her?

Find out what attention is for him/her? Be interested but don't probe or judge. If you need to indicate key standards of behaviour and values, model them through your own behaviours rather than a trance-inducing lecture. Be interesting: describe your day, your views and do it in their terms.

Give attention. It works miracles.

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B is Belief

Belief (or mindset) drives behaviour drives results. What your children believe-their personal software if you like-will clearly have a huge impact on how they go about their daily lives, their relationship with you, their happiness and...

Encourage them to have **empowering beliefs**: beliefs which support their growth and happiness. Such as: 'whatever happens I always love you'. If they know that you love them unconditionally that will encourage their full personal development even though they will regularly need to be instructed about right and wrong from you. 'you can do whatever you want for your job/career'. If they know you support them in the pursuit of that job in acting/forestry/police they are much more likely to be balanced and happy even if in the end they change their mind.'

'they own the consequences of their actions'. Allow them to grow up'.

Ensure that **limiting beliefs** do not become 'real' for them:

'my teacher says I'm no good at science so I can't become a vet'. Have such good conversations with your children that they realise that such a statement from their teacher is more their teacher's problem: take it as a comment, but certainly not the last on the subject.

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C is Compass

We all need a compass. Otherwise how do we find our way in this great mysterious Life which is available to us? Help your children discover their compass, otherwise they have to use someone else's: their teachers, one of their idols or horror of horrors, yours! Never hassle them and be wary of judging, simply try and encourage conversation about what is important to them, in which directions do they want to go and how might they make it happen?

And if you are a bit vague on your own compass, Being the Best and/or Get a Life will help you.



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D is Decision

Make some decisions: how do we want to bring up our child/ren? What will be important values? What about schooling? Personal development? Physical challenge? Staying fit in a world of child obesity? Skill development and brain and mind where in the UK according to a recent The Week article over half of three-year olds had a TV in their room.

Remember decisions help action. Action helps results. Results are rewarding and exciting.

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E is Emotional Intelligence

In an increasingly competitive global economy where once proud skills are turned into commodities, ensure your children realise the importance of Emotional Intelligence and work hard to develop it. It will be their secret weapon. They cannot increase their IQ (they have your genes to blame for that!), but they can their EQ (Emotional Intelligence).

And according to Daniel Goleman, $EQ = 2 \times IQ$.

Worth thinking about, worth developing. And given that your behaviour will have the biggest influence on your child's behaviour, worth modelling.

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F is Fear

It's a hard balance: protecting our children and yet allowing them to grow up. If their core beliefs are strong, then it is possible to get them to stretch, to take on challenges: to make that train journey on their own. To volunteer to run the club at school. To visit the sick relative. And to be able to cope. And when they can't to realise that it is only being human.

Of course, we wish things to be perfect for our children. But when we do so we are in real danger of causing them later problems: of being unable to manage challenges, own the consequences of their actions, and 'grow up'.

Love them and challenge them.



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G is Goal

Encourage your children to have goals and help them plan to achieve them. Celebrate when they do and learn when they don't.

From saving for an expensive toy, to budgetting their first pocket-money allowance. From a revision schedule to an inter-rail trip. Being able to plan and achieve goals is a high-level and vital skill. Be wary if your school steers away from this area as being 'elitist' or unfair on some children. If so, it is not preparing children for the competitive world of work. All children can have goals (not necessarily the same ones) and all can be successful in their own chosen area. The act of goal-setting helps this process tremendously.

And be a good role model yourself: set a few goals. And make them happen.

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H is Hero

Encourage your child to be their own hero. To do what is necessary, even when they don't feel like doing it. Don't always allow them the easy option of avoiding confrontation, of failing to tackle their teacher about the non-marked work. Encourage them to show up for the play even though they were not in it. Encourage them to ask again about cricket if their first request was tuned down.

Get them to be their own hero.

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I is internally-referenced

Encourage your children to be able to make their own decisions e.g. 'I don't want another drink' and stick to them. Be internally referenced rather than externally referenced.

Do this by (1) good modelling (2) discussion (3) reading about their own heroes who will have only achieved what they have by 'sticking to their principles'.

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J is Journey, not Destination

Encourage an enjoyment of the journey: they don't have to grow up too quickly. Childhood is a necessary developmental period. Don't rush it. We know play is vital to full brain development. Ensure there is balance; the exams are important but only within a bigger context.

Enjoy the journey, not just the destination



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K is Key

The Key to Great Parenting is unconditional love. If your children know that you *do* love them and *will* love them whatever, the relationship can be maintained whatever difficulties you might have (and undoubtedly will have: that's Life).

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L is Learn

Instil a love of learning. Yes they will get bored and fed-up with some lessons at school and yes, discipline isn't what it was 'in our day'. Enthuse about learning. Take the kids to great museums, take them on trips to castles. Talk to them as you learn. Get them reading non-fiction. Manage screen time when they are small. (Read anything by Neil Postman on this subject).

Discuss, debate, learn. Teach them how to use the library. Get them to be Lifelong Learners. Why? (1) It's FUN (2) it will protect their employability.

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M is Motivation

One of the greatest skills you can pass to your children is the ability to create internal motivation. The expressions 'I'm not motivated', 'I'm not bothered' defer the responsibility for action elsewhere. How about if your child learnt how to look for the intrinsic worth in something? As with the explorer who is asked why he/she climbs mountains and replies: because it is there. How about: why should I bother to do a decent homework/turn up at the school play/...? Because it is there and it says a lot about you.

As always, you modelling such behaviours will be the greatest influencer.

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N is Niche

Help your child to discover their niche, their speciality area. And don't allow your comments nor those of a teacher to put them off. What do they love, what are they good at? As a young child they are likely to go through a succession of fantasies and dreams. But buried within those is something which could make a career: allow and encourage them to explore it. Because what we are passionate about we tend to be good at and what we are good at we tend to be paid well for. And that tends to make a sustainable career.



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O is Organised

Help your child become organised: know where stuff is, anticipate, be able to plan. Why? Because employers crave those skills and will test for them. Children don't need to be as planned and as organised as once they did. The flexibility of the mobile phone and texting has allowed fluidity into agreements coupled with it is often not seen as 'cool' to be too rigorous on any subject. This means children get little early training with these skills.

A great place to start is exam revision. It needs a goal, it needs a plan, it needs anticipation and if it is started early enough, it works. Which will of course reinforce the skill.

Get organised.

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P is Passion

Encourage your children to do things with enthusiasm and passion. To persue a career about which they have some passion. Why? Passion brings fun, enjoyment and sheer vitality. Passion is a marketable skill.

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bonus

If there is one question I can guarantee on my workshops it's: **why isn't this stuff taught in schools?** Here someone looks at that in more detail. And if you are parent, why not start addressing it?

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Q is Quantum Change

Encourage your children to realise that sometimes a small, infinitesimal shift can result in a staggering breakthroughs:

Revision can cause great grades.

Being friendly can win friends and influence people.

Practising with the band can get the CD produced.

Being cheerful can get you more and higher tips as a waitress.

Giving up smoking can get you in the team.

Being a little less cynical can open your eyes to opportunities.

Asking her out can get the date.

Being helpful can cause less grief with your parents.

Keeping asking can get you a Saturday job.



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R is RainMaker

The Rainmaker makes it happen. When all else fails, people come to the Rainmaker for help and support.

Encourage your child to be a Rainmaker; someone who makes it happen, has a 'can do' approach, who supports people, who is seen as a leader. Why? It's fun and they will always be in demand and well paid.

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S is Success

Help your child understand what success really is. Increasingly society will seduce them into believing it is money, fame and stuff. Ironically most who acquire those find they do not really help at all.

Help your son or daughter to realise true success is doing what they are passionate about. To achieve that they will have to put aside much 'good' advice of others and learn to be true to themselves. You can help them have courage in this area.

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T is Today

Today is a really good day to start working on this stuff. How could you help your child/ren with their dreams? Small or large: start today.

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U is Uncertainty

Nothing is certain, that's for sure. The sooner your son or daughter learns to manage that, the easier Life will become. Early expectations are that we have a 'right' to things; no we don't. Or that if we work hard we'll get the place at Uni we seek. No, not necessarily. If we get qualified, we'll have a 'job for Life'. Not-not at all, any longer. Life is hard, very hard at times. But it's so much easier when we accept that.

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V is Vision

Have some fun one day. Get a huge sheet of paper and both of you: draw your visions: where do you want to be in a few years time? And share them. Help your child develop and clarify their vision.

Having one does not guarantee anything, but it does make it a whole lot more likely.

Help your child learn to work with uncertainty.



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W is Who?

Who can help? Can a teacher offer more help? Ask! A relative? Ask! The library? Ask! Get really good at asking for help. It is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.

Encourage your child NOT to lose their early curiosity and insatiable why?

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X is Multiply

How about if your son or daughter understood compound benefits? That if you take any of the A to Z so far and multiply them together you get amazing results. What about if you have an empowering belief (B) and give something massive attention (A) while managing your fear (F)? Yes, the results would be awesome.

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Y is Yin and Yang

Success for your child will be the interaction of complementary forces. They'll need to fail to learn. They'll need to have some upsets to understand real friendship. It's important to love the journey on the way to the goal.

Coach them into that valuable learning.

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Z is Zen and the Art of Success

"There is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way."

Dalai Lama

Model that and your child will get it. You can probably give them no greater gift.

