

Boost Your Parenting Happiness

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Watching your 7-year-old ride his bicycle without training wheels, witnessing your teen's first prom, getting a surprise breakfast in bed from the kids—parenting is filled with moments of surprises and pure bliss.

But not everyone agrees. Social scientists say that kids sap parents' disposable income, social opportunities and energy level. Parents who have spent years pursuing their passions – from rock climbing to rock bands – suddenly lack time to do the things that used to make them happy.

According to Nattavudh Powdthavee, a researcher at the University of York in Britain, it's the daily grind that does parents in. From preparing meals, to breaking up a fight and worrying about the kids' exams, overall satisfaction among mums and dads deteriorates with pressing responsibilities every day.

When our attention gets spread too thin, it's hard to keep going. What can we do to regain some control of our life? How can we bring a greater sense of joy into our daily routine?

Place relationships first

Frank Yeo, a father of two, aged 8 and 10, shared: "Whenever I remind myself that relationship is more important than results, and to look at what I can be thankful for in any situation, my wife and I tend to listen and talk differently to our kids. For example, when our son did not hit the targets he set for himself in last year's final year exams, we went back to what was more important. Do we want to harp on the results or take the opportunity to build our relationship with him from this small setback? We decided on the latter. So we talked to him about how he felt, what went wrong and how he could have asked us for help instead of struggling on his own. We also reiterated to him that we are on his side."

Frank said his 10-year-old kept quiet initially, but weeks later when he won a Good Progress Award for his work, his son thanked them for being supportive. Looking back, Frank and his wife are pleased that they have chosen to place their relationship with their son before academic results. They understand that a strong parent-child bond will help their son become more confident and motivated to do well.

When Shelley, mother of 3 got into a tiff with her teen son over test results, she was so caught up in the moment that she could not hear Ben's cry for some acknowledgement or recognition of the effort he had put in when he said, "Mom, I am trying."

As parents, we sometimes get caught up in the mad race for our children to do well that we forget how to be a mom and dad first. This puts a strain on the parent-child relationship and diminishes the joy of parenting. Shelley could have said, "I hear you son. I see that you are trying. Do you think you need help?" That would have made a world of difference for the mental state of both mother and son, and their relationship.

Act positive

Mah Huili, a mother of two boys, aged 8 and 10, says that parents must keep in mind that "we reap what we sow." She is ever mindful of the way she acts and what she says to her kids.

"When I am late in picking up my kids, I thank them for waiting for me and for being patient. And so whenever I pick them up, they will thank me for coming!" says Huili.

When we approach challenges in a calm and constructive manner, our children will learn and mirror these positive behaviours. Being positive and looking on the bright side of things also

helps to change your mood and the atmosphere in the family. So smile and the whole world will smile with you.

Look after yourself

It's hard to be happy when you don't feel good. Are your physical and emotional needs being met? Are you getting enough sleep?

When we don't get enough sleep, our concentration, productivity and health will suffer. Lack of sleep also makes us more irritable and sensitive to others' remarks.

Remember to connect with yourself and schedule in some me-time. Doing something that makes us happy everyday will soothe our frazzled nerves and re-energise us.

Here are 5 more sure-fire strategies to boost your parenting happiness.

Nurture your marriage. According to David Code, author of *To Raise Happy Kids, Put Your Marriage First*, parents who want the best for their children should spend less time trying to be the perfect parent and more time striving to be the perfect spouse. The emotional strength that you can draw from a healthy and happy spousal relationship will give you confidence to manage parenting challenges.

Have a supportive group of family and friends. Surround yourself with a positive and supportive group who won't just lend a listening ear, but also a helping hand with your parenting and childcare needs. Engaging in some fun activities with friends and family once in a while will also allow you to de-stress and connect with your loved ones.

Set goals and achieve them together. Satisfaction and happiness can also be derived from completing a defined task as a family. Make a kite, take classes together or complete a family day run.

Be thankful. If you can recognise that every situation, however difficult, can be a teachable moment or an opportunity to be grateful for what you have, it will help to transform the way you see things.

Don't aim for perfection. You don't have to do it all to be a good parent. So what if the house is not spick and span and the laundry is not done everyday? Let go of the high standards you set for yourself and learn to relax.

While raising a child can be at times exhausting, it is also an exhilarating and rewarding experience . With planning and the proper perspectives, parenting will become a journey that you can savour every step of the way.

Reference

<http://essentialparenting.sg/boost-your-parenting-happiness>