

Six Parenting Principles

Abridged excerpt from *Parenting Right From The Start*

Embrace the mess

Nobody ever said that growing up was meant to be an easy peasy walk in the park with no difficulty. In fact, it is in the mess of it that growth blossoms. It has to be difficult, it has to erupt, it has to feel immovable ... and then, magic happens. The human mind and heart come alive in the face of challenge. It is here that adaptation is fostered and resilience is championed. Furthermore, you cannot truly know the up of it if you have not fully lived the down of it. Celebrate the peaks and the valleys. Take heart in the perceived struggle for that is where the path to greatness begins. No challenge, no growth.

Grow you, grow them

There is nothing quite like loving and growing a child to absolutely bring you to your knees as a parent. Often it is in the act of raising our young that a light is definitively shone on the ungrown parts of ourselves. It seems that nobody can set us off or trigger us like our own children can. And yet, when the origins of these triggers are honestly explored, it becomes quickly apparent that it isn't actually our children that are the cause of our upset. It is the ungrown parts of ourselves that we have brought forward with us from our own pasts, our own childhoods. In becoming a parent perhaps the greatest gift you will receive is the invitation of growing yourself. Grow you so that you can grow them.

Find your village

For as long as we have existed, humans have been tribal in nature. We are meant to live and grow and thrive in villages. Within community there exists structures and relationships to support all of the members in their continued growth and development. Compared to the rich communal existence of our ancestors, parents today raise their children in relative isolation. And this makes things so much more challenging. With the erosion of our naturally existing villages, it is upon us to back-door the creation of community within which to raise our young. You were never meant to go this alone. Find your village.

Know where to set the bar

To really be full of compassionate guidance for your child, it is essential that you know where to set the bar. The goal always is to set the bar where the child can jump. Too high and the child is constantly faced with failure, conflict, and shame. Too low and the child never gets to experience their own capacity for conquering life. They are disabled by being enabled. In both cases the child has to reject your guidance as a big person who doesn't really get him. And because you don't get him, you are no longer trusted to be decisively in the lead. Rather than just let himself blow about in the wind, your child will be forced to be in the lead of himself. And that is a devastating place from which a child will never be able to fully emerge into his true potential. So know where to set the bar. Educate yourself about development, temperament, and attachment. Advocate for your unique, individual child at home and in community from this knowing place.

Slow down

Growth is a spectacular thing. It is ordained by the natural order of things to occur provided the appropriate conditions are created to foster it. One of those conditions is time. Development occurs on its own timeline and it cannot be rushed. Often times parents are misled into believing that rushing development leads to earlier and thus better outcomes and opportunities. But that is simply not the case. Rushed development can occasionally take on the early façade of a desired outcome. But it will be realized overtime that this façade had no depth or staying power because it did not honor the inherent trajectory of growth set forth for your unique little child. So pave the way, remove impediments, and champion your child's needs. But never rush childhood. Surrender to the natural power of growth.

Know that you are enough

Growing up a little human can feel utterly overwhelming at times. And the parenting industry hasn't actually served us well in this respect. Perhaps never more than now have parents painstakingly questioned their own capacity for being exactly what their child needs. The incredible amount of highly accessible information available to modern parents seems to have thrust them into self-doubt rather than promoting empowerment. Too often I see parents who give their innate know-how and power to raise their children brilliantly away to so-called experts. It is my view that nobody is the expert on a child in the way that the parent is. Your gut, your intuition, your sense of your child's being are unlike anything anybody else can lay claim to. Your child needs you to own this. You are enough. You were born for this. You have it in you to give.



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