

10 PARENTING TOOLS FOR EVERY PARENT'S TOOLBOX

*First and foremost, children want and need a sense of **connection**.
This allows the mind to work. When children feel connected, they are fully alive.
Children who feel connected feel safer, which leads to better judgment and decision-making.*

1. BE FULLY PRESENT.

This means making yourself available when your child is ready (which may not be the most convenient time for you). It means dropping everything, and focusing your full attention on your child, even if it's for a small window of time.

2. LISTEN OPENLY, WITH NO AGENDA.

Listening is key to building strong relationships and connection.
Listen with respect, patience, warmth, and your full attention – this helps build safety and trust.

3. BE CURIOUS!

What is it to be truly curious? True curiosity reflects interest and wonder rather than judgment.

4. NOTICE and ACKNOWLEDGE WHO your child is more than WHAT he/she does.

Acknowledging what your child does can result in a nice compliment.

Examples: *"Good job sharing with your sister!"*
"Nice work! You got an 'A' on your exam!"

These comments focus on behavior: what your child has done.
However, when we focus on WHO a person is, we are focusing on character: truly hearing and seeing them at their core, for who they really are. With our children, we show that we 'get' them - we understand their VALUES, and reflect the values that are important to us, and them.

Examples: *"You are such a generous person!"*
"You are so hard-working and diligent, and it has really paid off!"

- To be seen and heard in this way is a tremendous gift we can give our children.
- It reflects what is important to us as parents – our CORE VALUES.
- It allows our children to build a beautiful picture for themselves, OF themselves.
- It helps them understand how they are SEEN and HEARD in the world, and EMPOWERS them to act from the CORE of who they are.
- It also models for them how to truly hear and see others for who they are.

5. REFLECT YOUR VALUES IN WHAT YOU DO, ASK AND SAY.

Although it isn't always evident, you are the most important role model in your child's life. What you do has the greatest influence on the choices your child makes. This puts us in a very powerful and humbling role as parents – one of great responsibility.

- *What are the values you want to reflect?*
- *How do you model your values on a daily basis?*
- *What questions can you ask that reflect your values?*
- *What stories can you tell that reflect your values?*

6. FOCUS ON “YES, AND...” rather than “YES, BUT...”

Hear what your child says, and if necessary, add to it, rather than negate it. This is an expansive approach, which allows room for both parents' and children's points of view.

7. CREATE RITUALS, such as SPECIAL TIME with your children

It's never too late to create a ritual that becomes part of the woven fabric of your relationship with your child. Base this on your child's interests and desires – whatever they would like to do with you. This is about honoring them, and their interests, in order to build your relationship with them.

8. ACKNOWLEDGE MISTAKES

We learn as much from our mistakes as from our successes. When we, as parents, acknowledge our mistakes, we are modeling respect for our children's feelings, taking responsibility for our actions, and modeling humility.

9. SHOW EMPATHY, COMPASSION, and GRATITUDE (It's more important to be KIND than to be RIGHT)

Simply put, share your heart at least as much as your mind. Reflect caring and understanding. Show appreciation for the gifts in your life. Talk about what you're grateful for on a regular basis. Give.

10. USE HUMOR!

Laughter and lightheartedness go a long way toward building connection and strong relationships with our children. Find and create ways to laugh together, and feel the bond between you grow!