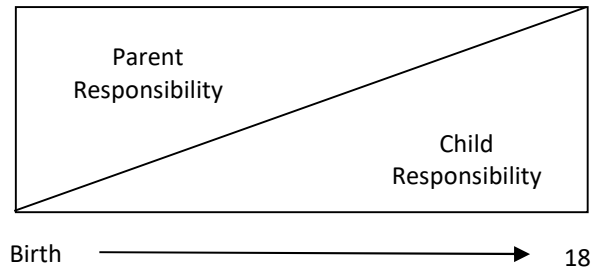


RAISING RESPONSIBLE, EMOTIONALLY MATURE CHILDREN

Parenting is not about getting our children to do what we want, which often leads to over-managing or over-indulging them. It is about creating a loving relationship and nurturing home that enables them to feel good about themselves, develop a sense of who they are, and learn to solve problems and take full responsibility for their decisions. **(We are gardeners not mechanics.)**



Three Styles of Parenting:

Permissive parenting— Absence of structure, discipline or routine. Parents may feel lots of love but fail to trust their authority and so give too much power and control to kids. Do too much for their kids. Avoid conflict. Try to make sure kids are happy. Kids become spoiled and entitled. Inflated expectations of themselves and what life owes them.

Authoritarian parenting—Lots of structure and rules. Parents are in charge. They are insecure about their children's ability to make choices, so they over-control (drill sergeant) and/or over-protect (helicopter). Children do not develop responsibility for self or emotional maturity. They learn to listen to voices outside and so become compliant (good child) or rebel (bad child).

Nurturing parenting—Lots of love and respect between family members. Children are seen as inherently good, worthy and capable. Parents trust their own authority and use it to set boundaries and create a positive environment rather than control. They support their children in their challenges and decisions, knowing where the responsibility ultimately lies, and allowing their children to make their own decisions and solve their own problems.

Principles of a Nurturing Home:

- 1. We, as parents, are the authority in our homes.** Due to our knowledge, capability and experience, we have a duty to preside. We must be strong enough to establish our authority and use this authority to create a positive, nurturing environment with clear expectations, routines, traditions, and loving communication. We are firm and fair. We say what we mean and mean what we say.
- 2. Our children are inherently good, capable and trustworthy.** Our children are the spiritual offspring of our Father in Heaven. We make it easier for them if we believe in them. Positive assumptions allow us to communicate and act from respect and trust (rather than fear and mistrust) which enables children to build self-worth, confidence, and make good choices.
- 3. We are responsible "to" but not "for" our children.** It is easy to overstep boundaries and rob our children of their agency. We set expectations, teach, and then support our children in their challenges by allowing them to carry out their own responsibilities, solve their own problems, and make their own decisions. By trying to do this for them, we steal from them growth opportunities of great value.

If I feel **responsible for** my children, I ...

- Fix, solve, protect, rescue, and control
- Feel tired, worried, fearful, unappreciated
- Expect them to live up to my expectations
- Manipulate them to make sure things turn out right.

If I feel **responsible to** my children, I ...

- Show empathy, encourage, support, love, and listen
- Feel relaxed, trusting, confident, appreciated
- Trust them to live up to their own expectations
- Am concerned with enjoying our relationship

- 4. Our children are responsible for themselves.** We cannot control our children and make them think, feel and do exactly as we want. We may lecture, preach, threaten and nag our kids to do their homework, choose good friends, etc., but we cannot follow them around and ensure that they do as we wish. They own their lives and have to learn to make their own choices.
- 5. Growth requires effort, even struggle.** It is easy to over-parent our children by hovering, rescuing, and doing too much or expecting too little of them. Doing so creates entitlement as our children learn lessons that are inconsistent with the realities of life. Home life should not be a free ride. We should not feel guilty about letting our children struggle to learn the lessons of life.
- 6. Consequences teach wisdom and responsibility.** Reality, experience and consequences are the most powerful teacher of life's lessons. Don't hold a job, can't buy a car. Don't come to dinner when called, go hungry. Forget an assignment, get marked down. Our children learn wisdom and responsibility through consequences (not preaching, threatening and nagging). Act more and talk less.
- 7. Parenting requires that we grow ourselves.** The biggest challenge to parenting is not our children's behavior but our own emotional reactivity. When reactive, we regress to immature words and actions, causing our children to be defensive and self-protective so they fail to learn from their mistakes. Loving parenting is not about getting our children to be different as much as getting ourselves to be different. Children want parents who are calm, consistent, and connected.

Communication Skills to Create a Nurturing Home (use increasingly as children get older)

Communication is the heart and soul of family relationships. It is through communication that we relate to, influence, and guide our children. We can communicate in ways that either weaken or strengthen our children.



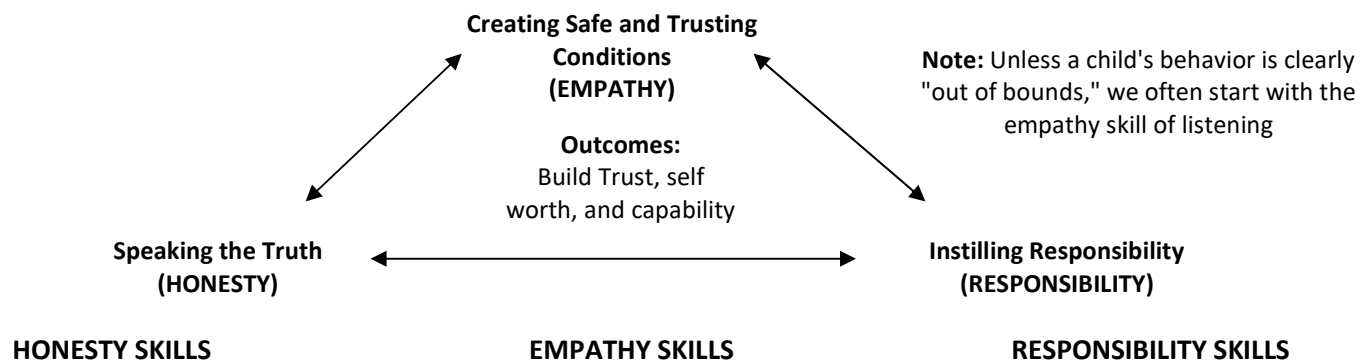
What do I do that weakens? (coming from mistrust, suspicion, fear): Many natural responses, when facing a challenge (key moment), are weakening. They impose control from without rather than building responsibility and self-discipline from within. They rob children of their ability to be self-governing and cause them to be externally driven. This has two forms:

1. **Over-managing:** Telling, prodding, reminding, lecturing, giving too much advice, criticizing, interrogating, labeling, comparing, threatening, nagging, blaming, raging, etc.
2. **Over-indulging:** Hovering, fixing, rescuing, protecting, sympathizing, flip-flopping, over-negotiating, pleading, bribing, giving in, etc.



What do I do that Strengthens? (coming from trust, faith, love): The goal is more than solving the immediate problem. It is to build trust, enhance self-worth, help children think for themselves, solve problems and take full responsibility for their thoughts, feelings and actions. This happens as we use honesty, empathy, and instill responsibility.

(The HERO principle of parenting:
Honesty + Empathy + Responsibility = Outcomes)



Disclose-This is what is important to me... This is what I believe and why... What do you think?

Care-front: This is what I see happening... Here are the consequences I see...

Reprove

1. Give clear (even sharp) correction
2. Ask (or tell) next step
3. Disengage
4. If failure to comply, impose consequence

Negotiate agreements

1. Develop a common understanding of perceptions/feelings of each person
2. Discover what is important to each person
3. Brainstorm and agree upon solutions that meet the needs of all parties

Harness Harmful Behavior

1. Initiate conversation
2. Invite child to share point of view
3. Place responsibility with questions
4. Process faulty thinking (victim, blame, etc.)
5. Jointly create a plan
6. Determine reward

Respect-See goodness and uniqueness

- Allow them to be who they are
- Join them in their world
- Take time
- Honor their boundaries

Affirm-communicate love and goodwill

- Acknowledge a quality of being or task well-done
- Touch, hug, smile (non-verbal love)
- Tell them you love them

Listen-Suspend judgment and tendency to react; be present to understand child's experience/point of view

- Tell me more...
- So you feel...
- Let me see if I understand...

Support-ask, rather than guessing or taking over

- What do you need?
- How can I support you?

Create structure-Children like and need structure and routine: meals, bedtime, chore charts, family prayer

Enforce Limits

- Establish few but fair rules (chores, respect, family time)
- Follow-through with action (consequences) when expectation violated
- Enforcement must be immediate, consistent, without guilt or hostility

Offer choices-Allow or give as many age-appropriate choices as possible

Let them own their problems

- Don't buy or do for them what they can do for self
- Allow them to struggle with life issues (be there/listen)
- Send "Good luck" messages

Ask valuing questions

- What do you think/feel about this?
- What are the consequences? Is it that what you want?
- What do you want?
- What choices do you have?
- What can/will you do?
- How will you handle it if...?