

POSITIVE PARENTING

DISCUSSION LEADER'S OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Good morning my name is _____. Today we will be talking about Positive Parenting.

The **ground rules** for this discussion are:

- (1) No personal attacks on anyone's opinions
- (2) Allow each participant to express themselves
- (3) Make head calls at your leisure, just don't interrupt the group
- (4) Keep your language clean as not to offend others
- (5) PARTICIPATION BY ALL!!!!!!

Gain Attention:

You and your spouse have twin 4-year-old girls and a 9-year-old boy. As a dual active duty family, life is often challenging trying to balance your obligations to the Marine Corps and meeting the needs of your children whose temperaments can range from easy-going and cooperative, to difficult or slow to warm up. If you add in the logistics related to meeting their needs and things can get frustrating to say the least.¹ Based on your experience, parenting is one of the toughest roles you've had and since there is no one-size-fits-all approach, finding the formula that works for you and your family seems to be the most challenging part.

Key points for the discussion today will be:

- (1) Communication
- (2) Healthy ways to discipline
- (3) Self-care in tough times
- (4) Resources

Learning Objective: After this guided discussion, you will have a better understanding of how to remain positive during the process of raising children.

DISCUSSION

You and your spouse really enjoy having a family; however, as rewarding as it is, you're both finding that raising children isn't as easy as you thought it would be. At times, you both find it difficult to maneuver the process of meeting everyone's needs, since they are all so different. For example, your 9-year-old is fairly easy-going; he loves to play soccer and video games. He has an even temperament and always seems to be moving at a leisurely pace. He doesn't get angry much and he always has a smile on his face. The challenge with him is that he can't seem to understand that playing soccer and video games are privileges and not rights. This argument often comes up because getting him to complete all of his homework in one sitting is nothing short of a war. You and your spouse have spoken to him about it. He says he understands he has to do his homework, but doesn't understand why he has to do it all at once as long as he finishes it. Thinking about your son's response, he does make sense, but it isn't how you prefer it be done and you don't understand why he can't just do things the way he's been told. Can you compromise on this? If he doesn't complete all of his homework at once, what's the big deal as long as he completes it? As

¹ <http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/vol24-4b.pdf?docID=1762>

for your twins, they couldn't be more different. One is kind and giving, while the other is slow to warm up and very stubborn. Both you and your spouse have given them small tasks to complete, like putting their toys away after they finish playing, and notice that one always cleans as soon as you ask her but the other one will take her time and requires you to speak to her more than once. You've been told by her teacher that she is always the last one to put her things away after play time, she does not share with the other children, and always finishes her food last at lunch time. How should you handle this? Is she being defiant, stubborn? Is this a reflection of something you and your spouse are doing wrong?

KEY POINT 1

1. All parents want to do what's best for their child/children, which explains why so many seek advice from their own parents, other parents, professionals such as pediatricians, and licensed childcare providers, as well as explore literature to establish reference points. Even with all their research, parents are often surprised to find that each child requires a unique formula and that what works with one may not work with the other, even if they are raised in the same house by the same parents. This is why understanding how to communicate with your child is so important. Experts say children develop a sense of who they are very early.² The tone of a parent's voice, the parent's body language, and facial expressions—all methods of communication—play a crucial role in how your child sees him/herself and reacts to the world around them.
2. Communication, consistency, positive reinforcement, validation and the feeling of being special are all important to the success of your child. For instance, if your child is struggling with sharing, you may encourage your child to do so by pointing out that sharing is a good deed and you would be proud of them for sharing with others. Remember, your child is very observant and is always taking cues from you. Smiling at your child, giving them a wink, a hug or thumbs up are all examples of how you can communicate to your child that you care, are aware of the good things they are doing and are proud of them. What are some other ways you can communicate to your child that you are proud of them? Another form of positive reinforcement is through verbal affirmation. Praising your child by saying things like "good-job," "well done," and "I'm proud of you" for things like following directions, helping with a chore, or doing well in school, encourages them to do their best while helping them to develop a healthy self-esteem and boosts character development in the process. Positive reinforcement and establishing age-appropriate communication, healthy norms, and realistic expectations are important to the development of your child. Your child's first view of the world will be through your eyes.
3. Because children learn by example, it is also necessary to not only communicate your expectations to your child in terms they will understand, but to demonstrate certain behavior as well. Back to the child we mentioned earlier, struggling to share, you could demonstrate sharing by sharing something of yours with your child or someone else and pointing out what you are doing. Ask your child if they think sharing is nice, and if so, why? Why not? Another way of demonstrating appropriate behavior includes helping your child accomplish a task. For instance, when your child does something positive like pick up their toys, you may praise the behavior by clapping and saying "good job" and rewarding them with a treat. The thing to remember here is to acknowledge the good they've done. Establishing consistent rules such as "no snacks until homework is finished" or "no television until chores are completed" helps your older child understand your expectations of them, making your expectations more relatable

² <http://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/communication/index.html>

and realistic. What are some clear expectations you communicate to your children? How do you feel when those expectations aren't met?

KEY POINT 2

1. So what happens when your child is disobeying you and it's time for discipline? Be mindful that your personal values influence your approach to discipline and will require your flexibility as a parent since no one approach is effective for all children. For example, one child may be successful the first time when given a list of things to do, while another requires prompting more than once to complete their tasks. This does not mean the first child is obedient and the second child is defiant, some children require more support than others to be successful. With this in mind, it is important to examine your values and expectations to be sure you are disciplining your child from a compassionate, age-appropriate, well-meaning place. When discipline is necessary, make sure you are clear in your position on how to discipline. Some believe physical discipline, such as a light swat to the buttocks or tap on the hand are the only ways to correct undesirable behavior. Others believe using behavior modification techniques, such as establishing clear rules your child can understand, giving choices, setting limits, using time-out or other consequences such as taking away toys or certain privileges like television time are the best means to establish boundaries and expectations with children. Each form of discipline carries its own benefits, risks, successes and failures and is dependent on the age of your child, his/ her level of understanding of your expectations, and your methods of discipline. Though the method of discipline you use is solely your decision, it is important to remember that improper or excessive discipline can lead to child maltreatment or verbal abuse.

KEY POINT 3

1. Where do you turn for support? Remember that at some point all parents need support to remain healthy during tough times. Having a healthy support network will help you when you feel overwhelmed or frustrated, as all parents do at some point.³ This could be a family member, a peer, or your partner or spouse. Their assistance may range anywhere from letting you vent to babysitting so you have time to regroup. Everyone can agree that having the right support at the right time is healthy and beneficial for you as the parent and for your child. In addition to using your support system, it is also important to pay attention to your own needs and feelings.
2. It is okay to take a break for yourself once in a while. What are some things you enjoy doing that can help you feel like yourself or relieve stress? Think of things that could be done for an hour or two once/ twice a week or when you need to recharge, such as:
 - a. PT/running
 - b. Driving
 - c. Hobbies
 - d. Hiking
 - e. Taking in nature at a favorite place
 - f. Going to a concert
 - g. Going out to dinner with friends
3. Check your local MCCS resources and take advantage of your local CDC or area Parents Night Out. This allows you time and opportunities to engage in the things you enjoy and will help you relieve stress and build resilience.⁴

³ http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=282445

⁴ http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=287083

KEY POINT 4

What resources are available to you?

1. We can all agree that raising children is not easy. It is important to recognize when you, as a parent, need support. This is why having a solid support system is necessary. When you feel overwhelmed, stressed and frustrated (all normal feelings from time to time), relying on your support system will help you address your feelings in a healthy, non-judgmental manner.
2. In addition to your support system, what are some other resources available to you?
 - a) New Parent Support Program
 - b) Peers, chain of command, chaplain
 - c) Substance Abuse Counseling Center
 - d) Community Counseling Program
 - e) Your pediatrician, Medical
 - f) Family Advocacy Program
 - g) Military and Family Life Consultant
 - h) Military One Source

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Today, we discussed elements of positive parenting. Communication and consistency are essential to parenting as they establish clear expectations for your child. Remaining positive when your child makes a mistake and expressing to them clearly that you love them, although you do not like the behavior, is important in maintaining the self-esteem of your child. Praise and reward, as well as expectation and consequence, are all ingredients that make for a healthy balance in a child's life. Being kind to yourself and recognizing that parents also need support from time to time will help you keep things in perspective and eliminate the feeling of frustration and aloneness in times of difficulty.

END OF DISCUSSION**RESOURCES**

1. <http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/vol24-4b.pdf?docID=176>
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/communication/index.html>
3. http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=282445
4. http://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-and-relationships/marriage?content_id=287083
5. MAPIT Guide. Retrieved from http://bhin.usmc-mccs.org/uploads/MAPIT_Guide.pdf.
6. MCO 1754.11