

FIVE TIPS FOR PARENTS

Parenting can be challenging.

But it can also be enjoyable and fulfilling if parents have a positive relationship with their children and are firm in using discipline strategies consistently and appropriately, said a spokesman for the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

The ministry has some tips on how to raise emotionally healthy children equipped with the necessary skills and resources.

1. Ensure a safe and engaging environment where children are adequately supervised and have opportunities to develop their skills.

When teaching new skills and behaviour to your children, you can model the desired behaviour, break down the task into smaller steps and use behavioural charts to reward the child for practising new skills.

For instance, if you want your child to go to bed without fuss every night, you may reward him with praise and a star on a behaviour chart each time he goes to bed without protesting. If he earns three stars in a row, you can allow him to do a favourite activity, such as playing his favourite board game, the next day.

Once the new behaviour has been learnt, you can wean him off the specific rewards and keep the improved behaviour going with just a little bit of positive attention and recognition.

2. Invest time in building a relationship with your children and encouraging desirable behaviour in them.

Give your children lots of descriptive praise when they do something that you would like to see more of.

For instance, when they respond immediately to do something you requested, you can say: "Thank you for doing what I asked straight away."

3. Be open to learning and applying appropriate strategies that will be helpful in managing your children's misbehaviour

There are many strategies that parents can use to manage misbehaviour appropriately rather than punitively.

These include setting clear limits on your children's behaviour. Sit down and have a family discussion on the rules at home. Let your children know what the consequences will be if they break the rules.

If your children misbehave, stay calm and give them a clear instruction to stop misbehaving and tell them what you would like them to do instead.

For instance, tell them to "stop fighting and play nicely with each other". Praise your children if they stop. If they do not, follow through with an appropriate consequence.

4. Have realistic expectations

All children misbehave at times and it is inevitable that you will have some discipline hassles. Trying to be the perfect parent can set you up for frustration and disappointment.

5. Look after yourself

It is difficult to be a calm, relaxed parent if you are stressed, anxious or depressed. Try to find time every week to let yourself unwind or do something that you enjoy.

Seek help if you experience problems in marital, health, work or other issues as these may have an impact on the way you parent your children.

Sources: Ministry of Social and Family Development, www.triplep.net