

Parental Responsibilities

Nobody ever said that children were easy to raise. They don't come with guidelines or instructions, and they certainly don't come with a "pause" button (I've looked!). What they do come with is a crucial set of physical and emotional needs that must be met. Failure of the parents to meet these specific needs can have wide-ranging and long-lasting negative effects.

The following outline provides eight essential responsibilities that parents must adhere to in order to foster their child's physical and/or emotional well-being:

1. Provide an environment that is SAFE.
 - A. Keep your child free from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.
 - B. Keep unsafe objects locked up or out of reach of your child.
 - C. Get to know your child's caregivers (get references or background checks).
 - D. Correct any potential dangers around the house.
 - E. Take Safety Precautions: Use smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, lock doors at night, always wear seatbelts, etc.

2. Provide your child with BASIC NEEDS.
 - A. Water
 - B. Plenty of nutritious foods
 - C. Shelter
 - D. A warm bed with sheets, blankets, and a pillow
 - E. Medical care as needed/Medicine when ill
 - F. Clothing that is appropriate for the weather conditions
 - G. Space (a place where he or she can go to be alone)

3. Provide your child with SELF-ESTEEM NEEDS.
 - A. Accept your child's uniqueness and respect his or her individuality.
 - B. Encourage (don't push) your child to participate in a club, activity, or sport.
 - C. Notice and acknowledge your child's achievements and pro-social behavior.
 - D. Encourage proper hygiene (to look good is to feel good, or so they say!).
 - E. Set expectations for your child that are realistic and age-appropriate.
 - F. Use your child's misbehavior as a time to teach, not to criticize or ridicule.

4. Teach your child MORALS and VALUES.
 - A. Honesty
 - B. Respect
 - C. Responsibility
 - D. Compassion
 - E. Patience
 - F. Forgiveness
 - G. Generosity

5. Develop MUTUAL RESPECT with your child.
 - A. Use respectful language
 - B. Respect his or her feelings
 - C. Respect his or her opinions
 - D. Respect his or her privacy
 - E. Respect his or her individuality

6. Provide DISCIPLINE which is effective and appropriate.
 - A. Structured
 - B. Consistent
 - C. Predictable
 - D. Fair

7. Involve yourself in your child's EDUCATION.
 - A. Communicate regularly with your child's teacher(s)
 - B. Make sure that your child is completing his or her homework each night.
 - C. Assist your child with his or her homework, but don't DO the homework.
 - D. Talk to your child each day about school (what is being studied, any interesting events,...etc.).
 - E. Recognize and acknowledge your child's academic achievements.

8. Get to KNOW YOUR CHILD.
 - A. Spend quality time together.
 - B. Be approachable to your child.
 - C. Ask questions.
 - D. Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

Now that we've looked at the responsibilities parents HAVE, let's look at what responsibilities parents do NOT have. The following is a list of responsibilities that no parent should be expected to meet.

1. Supplying your child with the most expensive designer clothes or shoes available.
2. Picking up after your child/Cleaning your child's room.
3. Dropping everything you're doing to give your child a ride somewhere.
4. Providing your child with a telephone, television, computer, or game system.
5. Bailing your child out of trouble every time he or she does something wrong.
6. Maintaining an unlimited supply of treats, chips, sodas, or junk foods for your child's unlimited consumption.
7. Replacing toys or other items that your child has lost or misplaced.
8. Welcoming any or all of your child's friends into your home for social or other activities.