

POSITIVE PARENTING AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR RAISING HAPPY CHILDREN¹

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ABSTRACT

How can we successfully educate our children? This question is asked by every parent who knows how difficult it could be the everyday life with a naughty child. What can be done?

Positive parenting comes to the rescue. It emphasizes mutual respect and uses positive instructions. The positive parenting focus on learning rather than punishment. Different studies show that using this method of discipline has better results in term of child behavior, emotional development, academic success and mental health.

Often, when one hears the word “discipline”, many associate it with negative associations, mainly related to punishment, which is thought to go “hand in hand” with discipline. However, the real meaning of the word “discipline”, which comes from the Latin word “disciplina”, is “learning”. Hence, discipline is basically a process of learning and adopting values, rules, norms and principles of acceptable behavior in a society.

Key words: discipline, parenting, education, children, learning.

INTRODUCTION

The emotional development is one of the key domains in personality development. It is closely related to the cognitive development of the

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individual. It plays an essential role in the development of identity, self-confidence, self-control and self-image. It is woven in the process of communication between the child and the adult, but also between the adults themselves. Emotions are the basis of non-verbal communication competence. Numerous studies emphasize the relationship between emotions and temperament, socio-emotional attachment in youth and adulthood, and the quality of interpersonal interactions in general.

A family, it has been said, is a circle of people who love one another. With wisdom, patience and love, they can create a home where child feels safe, secure and free to grow and learn, and where parents can find joy in your parenting role. Life with an active toddler can make the parent feel like he/she is on a runaway train. The days zoom past, each one filled with new marvels, new discoveries, new crises. Parents often have to scurry to keep up with their young offspring and sometimes have little time available for thoughtful planning. It will be very helpful, as parent set out on the journey of parenting, to have some idea of the final destination.

Perhaps one of the wisest things the parent can do is to take a moment to ask its self a very important question: What is it that I really want for my child? When the baby, the toddler or the preschooler has grown into an adult (as impossible as that may seem now), what qualities and characteristics do the parent want this adult to have?

Some parents may want the child to develop responsibility, resilience, honesty, compassion, self-reliance, courage and gratitude — each parent's list will be a little different. What truly matters is this: From the child's earliest moments of life, the decisions parents make will help shape his future. Each and every action they take — whether or not they slap the child's hand as he reaches for a delicate object, how they deal with food thrown across the kitchen, or how they respond to bedtime demands — can nurture or discourage those qualities they want to promote.

The child is constantly making decisions about himself and the world, and how to find belonging and significance in that world. These decisions are based on how he interprets his experiences in life, and they create his "blueprint" for living. Parents actions and beliefs will have a strong influence on his decisions.

This idea feels overwhelming to most parents. Some parents may be wondering, "What if I make mistakes? How will I know what to do?" It is good to know that mistakes are not insurmountable failures, but valuable opportunities to learn. Seeing mistakes as opportunities to learn is a fundamental concept of Positive Discipline.

Positive parenting is associated with the application of positive discipline. When we talk about positive discipline, we mean learning based on positive

support, understanding, encouragement and constructive communication between parents and children.

Positive discipline means guiding and teaching the child how to achieve self-control. Discipline is the establishment of a balance between the child's need for autonomy and the need for restraint. Positive discipline in the field of emotional development contributes to the child to learn to recognize and respect their own feelings and the feelings of others, to develop empathy, to promote and upgrade self-control and self-confidence and to build a positive self-image.

From my ten years of experience as an employee of the Department of Marriage and family at the Inter-Municipal Center for Social Work of Skopje, I realized that one of the main conflicts is the application of different parenting styles by both parents. Also, a source of conflict in the family can be the inappropriate behavior of children as a result of the upbringing they received from their parents, which was filled with criticism, corporal punishment, humiliation and insult.

The conditions that exist in the family and the quality of the relations between its members are extremely important for the optimal development of the individual. Hence, it is essential for the family to be functional and to provide an atmosphere in which the child will feel safe, secure, loved, accepted as he or she is, respected and understood. It should be a place where the child can grow freely, learn and explore and, thus, develop smoothly and realize the potentials it carries within itself.

THE INFLUENCE OF POSITIVE PARENTING ON CHILD SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The socio-emotional attachment of the child to the parents is a process through which positive connections are created that enable a sense of protection to appear and thus to satisfy the basic need for security. Tying a child to their parents is a process that takes place at an early age. It is a process through which positive connections are created that enable the child to have a sense of protection and thus to satisfy the basic need for security.

The most commonly stated classification groups the qualities of socio-emotional attachment of the child to the parent into two general categories: secure and insecure attachment. Within the framework of insecure attachment, the avoidant and hesitant qualities are distinguished, which, when they appear in combination, give the fourth quality of disorganized – disoriented attachment.

- Secure socio – emotional attachment

It is characterized by the child's behavior dominated by openness to new experiences, active research and calm reaction of a stranger when the parent is nearby. However, the moment these children are separated from the parent, they become very upset, so much so that any attempt to calm them down remains unsuccessful.

Secure attached children are relatively happy individuals who, over time, successfully build trust in relationships with other people, have a positive self-image, are often favorites in peer groups and among authorities, have higher self-control and self-confidence.

- Avoiding socio-emotional attachment

Characteristic of the child's behavior for this quality of attachment is the avoidance or neglect of contact with the parent. The latter is especially pronounced after a certain absence of the parent. The child himself does not try to get closer to the parent, nor to establish eye-to-eye contact, although he does not reject the parent's attempts to make contact. Outwardly, the child looks calm and focused on the game.

However, many studies show that in terms of physiological reactivity (skin temperature, blood pressure, heart rate, etc.), these children are very upset even though they do not show it. This means that the separation from the parent strongly affects them, but they have learned that no matter how they react, they have no control over it, nor the power to direct events according to their desires and needs – something that in developmental psychology is called “learned helplessness” – a condition that negatively affects the optimal development of self-image, self-confidence and trust in other people, motivation to be active and to have control over one's own life and decisions, etc.

- Hesitant socio-emotional attachment

It is recognized in the fact that the child reacts very negatively and anxiously after the separation from the parent. In such a situation, another person can sometimes calm him down, but often fails at all. Upon returning, the parent also fails to calm the child who becomes even more crying and nervous.

Hesitation is evident in, on the hand, the child's attempts to get closer to the parent, which can be intense to the point of addiction, but also in anger and resentment, or in withdrawing and avoiding contact with the parent, on the other hand. The overall behavior of the child is often accompanied by the so-called regressive forms of gnashing of teeth, etc. Hence, the parent needs more time to calm down and return the research focus to the game.

- Disorganized socio-emotional attachment

This quality of socio-emotional attachment is rarely encountered in practice. This is the most insecure bonding that combines evasive and

hesitant attachment. The child may experience a series of different reactions after the separation from the parent, as well as after his return.

These reactions can typically include numbness, confusion, anxiety during the meeting, hesitation whether to make contact or withdraw, and so on. It is possible at one point to ask for intense contact with the parent, and at the next to reject him and suddenly run away from him/her. The possibility of manifesting strange and unrelated emotions towards the people around him is not left out either. Conflicting patterns of child-parent behavior are often present.

The quality of the established socio-emotional attachment is expressed in the way the child reacts during the separation from the parent/s. The quality of the relationship, not the quantity is crucial for the quality of the parent-child relationship. How the child spends time with the parent(s) is more important than how long they have been together.

This basically means that the child will have more developmental benefits from a 15 minute quality interaction with the parent (play, conversation, reading, walking, etc.) than a whole day spent in parallel (side by side) where the child and parent are committed to their activities, the child gets bored or demands interaction, and the parent, preoccupied with the obligations, reacts nervously to the child's requests and complaints.

PARENTS ARE THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT EXAMPLE FOR THE CHILDREN

Personality development and the formation of the identity of children and adolescents have been considered and explained by many psychologists. One of the most famous is Eric Erickson, who claims that this development takes place through 8 psychological phases that include: trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, intimacy and personal integrity. Each phase has its own specific development tasks and each represents a potential crisis situation. The order of these eight phases is universal, with the possibility of their duration varying.

The first four socio-emotional stages occur in childhood, while the fifth is characteristic of adolescence. In each of the first five phases of the attitude of the parents towards the child, and then of the teachers, it is crucial for the successful overcoming of the developmental crisis, which is especially pronounced the smaller the child is. This is, in most cases, conditioned by the style that parents practice in their relationship with their child.

There are four most commonly cited parenting styles in theory and practice: authoritarian (disciplinarian), permissive (indulgent), uninvolved (unconcerned) and authoritative (democratic) parenting style. Authoritarian

parenting style is often described as very strict and rigid. It is characterized by low emotional warmth, high control and strict requirements for accepting responsibility. Children who grow up with parents who practice this style are neat, obedient and fulfilling, may have high academic achievements, but are not very happy and in later development often have lower self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, aggression, passivity and difficulties in independence.

Authoritative parenting style stand out as the best compared to others, because the warmth and control are high and balanced. Communication between parent and child is clear, warm, open and two-way. Children who grow up with this parenting style are happy, cooperative, sociable, generous, with high self-control. They are often a favorite in the peer group and in the authorities because they are socially competent and do not need to draw attention to themselves, including in problematic forms of behavior, have high academic achievements, are brave and empathetic.

The permissive parenting style is characterized by high emotional warmth and inconsistent control. The parent gives a lot of love, but does not set boundaries and control. The approach is lenient in the way of structuring the free time, choosing the friendships and performing the school obligations and homework. Expectations from the child are low, and the requirements for discipline and obedience are very low. Children have great freedom in making decisions, they are irresponsible, indecisive and impulsive. Children who grow up with this parenting style are unhappy, lack self-control and are often emotionally immature.

Uninvolved parenting style is one of the worst styles for child development. It is an indifferent attitude of the parent towards the child, where the priority is placed on the needs and desires of the parent, and not on the child. The parent is primarily focused on his or her own needs and is not actively involved in disciplining the child or sharing tenderness and love. Children who grew up with such parents have very low self-control, do not know to set boundaries in behavior, are emotionally immature, and often manifest problematic behavior in various forms and intensity.

PARENT - CHILD COMMUNICATION AS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

If we asked 1,000 parents to name their least favorite part of parenting, discipline is probably near or at the top of the list. And yet a good foundation for discipline is incredibly important to keep parents from feeling burned out. Positive parenting involves communication with acceptance,

encouraging the child to talk about their problems and feelings with their parents, asking for their opinion and sometimes even advice.

Using this way of communicating with the child is a bigger challenge for the parents, but at the same time it pays off many times over because it has a number of positive effects on the child. Among the most common are the following:

- The child creates a feeling that he is loved and accepted;
- It learns to accept oneself and love oneself;
- Becomes able to accept other people as they are;
- Respect itself and others;
- Enables the child to develop its own potentials and self-control;
- It helps the child to solve problems independently in the future;
- The child builds a constructive attitude and view of the world in which it lives;
- Learns to make decisions; etc.

Through communication, the parent sends messages to the child, through which he wants to convey what he thinks, feels or what he wants. This applies not only to the words spoken, but also to the color of the parent's voice, facial expressions and body language. The way the parent communicates with the child can send a message of respect, empathy and care, but it can also send the opposite, negative message.

People can communicate intentionally and unintentionally. When the received information from the interlocutor has emotional content, it provokes a reaction and the communication becomes closer, intimate and meaningful.

There are many ways for children to communicate. They express themselves not only through words but also through their behavior, through play, drawing, modelling, dancing and writing. The interaction between parent and child is a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication. Thereby, 8% of the messages the child receives through verbal communication with the parent, while 92% belong to non-verbal communication.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENT AND CHILD

The parent often wants to verbalize, to narrate the common events with the child. It happens that the parent expresses his own experiences, impressions and thoughts and leaves no room for the child to express its own

feelings and expressions from that event. It is very risky in the society where the child grows up today, because it can easily fall under the influence and pressure of the peer group, which can give him instructions.

If the child learns to reason on his own, it will use critical thinking and will only be able to make decisions. Instead of reacting immediately and taking matters into their own hands, the parent should let the child say what he or she thinks, how he or she feels and offer a solution. Active listening is one of the most difficult communication skills to master. It is important for the parent to listen to the child when it speaks, because that way he will teach him to think.

It is necessary for the parent to ask questions with interest, as follows: What...? How...? Why...? and have enough time to hear and find out what the child is thinking and feeling. If the parent does not have enough time to listen to the child's answers, then it is advisable not to ask them.

Another way a parent can show his child that he is listening is to act like a "mirror" by reacting back to what he has heard. The parent's task is to repeat to the child what he has heard from him. It is best to use other words but keep the content the same.

This is more effective when the parent leaves room for the child to express his feelings and not condemn them, then to "give lectures". This way the parents will enable the child to learn. Sometimes it is more effective for the parent to keep quiet and not say a word. So the parent will be surprised at how much the child has to say. The parent can maintain the conversation through non-verbal communication, through facial expressions, body posture or add simple words such as: aha, mmm, hmm, etc., but with visible interest.

It is very important for the parent to speak in a language that is understandable to the child and appropriate for his age. He needs to be clear and very specific, not to use offensive words, and during the conversation to show the child that he respects and loves him.

When at the age of three, children dress like Spiderman or Cinderella, they are cute and interesting, and when at age of 16 they dress in wide and down pants, suddenly according to the parent they are dressed in rags. It is difficult for the parent to accept everything that means modern and new, and that is not in accordance with the parental standard, such as tattoos, piercings, earrings in unusual places, and so on.

In such situations, to overcome the tension between the child and the parent, it is advisable to use humor. For example, it is good for the parent to pretend to read a horoscope in the child's sign, then to say something positive about what is important to them or that the parent zodiac sign says that a child should be hugged five times a day. Nicknames can be used, children love when the parent jokes about them, but for their uniqueness and

difference from other children, in a positive connotation, It is good for the parent to laugh with the child, but never make fun of him.

CONCLUSION

The family is a dynamic whole that develops through several life cycles, faces expected and unexpected events and adapts to internal and external changes. The most challenging stage in the development of a family is the growth of children.

The family environment is like an arena in which the first child's psycho-physical potentials are awakened and activated, the positive tendencies that come to the fore in development are encouraged and directed.

But in order for the trip to be enjoyable and successful, it is important for the parent to get to know well their companion - the child. On the above pages there are many guidelines and suggestions on how the parent can recognize the signs that lead to safe roads, but also tips on how to make the parent, the guide of the trip, feel comfortable, useful and successful. Parenting lasts a lifetime, it develops, upgrades and changes, but it still exists.

However, parenting exists and becomes the most important, timeless value for both the child and the parent, as well as for the community. It is therefore necessary for parenting to be supported, taught and practiced in its best and positive forms.

This concluding section will provide some practical tips for each parent:

- Accept and respect the child!
- Talk to the child, do not yell at him!
- Guide the child with love and support!
- Participate in joint activities with the child!
- Create a stimulating environment for the child to play, learn and develop!
- Encourage the child!
- Learn more about child development.
- Children need help and support, not punishment.
- Respect the rights of the child and his personality.
- Children learn from you, be a good example.
- Children learn boundaries when we are honest, fair and consistent.

The birth of a child should mean that the parent have made a conscious decision to accept that great responsibility and obligation to invest themselves in the upbringing of their child. The content presented in this

paper aims to raise to a higher level the awareness of all parents regarding the responsibility towards creating a healthy generation. Raise awareness of how parents communicate with their children.

Namely, it is important to keep in mind that when a parent says something to his child, he also says something about the child. That is why the way parents communicate with their children has a great impact on the child and on their relationship.

The communication style and the way the parent sends the messages can close / interrupt or open and stimulate the communication channel with the child. In addition to WHAT is said, equally important for the effect of the message is HOW it is said (what kind of intonation, gesture, facial expression is accompanied by the message being sent, etc.).

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