



Parenting Tips

THE POWER OF PATIENCE

For parents, patience is more than a virtue; it's an absolute necessity. But not every parent has enough patience and almost every parent runs out of it at some point. Remaining calm and steadfast even in the face of opposition (a defiant child), difficulty (dinner is burned) or adversity (your mate is working late again), is not always easy to do. Patience helps effective parents deal calmly and rationally with day-to-day problems and annoyances—to stay focused on the "bigger picture" and not get bogged down by daily hassles. Patience helps them maintain emotional stability even in times of crisis.

It's possible to develop or increase patience as patience is both attitude and ability, and parents can work to change both. Attitudes have a tremendous effect on how you deal with everyday experiences. And attitudes can become self-fulfilling prophecies. If you believe that you have no patience and are inadequate as a parent, you are more likely to continue patterns that increase your frustration and decrease your effectiveness. Your self-confidence will suffer, undermining your ability to find successful solutions to problems.

Your attitudes about your children also affect your parenting style. If you believe that your kids are spoiled, that they misbehave on purpose and that they are "out to get you," you will have little patience with them. On the other hand, if you believe they will make mistakes as they grow and learn, you will take more time to help them learn from these mistakes.

Parents should take the long-term view--eventually, young children learn to use the toilet and teens become adults--even though you feel you may never survive toilet training or adolescence. Your goal is to help your child through the stages of life. The patient parent considers "the big picture" rather than get caught up in the minutia of life. What's more important-- how a teen cuts her hair or dresses or that she doesn't drink and take drugs?

Skills that can help you maintain your patience include taking care of your own personal and emotional needs. Sufficient sleep and regular exercise are vital, as is taking a neutral approach and not responding impulsively or instinctually. Allow time to calm down, counting to 10, using deep breathing and other quieting or relaxation techniques. Use effective problem-solving methods: understand all aspects of the problem and think of as many solutions as possible.

Patience parenting takes time. Plan ahead and manage time well. Allow enough time to get things done without feeling rushed or under pressure. Allow time for unexpected difficulties like sick, cranky children.

Parents who discover the power of patience can find peace of mind and serenity as a parent. They accept that struggle and difficulty are part of everyday life and that a patient, optimistic approach will help them move forward more quickly than complaining, angry words and lingering resentment.

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