



Happy parents = happy families

When parents practice the art of controlling their emotions, children and teens thrive in a safe, mutually respectful and predictable environment. The following three steps will lower parents' blood pressure, help them feel more in control and better about themselves. When parents are happy, the family is happy.

1. **Create "Me-Time" and "Us-Time."** Parents must take care of themselves and their marriage first. When parents sacrifice all of their extra time and money for the children, mom and dad suffer, and the marriage begins to deteriorate.

"Me-time" for the primary caregiver – mom or dad -- is as simple as setting aside two hours a week for themselves.

To avoid paying for child care, trade childcare with friends to ensure parents get the time off. Ask grandparents to help.

Keep the time available to do something the parents enjoy. Do not use it for chores. Have some fun. Happy parents have more tolerance and patience and are better able to control their emotions when their children test their patience.

2. **When setting limits with children say it ONCE**, then take action **before** getting mad. When you follow this one guideline, your family life will improve. This means choosing your priorities and following through on them. When you start being consistent by giving ONE limit or direction and take action immediately – without counting, threatening or yelling – your children will realize you mean business. They will respond differently. You can train your children to listen to you by taking kind, firm and fair action before getting mad. Taking action eliminates "mother deafness" when children have learned to ignore directions. Children and teens will feel more secure because they are contained.
3. **Create a positive parenting plan.** When you have a plan for difficult situations, you will be able to take action with confidence, kindness and firmness. For example, Meg anticipates her three children need time to re-adjust when they come back from a visit with their father. Meg's routine is either to stop at a playground for 20 or 30 minutes, or pushing aside the furniture at home and having a massage or yoga session on the floor together. Investing 20 or 30 minutes in positive attention prevents problems later and eases the transition. Children thrive on routines. Routines show mutual respect. Children crave routines.

Have a plan ready

What difficult times can you anticipate in your home? How would a positive parenting plan make your before school or bedtime routines flow more smoothly?

"Management" is the ability to get people to do what you want them to do.

When you are relaxed and have a plan, it is easier to manage your family.