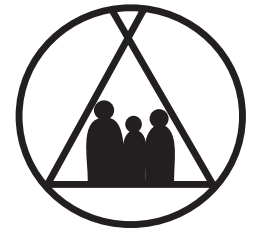




Principles of Child Rearing



The Challenge of Being a Parent/Caregiver

*Adapted from
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By learning more about children and their needs and by talking to other parents, we can learn how to make us more effective.

Of all the jobs in the world, raising children may be the trickiest. Children are often hard to understand. They seem impossible to control. Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, it seems that everything we do is wrong. No one can make child rearing easy. But by learning more about children and their needs and by talking to other parents, we can learn how to make us more effective. With this information we hope to help you find ways to be more effective. We also hope you will talk with other parents/caregivers who can give you good ideas.

What are the most important things parents/caregivers can do for their children?

How can you tell when you are a successful parent/caregiver? What are the qualities you most want your children to develop? One child psychologist suggested that there are two qualities that are most important for children, and all people, to develop.

The first quality is to be strong. Children should learn to make decisions, to be responsible, and to be trustworthy. They should learn how to deal with difficult situations.

The second quality is to be caring. Children should learn to love and be loved, to care about people, to show respect, and to be close with their families and others.

Developing strength and caring is important, but it is not easy. This information, hopefully, will give you ideas about how to help your children develop both qualities.

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CASE II:

Mary really loved her daughter. But she was always stressed-out or tired. She yelled at her daughter and spanked her a lot.

How can we develop caring children?

What experiences do you think will help children become caring, loving people? Do you think Mary's child was learning to be a caring, loving person? What message do you think the child was getting from her mother? Even though Mary really loved her child, the child probably did not feel loved.

If a child is to become a caring, loving person, she needs to see her world as a loving and sensitive place. When parents/caregivers take time to understand a child's needs and to be helpful, they are helping the child to feel loved.

Once again, imagine that you are your own child. From that point of view, do you see your home as a caring and loving place? Do people take time to understand your feelings? Do they express their love? Do they show that they love each other? When they make mistakes, do they try to find better ways to help?

If it seems that people are often unloving or unkind in your home, you will want to make some changes. Can you find ways to help you deal with stress? Can you find ways to guide your child without getting angry? Can you find ways to send the message of love to your child?

When we review how we are raising our children, we can ask ourselves two basic questions:

- Am I helping my child develop into a strong person by setting reasonable rules and consistently enforcing them?
- Am I helping my child develop into a caring person by being loving and sensitive?

Good child rearing pays off

You work at becoming a good parent/caregiver so that your children will turn out to be strong, caring adults. But what are the benefits for you? Does being a good parent/caregiver take tons of work and leave you worn-out? Why go to all the trouble?

Positive childrearing is easier, in the long run, than negative childrearing. Good childrearing practices are like good car repair. When someone does repair work with good tools and who understands the job, the car will run well. When someone who knows little or is careless repairs a car, the car is likely to be a big problem.

Children are more likely to be moody, angry, disobedient, immature, and low in social ability if negative childrearing practices are used. More positive childrearing practices are helping children to develop to be happy, capable, responsible, and enjoyable. Which kind of children do you prefer to live with?

Reading about childrearing, taking classes (as you do now), and visiting with other parents, whom you respect will help you become more effective. It does take effort to learn about children and to be a good parent/caregiver. It takes time to reason with children, to read them stories, and to follow up on rules. But it makes life more pleasant and helps you develop children you will be proud of.

Each parent/caregiver is different

Each person has different strengths and weaknesses. If you are a very caring parent/caregiver already, you may find that you need to spend most of your effort learning how to be strong and set limits. If you are a very strong person, you may need to practice being understanding and sending messages of love.

Each child is different

Just as with caregivers, each child has different strengths and weaknesses. You may have one child who craves excitement. You may have one who loves to be cuddled. The differences between children make childrearing exciting and challenging. We must work at understanding each child and his or her unique abilities and needs.

Caregivers need help, too

- A happy caregiver is a better caregiver. Therefore it is important to strengthen you as well as your child.



*For more information,
contact your county office of
the NDSU Extension Service.*

*Look in your telephone directory
under your county's name
to find the number.*



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