Connection is key to a happy childhood

By Edward M. Hallowell, MD

We talk a lot about the importance of connection and connectedness. And, if you judge by our use of electronic devices, you would think that we’re all pretty connected. But are we becoming connected electronically and disconnected personally?

Let’s look at the kinds of connectedness that help kids develop to their fullest potential. A large national study of adolescents identified two factors that were the most positive for children’s development—and also protected them from negative outcomes.

The first was connectedness at home: the feeling of being understood, loved, wanted and paid attention to by family members. The second was connectedness at school: the feeling that they are treated fairly, are close to people and that they get along with teachers and students.

Start with love

The starting point in creating a connected childhood is unconditional love from parents and other adults who are important and active in a child’s life. But loving a child unconditionally doesn’t mean you don’t have expectations for her or him. Having high expectations is a good thing, just not unrealistically high. When love always has to be earned (when parents imply “I’d love you even more if you got all A’s”), children may feel they can never please their parents, no matter what.

Have realistic expectations

It’s easy to get caught up in the great riptide that sucks kids out of childhood and into an achievement fast-lane as early as nursery school. Be assured that by providing connectedness, above all, you are giving your child the best “leg up” on the competition to come. The connected child will achieve at the level he or she is supposed to and will enjoy doing so.

At the opposite extreme of driving kids too hard is not expecting enough from them. This form of disconnection is called indifference. For example, if a child senses that nobody cares enough to make sure homework gets done, this can lead to sadness, loneliness and low self-esteem, which can result in self-destructive behavior.

As with everything else, finding balance is the key.
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Being a loving, connected parent doesn’t mean giving children too much, too soon and always coming to their rescue. Kids don’t really need a lot of fancy toys or clothes. What they do need is our time, interest, love, guidance and ability to say no.

We help our children the most by helping them help themselves. They need our supervision, but they don’t need us to produce around-the-clock entertainment.

When we do too much, we deny children both the opportunity to deal with adversity and the opportunity to create and sustain their own joy.

The most important advice in any parenting book should be: Enjoy your children. Learn from them. Listen to what they say and play with them while you can.

Elements of connection

Other kinds of connections can also help form a firm foundation on which to build an entire life. These include family togetherness and positive connections to friends, the neighborhood, school, community, sports, the arts and a sense of the past.

Here are some suggestions to encourage these connections.

Family togetherness

- **Talk about it with your kids.** Say the words: “It really matters to us as a family that we create a feeling of togetherness and connection.” Ask your children why they think it’s important or not to feel connected.

- **Make time for family dinner as often as you can.** If that doesn’t work, try family breakfast—or get together in the evening. Making this time essential. It’s hard to develop a feeling of connectedness if you are rarely together.

- **Read aloud to your kids** as long as they’ll let you. It promotes connectedness, literacy and the growth of imagination. Studies show that two family activities correlate with higher scores on achievement tests: eating dinner together and being read aloud to as a child.

- **Set limits respectfully, in the name of a principle such as fair play or respecting a person’s feelings.** Apply this to the other adults around you—and be aware that children who bully others usually learn this behavior at home from their parents.

- **Talk.** Television, video games and the pervasive use of smartphones and computers have significantly reduced the number of words exchanged in families. Find places to talk like riding in a car or sitting in the kitchen.

- **Stick up for what you think is right as a parent, even if it takes time to talk through a particular issue.** Disconnected families may not care enough to argue. Or family members may feel like they’re just too busy to discuss the matter thoroughly.

Friends and community

- **Show kids the importance of friendship.** Keep up with your own friends. Talk about not excluding people, and treat others the way you want to be treated.

- **Tell children stories about your friends—and listen to the stories they tell about theirs.** Learn more about your kids’ friends than just their names.

- **Look for new ways to connect with neighbors.** The old neighborhoods, where friends looked out their windows and kept an eye on kids, have disappeared in most parts of the country.

- **Develop strategies for living in a “new neighborhood” that is made up of people from your kids’ school or play group.** They may not all live nearby, but you can keep up with them by phone, text and through social media.

- **Don’t overprotect your child socially.** But if she or he is being teased a lot at school, talk with the teacher about what might be done. Or ask a pediatrician for guidance. It’s better to deal with a potential learning or behavior problem early.

Responsibility to contribute

- **Kids may roll their eyes when you use the words responsibility and making a contribution.** But they are important words to hear in terms of doing chores, and they will be remembered.

- **Get children involved in who does what chore.** Don’t sugarcoat the fact that some kinds of work are hard to do. Look for models from books, television and videos to illustrate how obnoxious a child can be who is spoiled, feels entitled and never has to do any chores.

- **If your child gets a job and has a difficult supervisor,** try to make it a chance to learn something. It can be like having a bad-teacher experience that everyone has endured. Talk about how to handle it, and encourage your child not to quit.

Activities and sports

- **Sometimes it’s good to push your child a bit to play a sport or take up a new activity.** Kids often resist because they’re afraid they’ll look stupid and mess up—which they may well do at first.

- **Children may need you to take them by the hand to overcome their fears.** Many adults regret that their parents didn’t try harder to get them to take music lessons or play a sport or other activity that is learned more easily when we are young. The more we expose kids to, the more likely they will be to find a lifelong interest.

- **The goal for kids should be to connect with a sport or activity.** Many children push themselves beyond what is reasonable to become “stars” or they get a lot of pressure to excel in a specific sport. At all costs, avoid being a fanatical hypercompetitive parent!

- **Sports can build confidence or make kids feel like total losers.** A bad sports experience can be especially harmful to a boy. Being humiliated on the playing field can do as much lasting damage as being humiliated in the classroom. If you create a negative frame of mind in sports or academics, kids will feel bad about themselves and not do well. I don’t know why teachers and coaches have missed this obvious point, but they have. Learning of all kinds happens best without fear.

—Dr. Hallowell is a best-selling author and founder of The Hallowell Centers. This article was adapted from his book “The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness.” Visit drhallowell.com and the podcast Distraction.
Why handling boredom is good for our kids

A friend gave me an idea for a “Boredom Busting” jar for our kids to fill with their ideas for non-screen things to do this summer. I thought you’d like to hear about just a few from their list: Blindfold my sister and take her on a tour of the neighborhood. String beads to make friendship bracelets. Build a fort. Draw pictures with our feet. Start a library club. Brush the dog.

I’d love to hear other ideas for ways to respond when our kids tell us, “Mom, Dad, I’m bored.” —N.D., Kansas City

You’re onto something with the Boredom Busting jar. The ability to encounter and engage with unstructured time is so important for kids’ healthy development. It’s tempting but counter-productive to respond to a child’s cries of boredom by offering TV or other forms of electronic media.

“Our kids have become so used to screen entertainment they aren’t practiced at looking inside themselves,” says parenting expert Laura Markham. “Their time is so structured they aren’t used to finding things to do on their own.”

Growing kids need all kinds of experiences—from building with blocks to creating pursuits on their own. They also need to be physically active, because our bodies are designed to move.

When young kids get whiny, Markham suggests, give them five minutes of “connection time.” Make sure their “love tank is full.” Play music and do a little dancing with them. Then ask some “what to do” questions.

If you are busy at home, get some help. Young children love to wash windows, help fold laundry or “clean out” the cupboard of your pots and pans.

Once children can read, there is never “nothing to do.” A whole world of books awaits. Schedule a weekly trip to the library to find wonderful books. Pick out some good chapter books kids might not choose themselves.

In most countries boys perform slightly better than girls in science and math. But girls outperform boys in reading in virtually all countries and economies.

Japanese students continued to score well above the global average in science, math and reading, and Japanese girls consistently score higher than boys.

Girls scored higher than boys on the two-hour exam in several other countries as well, such as Finland, Lithuania, Albania, Kyrgyzstan and Thailand. Girls significantly outperformed boys in Jordan, where experts say that 15-year-old girls have a strong economic incentive to do well in school.

Testing 15-year-olds from around the world

Who does better on tests of science, math and reading? Girls or boys? It all depends—both on the subject area and where in the world they live. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development tests about half a million 15-year-olds annually in 65 developed countries.

It’s known as PISA, for Programme for International Student Assessment.

Top-performing students in science are able to use abstract scientific concepts to explain phenomena and events. In math, they can do advanced mathematical reasoning. In reading, they can retrieve deeply embedded information from a text or graph.

Test results can be found at www.oecd.org/pisa. You can compare scores by country and view equity-issue findings in three categories: boys vs. girls, social backgrounds and immigrant students. There are also webinars on “Gender Differences in Education” and “Closing the Achievement Gap,” for example. Information is available in English, Spanish and French. Here are some of their findings:

Students in the United States continued to score slightly above the international average in science and reading and significantly below the average in math. Boys scored better than girls, and immigrant students were among the highest performers.

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Students who feel part of a school community and enjoy good relations with their parents and teachers are more likely to perform better academically and be happier with their lives. (See front page article.)

PISA made this social analysis for the first time in 2015. It’s based on students’ relationships with their peers and their teachers, their home life and how they spend time when they are not in school.

Calories count in that cup of coffee or tea

If you are one of the 51 percent of Americans who enjoy a cup of coffee every day—or the 26 percent who drink tea—here’s some not-so-sweet news.

A recent study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of California at San Diego found that adding sugar, honey, cream, half-and-half or a flavored syrup (which most of us do), seriously boosts the number of calories in your drink.

When the drinks are plain, coffee contains 5 calories and tea contains just 2.

But the more typical cup of coffee actually has about 69 calories, including 42 from sugar and 13 from saturated fat.

The more typical cup of tea contains 43 calories including 37 from sugar and 2 from saturated fat.
Sound advice for relating to someone with dementia

If an older relative or friend is having trouble with his or her memory, you may wonder if this is the onset of dementia.

Dementia is a term for a cluster of symptoms caused by the death of brain cells. Memory loss is often, but not always, the first major symptom. Other symptoms may include changes in personality and difficulties with reasoning, solving problems, judgment, language or controlling emotions. And, generally, the condition is irreversible.

Alzheimer’s disease is the most common of various types of dementia. So, if someone is told she or he has “dementia,” it may or may not be Alzheimer’s.

It’s not just ‘old age’

“Faced with symptoms that suggest a problem, family members should be prepared to act as advocates and seek an appropriate medical assessment,” says Peter Silin, an author and consultant on aging issues. “Saying ‘it’s just old age’ is an inappropriate response to memory loss.”

Because one form of dementia attacks the emotional centers of the brain, you may notice that your relative has less control over her or his feelings. Another form attacks the frontal lobe, which affects the ability to plan, make sound judgments and carry out tasks.

As dementia worsens, the ability to interpret social cues may be lost. Your relative may be unable to ask for what he or she needs. As the disease progresses, the sense of time may also be distorted.

If this happens, it is not helpful to tell an older relative that something will happen in a week or day or even an hour.

“But if you have news that brings happiness—such as your granddaughter is going to have a baby”—there’s nothing wrong with saying it every day,” Silin says. “The joy will be like hearing it for the first time.”

Short-term memory loss

The memory loss associated with dementia is due mainly to temporal lobe damage. Typically, short-term memory is lost first but the person can still maintain his or her longer-term memory. When this happens, many people revert to living in the past.

In dementia’s early stages, your relative may know something’s wrong but may not know what it is. This may cause embarrassment and fear. The feeling of losing control of your world can lead to denials and cover-ups. It can be expressed as anger, withdrawal or depression.

Try to be understanding

In later stages of dementia, people may be able to understand what’s being said but may stop trying to express themselves. And if they do express themselves, they may not remember what they said.

As time goes by and more brain cells are lost, it’s important to remember that your loved one still has feelings. Insist that he or she be treated with respect by family members and caregivers. Do your best to interpret what the person is attempting to say.

People with dementia will still respond to a warm embrace, holding hands or gentle massage. They can sense compassion, warmth and acceptance. Rough and abrupt treatment is frightening.

Behavioral tips

★ Don’t be too abrupt. Approach your older relative slowly to get his or her attention. Say what’s going on or what’s going to happen. Give one-step instructions. Be patient. Explain things in different ways at different times of the day.

★ Make sure your relative can hear and see you when you’re trying to have a conversation. Are his glasses on? Is her hearing aid working properly? If you’re giving instructions, remove background noise. A loud TV or radio increases the likeliness that you will not be understood.

★ Ask questions that can be answered with a yes or no. Instead of “Tell me about your day,” ask “Did you have a good day?” If your relative is struggling to express something, it can help to ask a few simple, direct questions or supply a word or two.

★ Validate feelings when he or she says things not based in reality. If your mother suddenly asks about your father, you need not remind her that he died many years ago. Just say he’s okay and go on to reminisce together about him. And avoid asking “don’t you remember” questions.

★ Be specific with any directions. For example, instead of “Hurry up, we have to go,” say “Come with me. Here’s your coat.” Instead of “What do you want to drink?” try “Tea or coffee?”

★ Acknowledge older relatives’ anger and frustration. Do all you can to preserve their dignity. Try to protect them from situations that cause anxiety, agitation or fear.

★ Focus on strengths—what your relative can still do or talk about. For example, try leaving out some paper and writing materials. Your parent may like the feeling of being “back at work,” opening mail and sending memos.

★ Pay closer attention to body language. Pacing and other anxious behavior may be a sign that your relative is cold, hungry or needs to use the bathroom.

★ Go to quiet places. Avoid high-stimulation environments such as a noisy restaurant.

★ Lock drawers that hold important papers, knives, scissors or items of value that your relative might lose or use in an unsafe manner.

★ Keep reminding yourself that a physical condition in the brain is the problem. Your relative is not acting this way on purpose. ◆
New study on the changing roles of today’s dads

Fathers want to be active and engaged with their families. And, today, more than two out of three dads express a desire to be an “equal parenting partner.” But research has found that less than one-third of dads say they’re able to achieve that goal.

Over the last nine years, the Boston College Center for Work & Family has conducted studies on the ways in which men’s roles are changing.

Fathers today are caring and committed to their roles both at work and at home, but researchers have found that while many dads say they want to spend more time with their kids, they feel constrained by their work obligations.

For example, two out of three fathers say that caregiving should be divided 50/50 with their partner, but fewer than one out of three dads actually manage to do so.

“The fact that so many fathers feel conflicted is a major finding of our years of fatherhood research,” says Dr. Brad Harrington, director of the Boston College Center for Work & Family.

Different types of dads

To understand differences between dads—in terms of balancing one’s career and caregiving—the Center’s new study examined data by generation. Researchers looked at differences and similarities between Millennial, Generation X and Baby Boomer fathers.

The findings suggest three distinct “fatherhood types.”

The first group of dads thought caregiving should be divided equally with their partners, and in their homes it was. These are called Egalitarian fathers.

The second group also felt that caregiving should be divided equally with their partners, but they admitted that their partners did more than they did. They were labeled Conflicted dads.

In fact, regardless of generation, the most observable pattern across a broad range of findings was that Conflicted fathers scored lower on job, career and life satisfaction questions.

The study authors suggest that what today’s Conflicted fathers are experiencing is very similar to the dilemma working moms have faced for years: “Is it possible to have it all?”

The struggle to have a professional career while also being an engaged caregiver is one that many mothers can easily relate to. What’s new is that this struggle is being amplified significantly for modern day working dads.

Reality bites

While dads may want to provide equally shared care, their sincere intentions compete with their own career advancement goals, as well as the signals many men receive in the workplace—that their breadwinning responsibilities and careers should always come first.

“It is clear that fathers are in a period of transition in the U.S.,” according to this new report.

“The stereotype of fathers being career-centric parents who are emotionally detached from their family and don’t seek intimate relationships with their children is outdated. A significant number of men are caught between two competing ideals—that of ideal worker and ideal parent.”

The bottom line

The fact is that societal transitions tend to happen slowly, and we typically experience many bumps along the way.

Reducing the conflict that so many fathers feel is not an easy process. But, over time, recognizing these issues and bringing them to the forefront of our discussions will have positive benefits for fathers in the workplace and at home.
Give the ‘feel, felt, found’ formula a try

W e all know smart people who have great technical skills and are experts in their fields, but they don’t get along well with their employees, coworkers or managers. All too often, they are ineffective as members or leaders of teams and they are not as respected as they could or should be in their organizations.

One reason for this is that they are not very good communicators. In fact, communication is a skill many of us can use some help with.

As the management guru Peter Drucker wrote, communication is responsible for 60 percent of all of our problems. So how do we get better at listening and talking so we will hear and be heard more effectively?

Here are some ideas:

Stop talking. “When the mouth is engaged, the ears are out of gear,” says professional development expert Wolf Rinke, PhD.

Focus on the other person. When you’re having a conversation with another person, focus on what he or she is saying, and don’t think about what and how you’re going to answer. We have all read this advice before, of course. The challenge is to really try doing it.

Show the other person you are listening. Remove distractions. Silence your phone. Make and try to maintain eye contact. Lean slightly toward the person who is talking. By all means, don’t attempt to catch someone else’s eye or check out what else is going on around you.

Show empathy. At different points in the conversation, say “I understand,” “I know what you’re saying,” “I see” or “I’m with you.”

Test whether you heard the other person correctly. Summarize it: “Did I understand you correctly that we agreed to...?” Avoid asking repeatedly, “Do you understand?” People don’t like to say they didn’t follow what you were saying.

Use the “feel, felt, found” formula. To be more persuasive, try: “I know how you feel. I felt the same way before I found out about...” (See the tinted box below for other “win-win” outcomes from Wolf Rinke’s book Winning Management.)

Keep it short and simple. Whether you are speaking or writing, you’ll lose people’s interest if you ramble on. You’ll irritate them if you’re repetitious. Avoid fancy language. Instead of saying “That’s something I’d like to explore further,” just say “I’ll look into it.” The word “now” is much stronger than “at the present time.”

To make your language more powerful

In his book Winning Management, business consultant Wolf Rinke, PhD, suggests many ways to achieve “win-win” outcomes at the workplace. For example:

To increase cooperation, try asking Are you willing to...?
To increase accountability, ask Can I count on you to...?
To avoid justification, give an example: I found it works to...
To deflect hostility, express empathy. Say I understand your point of view.
To diffuse conflict, use “I” language. Instead of “You’re wrong.” Say I disagree.
To communicate with precision, do a reality test. What I heard you say is...
To increase understanding, try asking What is it specifically that you don’t understand?
To assume more responsibility for communication, trying using “I” language. I’m not saying this clearly.
To get things done, focus on the outcome, not the process. What stands in your way...?
To achieve win-win, ask What can I do for you?

Express yourself in a positive way. Positively worded statements are easier to understand and make for a much more pleasant interaction. “I’ll get that for you in five minutes” works much better than “No, wait a minute, I can’t do that now.” Or try saying, “Let me say that in a different way” instead of “Don’t you understand?”

Rather than telling someone, “You’re not listening to me,” try a more upbeat approach: “I’m not expressing myself as clearly as I should. Let me try to be a little more precise.”

Make everyone a winner. Look for ways to make the person you’re talking with feel like a winner, too. If someone is joining your team, for example, ask what he or she might contribute to the group’s objectives. Ask also: “How can I help you?” or “What options can we consider that will...?”

When you make it clear that you’re interested in making other people successful, they will be more likely to share information with you—as well as contribute their best effort.

Be trustworthy and honest in your communications. Don’t play games with people. Be careful how you express yourself. Watch out for those automatic phrases you hear all the time such as “quite frankly” or “to be perfectly honest.” They may suggest that you’re only being frank or honest about this one thing.

Don’t be uncomfortable about admitting that you were wrong or that you need help. Get used to saying: “I just don’t know,” “I have made a mistake,” “I’ve changed my mind” or “Can you help me?”

“‘We’re all pretty fast, direct talkers on our team.’

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Guide to help recognize signs of a stroke

The Cincinnati Prehospital Stroke Scale (CPSS) bears repeating, because speedy treatment for a stroke is so crucial.

The CPSS tests three signs. If any one of the three is abnormal, the person should be sent to a hospital immediately.

Facial droop. Have the person smile or show his or her teeth.

Normal: Both sides of face move equally.

Abnormal: One side of face does not move as well as the other (or at all)

Arm drift. Have the person close his or her eyes and hold his or her arms straight out in front for about 10 seconds.

Normal: Both arms move equally or not at all.

Abnormal: One arm does not move, or one arm drifts down compared with the other side.

Speech. Have the person say, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks” or some other simple saying.

Normal: The person uses correct words with no slurring.

Abnormal: Slurred or inappropriate words or mute.

People with any one of these findings—as a new event—have a 72 percent probability of an ischemic stroke. If all three findings are present the probability of an acute stroke is more than 85 percent.

“The sooner the patient receives treatment, the better the chances for a full recovery,” says Dr. Amy S. Hurwitz, an emergency medicine specialist in Durham, NC. ♦

Quiz: What diet can do for you (or not)

Here’s a tough quiz from the Center for Science in the Public Interest’s Nutrition Action Healthletter. Feel free to cheat—the answers are full of good information.

1. Which is LEAST likely to help prevent memory loss? (a) controlling blood pressure, (b) filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables, (c) keeping a lid on blood sugar, (d) avoiding gluten, (e) getting enough exercise.

2. Which is LEAST likely to cause food poisoning? (a) mayonnaise, (b) chicken, (c) green salad, (d) ground beef, (e) raw sprouts.

3. Which is LEAST likely to lower the risk of breast cancer? (a) staying at a healthy weight, (b) exercising on most days, (c) avoiding soy foods, (d) not taking hormones after menopause, (e) limiting alcohol.

4. Which is likely to have the fewest pesticide residues? (a) tomatoes, (b) onions, (c) bell peppers, (d) spinach, (e) celery.

5. Which is LEAST likely to lower your risk of type 2 diabetes? (a) almond milk, (b) spinach, (c) bran cereal, (d) beans, (e) coffee.

6. Which is LEAST likely to reduce arthritis pain in your knees?

(a) taking a 30-minute walk on most days, (b) strengthening your quad muscles, (c) doing aquatic exercise, (d) taking vitamin D, (e) losing excess weight.

7. Four of these conditions are linked to sexual dysfunction in men. Which one isn’t? (a) obesity, (b) diabetes, (c) muscle loss, (d) high LDL cholesterol, (e) high blood pressure.

8. Which is LEAST likely to lower your risk of cataracts? (a) not smoking, (b) eating leafy greens, (c) taking a multivitamin, (d) taking high doses of vitamin C, (e) wearing sunglasses year-round.

9. What’s the surest way to get enough vitamin D? (a) drink a daily glass of milk, (b) take a daily supplement, (c) eat an egg every day, (d) spend 30 minutes a day outdoors, (e) eat a daily yogurt.

The Answers

1. (d) avoiding gluten, contrary to claims. The four other choices are more likely to lower your risk of dementia.

2. (d) mayonnaise, despite its reputation, it’s been linked to fewer outbreak than the other choices.

3. (c) avoiding soy foods. Soy has not been found to raise or lower the risk of breast cancer in Western women. Taking hormones for a few years poses a smaller risk for women in their 50s.

4. (b) onions. Any fruit or veggie with an outer peel or rind is less likely to have pesticide residues.

5. (a) almond milk. All of the other choices, even coffee, have been linked to a lower risk.

6. (d) taking vitamin D. Exercising and strengthening your quad muscles are a better bet.

7. (c) muscle loss. All of the others are a risk factor for ED.

8. (d) taking high doses of vitamin C. There’s research evidence for all but vitamin C.

9. (d) taking a daily supplement. Adults need 600 IU a day and people after 70 need at least 800 IU. The other choices may help, but not nearly enough. ♦

Having trouble sleeping? These tips may help

If you are having trouble sleeping, here’s what the sleep experts suggest:

Stay on schedule. Aim for a regular bedtime and don’t nap after 3 pm.

Avoid big meals late at night. They may cause indigestion.

Exercise daily, but not within 2 to 3 hours before you go to bed.

Avoid caffeine. It can take up to 8 hours to fully wear off.

Turn off bright lights. This includes your phone, tablet, computer and TV.

Keep your bedroom cool.

Avoid alcohol before bed. It reduces the time you spend dreaming and in deep sleep. It may also wake you up in the middle of the night.

Try a hot bath before bedtime. Afterwards, your body temperature drops and may trigger sleep.

Check your meds. Some medicines for coughs, colds or allergies contain ingredients that can keep you up at night.

Try CBT. This refers to cognitive-behavioral therapy. It can curb negative thoughts and anxiety and may also help with chronic insomnia.

If nothing seems to help, talk to your doctor. ♦
Valuable new guide on using gentle discipline

Many people believe that discipline means punishment. But discipline is really about teaching and learning, says author Sarah Ockwell-Smith. She calls it “gentle discipline” in her wonderful new book. She shows how to use it, plus ways it can foster the development of empathic, kind, confident, respectful and happy children.

It’s not as hard as you think to develop children like this, says Ockwell-Smith. You need only do three things: respect, understand and guide. Respect and understand your kids’ feelings and points of view, as well as their current capabilities, and gently guide them to do and be better.

Gentle discipline is about conscious, mindful decisions. Her approach helps parents find a more effective, positive, individualized method of interacting with their children. Citing the current research in child development, psychology and neuroscience, she helps parents understand:

- **How children learn:** the four main learning styles and even some discipline ideas based on these different styles.
- **How children’s brains develop:** ensuring that what we expect of our children is appropriate for their age and cognitive ability.
- **The problem with common discipline methods:** the use of praise, logical, illogical and natural consequences.
- **How to cope with behavioral issues:** sibling rivalry, lying, swearing, not listening, refusing to do things.
- **School discipline:** the problem with extrinsic motivation in the classroom. What happens when the discipline at school and at home are different.
- **Working with parental demons:** dealing with your own anger. Why parents get angry and what to do about it.

**Gentle Discipline: Using Emotional Connection—Not Punishment—to Raise Confident, Capable Kids** (Penguin/Tarcher-Perigee) is available in bookstores and online in paperback, Kindle, Audible Audio and Audible CD editions.