

Black Parent Network

Parenting Tips

FREE E BOOK



Black Parent Network

Off The Shelf Publication

BLACK PARENT NETWORK

Be A Part of The Solution



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Black Parenting Network's Parenting Tips

Parenting a child is one of the most rewarding and sometimes challenging things that you can do in your life. It is often said that when kids are born they do not come with a manual and yet still we are expected to simply "get on with it!"

By talking to parents, grandparents and carers as well as researching the views of child psychologists the Black Parent Network brings you some of their tips to share their wisdom with you.

We do hope that you will find these tips useful and will share your own child rearing tips on the Black Parent Network website's forum.

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Founder Member

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1. Constantly Reaffirm Your Love And Support

As well as taking care of the physical needs of your child ensure that you provide them with the emotional support they need to feel that they are loved and lovable.



Age appropriate displays of affection that your child

feels comfortable with is important. From hugs and verbal expressions of love are critical to your child's sense of security and well-being.



2. Be A Role Model

“Live your life so that your children can tell their grandchildren that you not only stood for something wonderful - you acted on it.”

-Dan Zadra

Bear in mind that children tend to do what you do rather than what you say so you need to consciously embrace this responsibility as a part of parenting to ensure that you do not unwittingly provide a model that you do not want your child to follow.

3. Be A Mentor To Your Child

Provide your child with constant guidance to give them the confidence to enable them to achieve the things they want to do in life on a personal and educational level. Encourage your child to have hopes and dreams for the future and give support to help them work towards their goals. It is better if your child sees you as their guide rather than looking to peers or other influences which may not be as positive.

4. Teach Your Child To Celebrate And Respect Their Cultural Heritage.



Wherever you or your ancestors come from – it is vital to your child’s sense of security and understanding of who they are to be able to learn about and take part as much as possible in their cultural heritage. Teach your child about the country, food, traditions, family members, great leaders and achievements. This is also a vital part of putting race and racism in its historical context and enabling your child to feel sure and proud of their own identity. Security about identity is key to minimising the effects when confronted with racist stereotypes and misinformation. As a part of their heritage ensure they understand and feel comfortable with that part of them that is black and British too.

5. Teach your child life skills

Life skills affect the way we conduct ourselves and this in turn affects our life chances.

self-motivation, inter-personal skills of the many skills enrich the quality of your relationships. know-how and life is vital training children in how to In particular these the key to success with challenging periods in their



Self-discipline, parenting and are only a few which can your life and Passing on your experience of for your live their lives. skills are also when faced situations and lives.

6. Listen To Your Child.

Many of us from African-Caribbean backgrounds have been brought up in a culture where we were discouraged from speaking out or “answering back” our elders. Children can be great teachers and if we don’t listen to them we don’t learn. Talk to your child and ask open questions which require more than a yes or no answer. Also be sure to listen and let them know that you take the things that they say on board – this is not the same as agreeing with them but at least this will help them to feel respected, heard and understood.



7. Take Responsibility For Your Child's Education.

Government statistics show that too many black children fail to do well in the school system. Teach your child the value of education and ensure that you take an active part in it. Talk to your child about their school work and sit and help them with homework. (My father is profoundly dyslexic and so virtually illiterate so he would ask me to read to him. There is no excuse for no involvement!) Keep regular contact with the school, see the teacher for one-to-one meetings about your child's progress as well as attending parent's evenings. In addition, so that you are able to give additional support at key times, keep abreast of educational requirements like preparation for key stage tests at 7 and 11 and GCSEs at 16.

8. Respect Gender Differences

Feminist arguments about the equal rights of males and females have often clouded the different nurturing needs of boys and girls. Children need to feel comfortable to grow up in a context where gender differences are respected but that sexist behaviour which ghettoises girls and boys into predefined roles is damaging and limiting. For example, respecting the male qualities of a boy does not mean that he cannot take a full and active part in domestic chores which have been seen as traditionally “female” tasks, it teaches him important life skills and in no way diminishes his masculinity.

9. Develop And Refine Your Parenting Skills.

Traditionally parenting skills were passed on from one generation of parents to the other. Living in the diaspora in the nuclear family model means that much of the guidance and support that our people traditionally took for granted is no longer available. As a consequence it is imperative that you take action to update your skills and knowledge. Seek out and share information and experiences with other black parents – particularly the ones who you think are doing a good job. Do not be afraid to ask for help when you feel out of your depth. Also read information on parenting both in books and on-line. There is a wealth of information out there. Admittedly much of it is generic and does not take on board black cultural and social

issues. Take what you need from these sources and leave the rest.



10. Set Limits And Boundaries

Be fair, firm and consistent. Ensure that your child knows the consequences of breaking the rules eg. grounding or withdrawal of treats. Reasonable limits and consequences enable a child to feel more secure and able to follow rules. It is easier to do if you start setting limits at an earlier age but limits are

necessary for all age groups. Your skill is to adapt boundaries so that older children are given more appropriate freedoms and limits to minimise resentment and rebellion.

11. Discipline

It works to enable a parent to use sanctions to teach their child that inappropriate behaviour and breaking reasonable rules can have consequences. This lesson is key because it also carries over into adult life – if we break the law we are forced to pay the consequences.



There are many forms of punishment from withdrawal of privileges through to smacking. Public and government opinion is currently against the use of violence against children and there is much evidence to support the view that being

violent towards children can lead to harm and teaches them to be violent.

Whatever your opinion on this debate obviously the key to discipline is that it must be fair and appropriate with the key objective of teaching your child the consequences of bad behaviour.

12. Take Care Of Any Negative Patterns That You Might Find That You Are Repeating As A Parent.

We all compare ourselves to our parents and swear that we will never do the things that our parents did that we did not like. However in many cases we find that we are behaving in the same or similar ways. Writer Iyanla Vanzant says “We do what was done to us. We behave the way we saw others behave. Unwittingly, with a great deal of denial, we repeat the physical, emotional and mental patterns set by our families.” The only way to stop the cycle and break the pattern is to acknowledge the cycle and deal with the emotional pain which drives us to respond the way we do.

13. Adapt Your Parenting Style And Support Your Child Through The Different Life Stages They Will Encounter



From baby, to puberty and adulthood your child will go through phenomenal changes and how you parent obviously has to change too. In many African cultures rites of passage from one life stage to the next hold a central part. The passage from childhood to adulthood at puberty is a key one. It would mean a formal change in the way that you were treated by your family and the community. Whether you think these traditions were good or bad they served an important purpose in enabling parents and the

community to recognise and support a child through some of the most confusing and challenging periods of their lives. These rights are largely now forgotten in many cultures, however the principle of recognising and supporting your child in line with the different stages that they reach as they develop and mature is vital to minimising rebellion and communication breakdowns later on.

14. Be There For Your Youth

Parenting young people can be very challenging. It is a time in your child's life when naturally they will question every aspect of their lives including your authority in a bid to define their own identity and independence. Guiding your child and dealing with the threat of drugs, under-age pregnancy, important examinations, career options, risk of offending and peer pressure at this stage is demanding for any parent.

However in a society which negatively stereotypes and disrespects young black people, treating them as something threatening, criminal and even perverse, it can be challenging for them to feel positive and secure about their identity. As a consequence it is vital that they are given the guidance and support of strong role models in the community in order that they are able to successfully model themselves on mature and stable adult role models. If you are having problems with your youth do not be afraid to seek advice and support from other parents. An external mentor of the same sex as your child may be of additional support.

