



The 8 Principles of Parenting For the 6-12 Year-Old-Child

1. Prepare for Parenting:

Become knowledgeable about your child's emotional, developmental and cognitive levels

- Prepare yourself to become an advocate for your child's education
- Increase your understanding of emotional development through the lens of attachment such as *Giving the Love that Heals: A Guide for Parents* or *Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child* by Harville Hendrix, PhD and Helen Hunt
- Learn about the normal stages of human development and the different kinds of temperament children have. For instance, the Gesell Institute of Human Development has a variety of parent-friendly books like *Your Five-Year Old*, *Your Six-Year Old*, etc.
- Develop an understanding of your child's learning style (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, etc.). Howard Gardner's book, *Multiple Intelligences*, is a good resource.
- Keep expectations appropriate to the developmental level of your child.
- Investigate all the educational options available that will best suit your child and family's needs.
- Nurture her natural desire to learn by helping your child develop her interests.

2. Respond with Sensitivity: Stay attuned and emotionally responsive

- Respect and acknowledge your child's emotions and feelings.
- See the world through the eyes of your child. Children do not perceive situations or think the way adults do, so try to keep your expectations appropriate to the developmental level of your child.
- Reflect back what your child may be feeling: "You're feeling angry because you want to play and it's time for us to go."
- Create an environment where your child feels safe to express his/her feelings. Listening and not over-reacting will help facilitate this.
- Keep the lines of communication open regardless of your child's behavior. Staying connected with your child is the most important thing you can do to help him/her get through the tough times. If you have difficulty handling your child's behavior, it may be helpful to seek the expertise of a professional.
- Children whose parents are empathic and emotionally responsive are better able to be empathic and responsive to others.

3. Feed with Love and Respect: Strive for healthy eating, family meals and good physical health

- Respect your body & mind by establishing and maintaining nutritious eating habits. Start nutritious foods early and children will be less resistant to these foods later. You can find healthy alternatives to junk food in most health food stores and general grocery stores.
- Change your own eating habits if necessary; you are your child's role model.
- Research all aspects of health care for your child, including immunizations, vitamins, and/or any recommendations made by health care providers to help you make informed decisions.
- Model good exercise habits, and make sure your child has plenty of opportunities for physical activities.
- Have regular family meals together and share cooking together as a family. This is an important time that helps families reconnect after a busy day.



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4. Use Nurturing Touch: Maintain an appropriate touch relationship

- Warm, nurturing human touch is important no matter what the age of the child.
- Be demonstrative of your love with hugs and kisses.
- As boys get older they may tend to resist affection, but they may not mind a pat on the back, a head massage or a shoulder rub.
- Find creative ways to incorporate touch through games ~ wrestling games with dad are fun but also can be a bullying prevention, teaching how the strong don't use all their strength to harm a weaker person. Use songs and stories for creative hand movements as you give a back massage.

5. Ensure Safe Sleep, Physically and Emotionally: Develop and maintain positive sleep routines

- Older children may still enjoy snuggle time with their parents before bed.
- Long before bedtime, establish routines for quieting down like having a bath, reading younger children a story while lying in their bed, or having a quiet conversation about their day.
- Try to maintain regular bedtime hours, especially during the school year.
- Try to avoid using media to habitually put your child to sleep ~this is often the most important part of the day to hear about your child's needs or challenges so try to make time to be with your child at bedtime.

6. Provide Consistent, Loving Care:

Be physically present and emotionally available for your children

- Children still desire, enjoy, and need the presence and availability of their parents.
- Being available makes children feel safe, cared for, and secure. Parents should remember that being physically present is not enough. Active listening, making eye contact, and knowing your children's friends will help keep the lines of communication open.
- Working parents should avoid the 'latch-key' temptation and find appropriate adult supervision for their children after school. Even teenagers need supervision – most teenage pregnancies occur between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

7. Practice Positive Discipline: Preserve the connection with your child using kindness, respect, and keeping the child's dignity intact

- Emotionally connected children trust and love their parents and are generally easier to discipline.
- Connected children are internally motivated to please their parents most of the time.
- Respond to misbehavior as a cue to reconnect with your child
- Be an active listener.
- Using natural consequences teaches your child more effectively than punishment.
- Children often communicate their feelings through their behavior. Try to understand what your child's behavior is telling you. By looking at the world through their eyes you model the first lessons of empathy. Helping your child think about and understand what others are feeling will also foster empathy.
- Remember that the ultimate goal of discipline is to help children develop inner self-control and self-discipline.



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8. Strive for Balance in Your Personal and Family Life: Become a conscious parent using mindfulness in your interactions; promote family togetherness

- Don't over-schedule extra-curricular activities.
- Allow your child some free time. Avoid scheduling every minute of your child's time. Children love to have time to hang around the house, read, have their friends over, talk, play games or be creative.
- Emphasize to your children the importance of family time and family traditions, regardless of the type of family you may have. If parents act as if family time isn't important, the children won't value it either.
- Individual children need individual time with one or both parents. Make a 'date' on a regular basis with each of your children for special time together.
- Create special family nights, like 'game night', 'movie night', or 'music night'. Most young children look forward to special times like these.
- Parents need to nurture themselves and their relationship. As children get older and develop trusting relationships with friends and family outside of the immediate family, parents can find more opportunities to have time alone together. Parents can also develop their own hobbies, interests, or do volunteer work they may have put 'on hold' when their children were younger. Set an example for your children, and include them if possible.