



PEACE AT HOME
PARENTING SOLUTIONS

Peace At Home's principles are built on decades of research focused on parent-child relationships and positive outcomes for kids.

Our approach starts with four principles for parents to create a strong foundation.

1. Be your child's calm center - A calm brain provides the shortest path to a skillful response when your child is emotionally overwhelmed. The ability to keep a calm brain in a tense situation doesn't happen without practice and commitment. Building a brain calming practice is one of the most powerful things a parent can do for their kids. Once parents find a practice that works, they can invite kids to try a practice that will work for them.



2. Understand yourself - The majority of parents in the US grew up with at least one Adverse Childhood Experience and these experiences powerfully influence them as parents. Parents benefit when they increase their awareness of how their childhood specifically affects how they think, feel and behave, especially in response to their children. Understanding yourself can also include reckoning with the history of your cultural group and related traumas as well as striving to break negative family patterns. This process may also include grappling with the difficult question of how to raise and nurture children in a society that wasn't necessarily designed or intended to support the well-being of all children. And finally, to the best of your ability, work to avoid using your children to "re-do" your own life, make up for your regrets and failures, or fulfill your dreams.

3. Focus on connection and curiosity - A positive parent child relationship is the most powerful mental health intervention that exists. Healthy relationships are built on positive connection, not control. Your curiosity about your child is a magical ingredient that allows you to really see your child and for them to feel seen. Feeling seen and accepted is vital to well-being. Curiosity happens when you drop your own agenda and approach your child with an earnest wish to see them as they are. In this way, curiosity is a way of expressing unconditional love and acceptance. Stay open to your children, even when they are stressed and misbehaving, and allow them to influence you.

4. Teach and model kindness and compassion- Avoid dividing the world into good and bad people. Talk about kindness, Invite kids to talk about ways they have been kind to people and how people have been kind. Model compassion and talk about how it works in the world - including ways you may or may not have compassion toward yourself and others. Discuss the challenges of kindness and compassion and the need to accept your own imperfections while still striving to do better.

We suggest these five essential strategies that are especially important for parents to consider to help children thrive.

1. Create rules, routines, rhythms, and rituals with your family - Rules articulate the expected behaviors for a peaceful home. Rules work best when they are created as a family and are expressed in the positive, telling family members what TO do rather than what NOT to do. Routines define the way an activity, like mealtimes, occurs. Routines are the how-we-do-it and are made more inviting by a positive emotional climate. Rhythms are the order, and sometimes the times, at which things happen in the home. Rituals are activities that mark important events, like holidays or vacations. Daily routines that start to have special meaning become rituals, too. These practices may also reflect traditions like stories of your family or culture that are meant to be passed down through generations. Rules, routines, rhythms, and rituals are important; they signal safety to the brain and strengthen the important feeling of belonging, both of which protect children's emotional wellbeing.

2. Recognize the power of play and playfulness - Play and playfulness provide powerful signals of safety and open the mind to cooperation and social learning. Playfulness is a way of being in which a parent expresses joy by engaging with their child. Songs, rhymes, smiles, and silliness are all ways of playfully inviting children to do almost anything. Play is exploring without a goal; playing is like breathing for young children because play is how they learn best. Parents sometimes set aside time to connect with their child by joining in their interests, imaginary world, or a game. This communicates respect and acceptance of the child's interests. Play doesn't need expensive toys or materials - using things found in the home or in nature can work just as well to explore or spend time enjoying together.

3. Strengthen emotional intelligence - Help children feel comfortable with their own emotions and those of others. Help your child recognize emotions and name them. What they can name, they can tame. Treat all emotions as normal - theirs and yours. Be a model of expressing emotions, managing emotions, and getting support to handle your emotions. These are the building blocks of emotional intelligence and the first step in helping children become problem solvers.

4. Create Problem Solvers - Children who are problem solvers embody independent thinking, self-awareness, situational awareness, confidence, and emotional intelligence. If your child is of an age and stage in which they are capable of making a decision and living with the consequences, you can entrust them with the power to make their own decisions about most problems. If they need your support, use curiosity to invite them to think through the outcomes. Give choices from an early age and refrain from directing, correcting, and offering unsolicited advice and criticism. Above all, regardless of the difficulties you see around you, strive to parent your child from a place of hope to the best of your ability.

5. Signal Safety - Children look to caregivers for signals of safety or danger. It is vital that parents recognize the nature of their own anxious responses. A child who feels safe in relation to their parents and caregivers will naturally use social-emotional strategies to problem solve. Signaling safety is a powerful way to protect your child's mental health.