

# Empathic Parenting: Fostering Self-Confidence and Self-Reliance in Your Child



**Career Success Training Program**  
*Presented by*  
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# *Learning Objectives & Agenda*

2

## ***7 Broad Dimensions***

- Developmental Needs and Styles of Parenting
- 7 Limiting Parenting Behaviors that Keep Children From Growing Into Leaders
- Importance of Boundaries and Healthy Parenting
- Stressors and Outcomes
- Benefits of Empathic Parenting
- Healthy Family Dynamics
- Building Resilience in Our Children

# Children's Development Needs

3

Stages

Key Need/Issue

Parents' Role

<p><b>Intimacy vs Isolation</b> Ages 20-30</p>	<p>Learning to experience true intimacy that makes possible strong relationships &amp; genuine and enduring friendships</p>	<p><b>Provide Healthy Role Model</b></p>
<p><b>Identity vs Identity Confusion</b> Ages 13 –20</p>	<p>“What am I all about?” ... if identity is pushed by parents, different roles not explored, no positive future path defined → Confusion</p>	<p><b>Encourage “Their” Interests Expand / Explore Options</b></p>
<p><b>Industry vs Inferiority</b> Ages 6 to puberty</p>	<p>Acute desire to learn BUT if they feel incompetent OR unproductive → Inferiority belief</p>	<p><b>Limit Pressure Applaud Achievement</b></p>
<p><b>Initiative vs Guilt</b> Ages 3-5 years</p>	<p>Begin to accept responsibility for: Bodies, Pets, Toys, Behavior ...if irresponsible or made to feel anxious → Guilt</p>	<p><b>Create Tasks Recognize and Reward Responsibility</b></p>
<p><b>Autonomy vs Shame / Doubt</b> Ages 1-3 years</p>	<p>Begin to assert independence BUT if Punished too harshly   → Shame OR Restrained too much   → or Doubt</p>	<p><b>Encourage Exploration Define and Maintain Limits</b></p>
<p><b>Trust vs Mistrust</b> First Year</p>	<p>Developing trust, security &amp; optimism BUT if not well-cared for, become insecure and mistrustful</p>	<p><b>Establish Safety and Security</b></p>

Based on Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

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## *7 Limiting Parenting Behaviors That Keep Children From Growing Into Leaders*

4

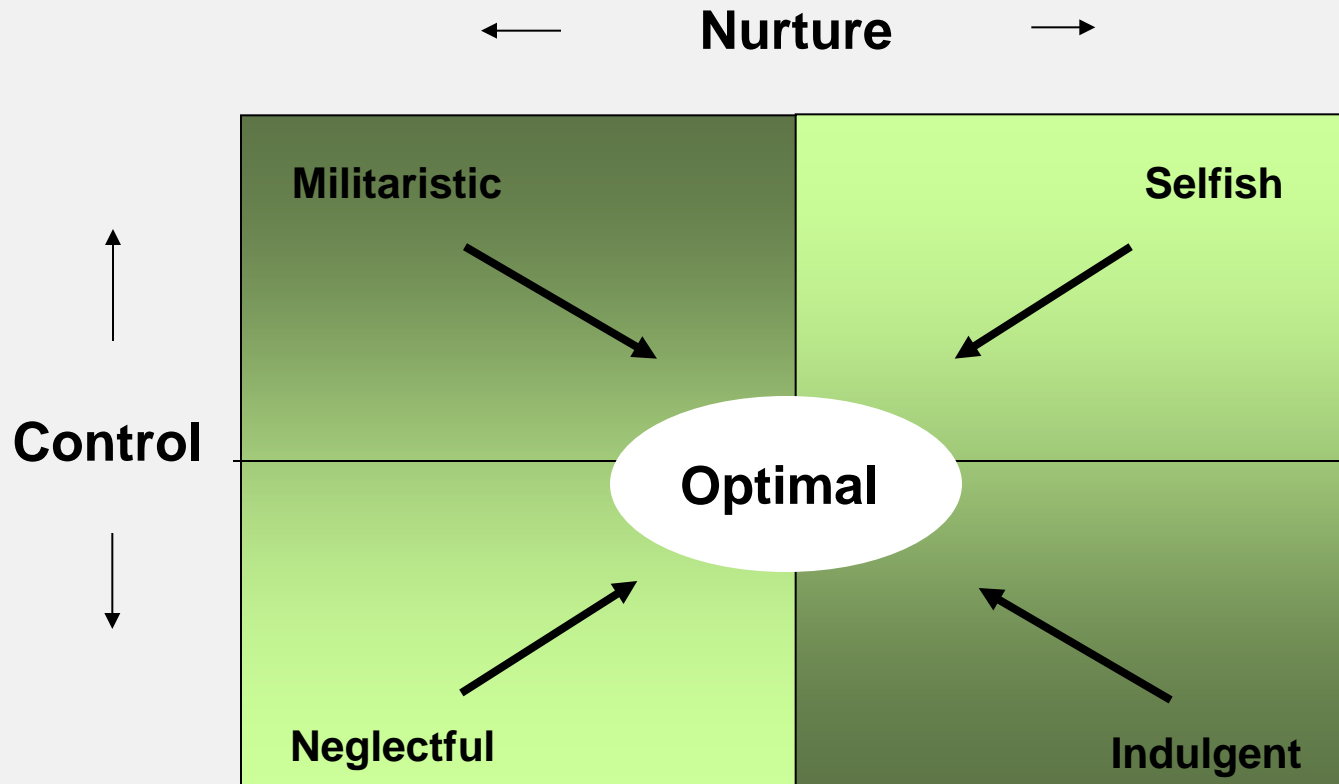
- 1. We don't let our children experience risk – we remove all risk**
- 2. We rescue too quickly – swoop in and take care of problems**
- 3. We rave too easily**
- 4. We let guilt get in the way of leading well**
- 5. We don't share our past mistakes**
- 6. We mistake intelligence, giftedness and influence for maturity**
- 7. We don't practice what we preach**

See the work of Dr. Tim Elmore and Growing Leaders ([www.growingleaders.com](http://www.growingleaders.com)) for more information.

Read Kathy's Post: [\*7 Crippling Parenting Behaviors that Keep Children From Growing Into Leaders\*](#)

# Styles of Relating as Parent

5



**Balance = Effective Parenting = Healthy Development**

# What Are Boundaries?

6

1. Invisible barrier between you and the outside systems in your life
2. Define limits to what is acceptable or can be tolerated in a relationship
3. Boundaries are both physical and emotional, and are highly individual
4. Defined on a scale of rigid (impermeable) to diffuse
5. Healthy boundaries are firm yet flexible
6. Learning to set healthy boundaries can feel scary and uncomfortable – aim for *progress not perfection*.
7. Those raised in dysfunctional families often have boundaries that are not appropriate and healthy

# *Why Are They Important?*

7

1. Boundaries keep us safe and protected, and preserve our well-being.
2. Clearly-set boundaries allow us to define ourselves in relation to others.
3. Your boundaries impact every facet of every relationship you have – parental, personal, professional, societal, community, social, etc.
4. Boundaries require our identifying and respect our needs, feelings, opinions, and rights.
5. To build healthy boundaries, we must overcome low self-esteem and passivity; learn to identify and respect our rights and needs; and become skilled at assertively taking care of ourselves in relationship with others.

# What You Need to Know

8

## **It is impossible to...**

- Have a healthy relationship with someone who has no boundaries; who cannot communicate directly, and honestly.
- Be caring to ourselves and others without owning our self - and owning our rights and responsibilities as co-creators of our lives.
- Have a successful, fulfilling, rewarding and healthy life and career without appropriate boundaries.
- Learning how to set boundaries is a necessary step in learning to be a friend to ourselves and effective parent. It is not easy, and requires work, commitment, and practice.
- It is our responsibility to take care of ourselves - to protect ourselves and keep ourselves healthy, safe, and secure



# *6 Steps to Setting Boundaries*

9

1. Gain Self-Awareness
2. Understand Your Needs, Values, and Goals
3. Set Your Boundaries
4. Strengthen Your Internal Boundaries
5. Overcome Guilt and Resistance and Learn to Protect What's Important
6. Model healthy boundaries for your children

# Stress

10

## What is Stress?

- **Normal, natural, unavoidable part of life that affects everyone at different times for different reasons**
- **Stress is how the body reacts when confronted with physical or emotional situations that alter life's normal balance, or present change**
  - *“Pressure on the outside that causes pressure on the inside”*
- **Both “positive” and “negative” as well as common events may contribute to stress in children/teens including:**
  - being bullied or exposed to violence or injury; unsafe environments
  - Relationship stress, family conflicts, or heavy emotions that accompany death of loved one
  - Ongoing problems with school work relating to learning disability or other problems
  - Crammed schedules, not having enough time to rest and relax, always on the go
  - Negative thoughts about themselves; overly high expectations
  - Family problems (financial, emotional, occupational, etc.)
- **When extra demands are placed on a child's ability to cope, stress occurs**

# Warning Signs

11

## Recognizing Warning Signs

- **Important to recognize that children react differently to stress; some act out and some internalize; some with chronic illness may see symptoms flare up under stress**
  
- **Look for behaviors that are not the norm for the child (emotional, social, physical, intellectual changes), including:**
  - **Anxiety or panic attacks**
  - **Feeling of being constantly pressured, hassled, hurried**
  - **Irritability and moodiness**
  - **Physical symptoms, such as stomach problems, headaches, chest pain**
  - **Allergic reactions, such as eczema or asthma**
  - **Sleeping problems**
  - **Sadness or depression**
  - **Difficulty concentrating; carelessness; forgetfulness; accident-prone**

# Protective Factors

## **Protective Factors:**

Research has shown that children who manage stress well (vs. those who do not) tend to have:

- **Good relationships with friends and teachers**
- **Perception of control over their lives**
- **Strong self-esteem**
- **Sense of humor**
- **Consistent family structure (rules/limits)**
- **Cohesive family unit**
- **Open communication in the family**
- **Warm, supporting relationships with their parents**
- **Recognition for their achievements**

## **What Children Need in Times of Stress:**

- **Adult support; secure attachments to caregivers, with attention, support and guidance**
- **Familiar settings; Predictable routines**
- **Sense of control**
- **Time to enhance their coping skills**

# Helping Children Cope with Stress

13

## What We Can Do To Help Children Cope with Stress

- **Monitor if stress is affecting your child's health, behavior, thoughts, or feelings**
- **Listen carefully and watch for overloading**
- **Learn and *model* effective stress management skills**
- **Support involvement in sports and other pro-social activities**
- **Help them identify variety of coping and problem solving skills**
- **Expand their positive thinking and self-talk ("I'll try. I think I can do this.")**
- **Provide supportive environment where they can openly communicate or play out concerns**
- **Implement sound positive discipline strategies**
- **Focus on consistent routines; provide safe, secure, loving environment**
- **Identify where the family is stressed; take steps to address**
- **EMPATHIC RELATING**

# Empathic Relating is Critical

## What is Empathy

Empathy is the recognition and understanding of the states of mind – **beliefs, desires**, and, particularly, **emotions** of others. It is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another one's shoes", or experiencing the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself; a sort of emotional resonance.

## Why is Empathy So Important in Parenting?

Emotionally-focused empathic caregiving helps children...

- Pay attention to and value *their own experiencing*
- Process their experience cognitively and physically
- See old experience in *new ways*
- *Modify* their self-perceptions and their worldview in deeply positive ways
- Increase their *confidence* in their own perceptions, in making decisions, and in following a course of action that is right for them

***"If I can provide a certain type of relationship, the other person will discover within himself/herself the capacity to use that relationship for growth and change, and personal development will occur."***

***– Carl Rogers***

# Genuineness

15

**As a parent, relating empathically and creating a positive climate for growth requires:**

- ✓ Genuineness, realness, congruence
- ✓ Unconditional positive regard
- ✓ Empathic understanding

## Genuineness, realness, congruence

**“I am genuine and real with this child.”**

- I am fully present and open for this child. I provide support, validation, and reassurance, and show deep understanding that he/she is having a difficult time.
- I am fully available; I am caring, supportive, and I let him/her know I am there.
- I know when I am stressed and having difficulty coping; I know how I am projecting stress onto the family. I model appropriate ways to identify and cope with my stress
- I am calm and steady with my child.

# Acceptance

16

## Acceptance, Caring, and Prizing – Unconditional Positive Regard

**“I accept this child.”**

- My care, concern and love is continual and constant, despite behavior that is difficult or negative
- I guide my child by letting him/her know behavior is acceptable; I verbally recognize positive behavior
- When unacceptable behavior occurs, I redirect by stating their options; help them find acceptable ways to express negative feelings
- We have a deep mutual respect and trust; I do not judge, criticize or reject
- I involve my child as a helper and contributor – I focus on increasing his/her own sense of control and efficacy
- I trust and believe in his/her abilities to cope, and know that s/he will develop the necessary coping skills in time



# Understanding

17

## Empathic Understanding

### “I understand this child.”

- I am a special, active listener, and understand the personal meanings that my child is experiencing
- I encourage one-on-one conversation – look for opportunities to ask about feelings and opinions; I help her gain awareness of herself
- I help my child identify what makes him stressed; we talk about and identify new options for coping
- I accept all feelings without judging, condemning, evaluating, fixing, or pitying
- I help my child anticipate and discuss ongoing or upcoming events that might make them experience stress

***These caregiving behaviors and attitudes foster children’s tendency to grow, develop, and realize their full potential. With these behaviors, the child trusts the constructive directional flow of herself/himself.***

# Healthy Family Dynamics

18

## Healthy Family Dynamics – Assessing Your Family Structure:

### Hierarchy/Structure

- ❖ Who is in control here? Do I have difficulty maintaining control with my child?
- ❖ Do I need to set clearer, more consistent boundaries?
- ❖ Am I on the same page with my spouse? If not, am I avoiding hostility or triangulation?
- ❖ Power: Who wields it, and how is the power asserted?

### Communication

- ❖ Do I validate my child?
- ❖ When my child is acting in ways that are not positive, do I look for what's going on on a deeper level?
- ❖ Do I let him know that, while I may not agree with his position, it is a valid one to him?
- ❖ When I discipline, do I do so in a way that my child saves face?
- ❖ Do I communicate that I *believe* in this child?

### Your Motivation

- ❖ Can my struggles with my child teach me anything about my own fears and insecurities?
- ❖ Am I fostering my child's own individual path, or am I trying to make him/her in the image of someone else?

### Family Goals

- ❖ Overall, what am I aiming to achieve as a good parent? What about my spouse?
- ❖ How will we know we have been successful?

# Supporting Self-Reliance

## **Supporting Your Child – Help Your Child Learn to:**

- ❖ Self-Soothe/Relax - Help him/her develop and utilize relaxation techniques that are calming and pleasurable, such as reading, making time for a fun hobby, spending time with a pet, taking a relaxing bath, deep breathing, yoga, etc.
- ❖ Love and Accept His/Her Body – Help your child love his/her body, and treat it with great respect and care. Eating nutritiously and healthy exercise helps the body function effectively. Moderation is critical. Notice any signs of use of stress which counteract the body's ability to function well.
- ❖ Develop the Habit of Positive Thinking – His/her outlook, attitude, and thoughts and beliefs influence your child's reality. Optimism and flexibility bring great rewards. (Read [\*How Happiness Directly Impacts Your Success\*](#).)
- ❖ Solve the Little Problems: Learning to rely on herself/himself to solve everyday problems can help your child develop his/her own sense of control and reliance. Step out of the way.

***Don't make it a habit to do for your child what they can do for themselves.***

# Building Resilience

20

## **Building Resilience:**

**Attitudes and behaviors that have been shown to foster resilience in ourselves and others are:**

- ❖ Thinking of change as a challenge and normal part of life
- ❖ Seeing setbacks and problems as ways to grow in empowerment – they are temporary and solvable
- ❖ Believing that you can shape your future, and will succeed if you keep working toward your goals
- ❖ Taking action to address and solve problems that crop up
- ❖ Building strong relationships and keeping commitments to family and friends
- ❖ Having a support system and asking for help when you need it
- ❖ Participating regularly in activities for relaxation, fun, and joy
- ❖ Believing in yourself!

# Increase Your Awareness

21

## **As a parent, increasing your awareness of your actions and attitudes helps you...**

- ❖ **Expand your choices as to how to react, communicate, and behave – “Greater awareness equals greater choice.”**
- ❖ **Decide to choose, *consciously*, the ways in which you wish to parent. Keep your ultimate parenting goals in mind.**
- ❖ **Model empathic parenting and relating, which will benefit not only your children, but future generations as well**
- ❖ **Help make your family life more joyful, fulfilling, and balanced in the process!**

# Key Takeaways

22

- ❖ **Recognize stress (your own and your family's) and its contributors, and actively address it**
- ❖ **Increase your ability to relate *empathically* to your child and to others**
- ❖ **Assess your parenting style and power dynamics, and modify where necessary**
- ❖ **Identify and move toward your goals as a loving and effective parent**
- ❖ ***Believe* in your child, and support his/her own self-reliance and competence**
- ❖ ***Believe* in yourself!**
- ❖ **Ask for outside help if/when you need it**

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23

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