

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

Parents as Coaches

This term, Parenting Pointers is following the course material from the Incredible Years Parenting Programme. The course relies on parents spending quality "Special Time" with children, which builds a secure relationship with them. This week we thought about the idea of being coaches to our children. Here's what we learnt ...

While we are playing with our children we can coach them in a variety of different ways. We can notice what they are doing by giving a sort of running commentary, much like a sports reporter would do. "You're picking up the red crayon", "You fixed the pieces together", "You made tea for your teddy." This may feel strange at first, to parent and child, but in time, children learn to really enjoy this attention, which acknowledges what they are doing without necessarily giving an opinion.

We can also learn to be "Emotion Coaches" for our children. This involves trying to describe the feelings we see in our children and begins to teach them emotional vocabulary. For example, if your child is trying to tie their shoe laces, you could say "I can see you are getting frustrated, would you like some help?" Or, if they are playing nicely with a sibling "You're having fun playing with your brother and he looks like he's enjoying the game too." We can comment when we see them reacting to a difficult situation calmly, so that children learn to recognise what "calm" feels like. After all, we can't expect them to "calm down" if they don't know what that looks like. As they get older, children can learn to express their feelings using their words, rather than their actions but we need to give them the words in the first place.

We can encourage social skills by coaching too. For example, when we are playing a board game, we can notice that children are waiting patiently for their turn. Or if we are playing with more than one child, we can comment when we see them sharing toys with each other. If we notice these positive, social behaviours and praise them, we are more likely to see them repeated and we are teaching children what it is like to be a good friend or to work as a team.

Coaching can also be used to encourage our children with a difficult task. Sometimes children will give up when an activity becomes "too hard". By encouraging them to persist, we are teaching them that sometimes we have to keep practicing to get good at something. A few years ago, a parent told me that her child wanted to learn how to skip to keep fit. He found it really hard to begin with but Mum kept encouraging him and he soon became really good at skipping very fast. Some time later, when he was struggling with some school work, Mum was able to remind him of this experience and he remembered what it felt like to keep trying and succeed with practice.



Our children need us to be their biggest cheerleaders. By coaching them through the ups and downs of life, we are helping them to recognise their strengths, work through their weaknesses and manage their emotions in a healthy way.

If you have any questions, or need to chat anything through, please email parenting@foundrylanprimary.co.uk.