

5 TIPS FOR PARENTING WELL

Parenting together or separately these ideas can be of help



This is some of my story...

I was 38 when I met him and 42 when I had a baby as a single mum. I was very happy to be a Mum, but our intimate relationship was a mess. Not what I wanted to bring a new baby into. We split-up while pregnant. And then my Mum died. There was a lot going on back then!

Today my daughter's Dad and I are good friends. We co-parent well and she's a happy, confident, kind girl, head of her year at secondary school. In fact, we 3 are going away together for her upcoming 13th birthday. I'm glad and proud of our shared success. Our daughter is equally at home, in both her homes. She is at home in her own unique self.

I'd like to share with you some of the shifts in attitude that helped me/us:

- **Our parenting was not an overnight success.** But slowly and steadily, we forged something beautiful, full of love, integrity and boundaries. Our priority was (and still is) our daughter's wellbeing, What helps is surrendering fully to the challenge of parenting, by being in service to Love. Putting someone else's needs first, not life all about me, me, me. It is profound and rewarding.

- **We allowed ourselves space and time for transitions.** After the first 6 months, when I was mostly alone with the baby (an experience that felt as if every day lasted a year) she would see her Dad each week. We allowed an hour for her movement between us as caregivers. As a baby born too quickly by caesarean, I understood she would need extra time to make transitions. For example, it was also not easy for her to fall asleep. By contrast at the house next door, the Mum's car would screech up, the horn would honk, and she'd yell out to the Dad, "Send him out!" Here, I let her Dad garden our front yard, therapeutic for him and he created a beautiful space that we often met in. What helps build good relationships, is slow spaciousness - for eyes to be seen, feelings to be felt and conversations to happen.
- **Like every parent we learnt on the job.** We created birthday celebrations, took her to playgroup, then primary school, figuring out our routines and finances. I still got triggered. I discovered that what really helps, is taking responsibility for all my feelings and behaviour. I 'owned' my stuff, rather than blaming or collapsing. I also came to understand that for a child it is ok to see their parents arguing, so long as they also see them making up together afterwards. Children can usefully learn that discomfort is a natural, temporary part of life and communication requires care.
- **What helps, is trusting our intuition.** Listening to the spontaneous wisdom of the body. I love to notice what the body is telling us. Magical moments arose from us both, at different times, listening in to our bodily intelligence. In one instance, this unexpected, illogical but strongly felt sense, actually saved our daughter's life.
- **Self-care is vital.** Doing what is needed for myself, not for my child or our parental relationship. I explored meditation, exercise, creating order, drinking water, dancing in the kitchen, and more. I drew myself a colourful grid that I pinned to the wall, listing positive habits that I could satisfyingly tick-off when each was achieved. It was important to me to remember that I am a woman, not just a mum!

Our parenting success gave me peace in my soul. I love my ex and respect him as a friend, parent and individual. I've learnt to learn not just together with him, but also from him. This peacefulness gave me the inner space to write my book, internationally published two years ago 'The Healing Power of Pleasure: Seven Medicines for Rediscovering the Innate Joy of Being', and to create a loving intimate relationship with my new boyfriend. I am happy, grateful, and fulfilled. Parenting has been a delight. Our daughter is a lovely person. All is very well.