

One-Page Summaries:

# Children's Mental Health

Empowered Parents Summit 2024



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# Ageless Parenting: How to Always Tune in Perfectly to Your Child

Jennifer Kolari



*“When your kid is acting out, you need to show them ruthless compassion. You want to show them as much compassion as they’re showing you anger.”*

## The best medicine for a parent-child relationship

Kids can really push our buttons. But when you're constantly upset with them because of their behaviour, it puts a strain on your relationship. They start feeling like they're not lovable, and that can lead to all sorts of issues, which are often behind their challenging behaviour.

But think of it this way—if your child needed medicine, you wouldn't give up. You'd find a way to ensure they get it. So, connecting deeply with your child is like giving them medicine. It releases oxytocin and natural opiates. **It's the best emotional nutrition there is.**

## Connect before you correct

Your kid's job is to push back and be like, “No, not now, in a minute,” because the feeling part of their brain is what's dominant. So, how do you stay kind and understanding while your kids are being impossibly difficult? **Connect with them before you correct their behaviour.**

It's about compassion and deep listening on one side and loving limits on the other. Children crave limits. **They need limits.** They do best when there are limits, and they're less anxious when they have limits. But those limits need to come from a place of love, not anger or fear.

## Loving authority

You want to have this beautiful, strong authority from a place of love. You need to let them know they can express themselves, even if it means yelling and screaming. But, at the same time, they've got to understand that actions have consequences.

**Consistency is key here:** We can't just give in because they're throwing a fit. That wouldn't be good parenting. They can throw themselves on the ground if they have to, but they should know that certain behaviours don't get rewarded.

It's all about teaching them right from wrong and showing them that we're there to guide them, no matter what.

# Common Mistakes Parents Make That Create Entitled Teens (And How to Avoid Them)

Aly Pain



*“When kids are no longer entitled, they are empowered. They are more confident, their anxiety is lower, their motivation goes up, their resilience goes up, and they’re more willing to try things.”*

## Breaking old habits

Most of us were raised in an authoritarian home with an outdated model of command and complete dismissal of emotions. We got this message that the more we achieve, the more our parents will love us. And if things didn’t work out, they would punish and ground us.

But our parents did the best they could—none taught them better. They didn’t realise at the time that **criticism is, in fact, the number one demotivator**.

Many parents today want to break free from this cycle. However, they find themselves at a loss when it comes to implementing new approaches. Without a structured plan in place, they often revert back to the old patterns.

## Seeing, hearing and loving them

You need to **re-parent yourself** first. You need to really understand that your teen’s brain is working a certain way that’s healthy for their independence.

They are no longer ‘mini us’, but they are also not miniature adults (their brains are actually more similar to toddlers). So, we need to allow them to express their emotions, no matter how uncomfortable that might make us feel. **Your teen needs to be seen, heard and loved.**

## Respectful disagreements

Learn how to disagree with your teen politely. Just because you gave birth to them doesn’t mean they should hold your values and beliefs. Your role is different; you’re at the top of the hierarchy. When you disagree, you should explain the situation to them respectfully and lovingly.

Also, offer honest advice and practical help. Tell them it’s absolutely normal if they feel bad about something. *“I know how much you want this; I know it sucks; it would have been fun if you could do that.”* This is how you’re helping them regulate their emotions.

# Science-Backed Emotional Health Hacks for Raising Resilient Kids

Dr. Cindy Hovington



*"When we are validated, we feel connected to that person, and we feel seen, and everything feels safer in our environment. So, imagine how it feels for kids if it's like that for us."*

## Parenting struggles

Most of us tend to power through parenting when our kids are giving us a hard time. We tend to brush off the difficult behaviour, acting like everything's alright when, deep down, we know it's not. It's almost as if we're so afraid of admitting that we're not perfect parents. But the truth is, **no one is perfect**.

By holding ourselves to impossible standards, we aren't setting a good example for our kids. However, we want to learn to regulate our emotions so we can teach our kids how to become resilient and adaptable in life.

## Choosing support over anger

Kids can't make sense of their emotions on their own. They feel them intensely but don't always know how to handle them. That's where you come in—to support them instead of getting angry.

When your kid is having a tough time, take a moment to pause before reacting. Ask yourself, *"Do I really need to yell, or do they need my support?"*

**Yelling isn't necessarily always bad**, but it becomes problematic when it's happening often. It's normal to have a bad day, but if yelling makes up 80% of your interactions, that's not healthy. What you need to do instead is to **find a healthy way to vent out**.

## From reacting to reflecting

We need to practise regulating our emotions, and it's not just about saying, *"I'll do better tomorrow."* It takes real effort. That's why **journaling and self-reflection** are key.

If you catch yourself yelling at your child, take 2 to 3 minutes to jot down what led up to it. Maybe there was an argument with your partner or stress from work that you didn't notice affecting you.

Even a quick note on your phone can help. Just ask yourself, *"Did I set boundaries? Why did I lose control?"* It's all about understanding our triggers and how we can do better next time.

# The Secret to Learning, Creativity and Regulated Behaviour: All Free & Natural

Avital Schreiber Levy



*"If you want your kid to play independently for hours, forget about buying more toys or entertaining them all day long. Just set the right environment and step back."*

## Challenging misconceptions

Parents today seem to have forgotten that kids are naturally designed to play independently for hours. Instead, they often say things like 1) "My kids get bored too quickly", 2) "They can't entertain themselves", and 3) "They just like screens more". We tend to think that our child simply isn't meant for independent play, so we give up on that idea too easily.

## Why more isn't always better?

Many parents believe that if they buy more toys, it'll lead to more playtime for their kids. But it's surprising how quickly their excitement fades. In the end, you'll be left with clutter that's just a pain to deal with.

The truth is, having more stuff doesn't necessarily mean more play. Kids actually thrive in simplified environments where they can focus better. So, if we want our homes to be places where our kids can play freely and independently, it's best to keep our space **decluttered and organised**.

## Setting up the play zones

Think about how you can set the five playing zones in your home. They don't have to be in separate rooms; they can all be in one space. Also, simply use what you already have around the house.

1. In the **"imagination zone"**, kids become directors, creating their own little worlds with dollhouses, LEGO, and toys.
2. In the **"messy zone,"** it's all about getting creative. Here, kids get to touch different materials, as well as play, paint or build.
3. Clear some floor space and throw down a mat for your kid to shake off their excess energy in the **"movement zone"**.
4. In the **"focus zone,"** you want to keep materials that encourage concentration, such as puzzles, educational toys or science tools.
5. Pick any cosy spot in your home to set up the **"quiet zone"**. In this space, your kid will get to relax or simply have some alone time.

# How to Stop Butting Heads With Your Children Once and for All

Deborah McPhilemy



*"The minute you stop taking away their freedom of choice and infringing on their autonomy, the conflicts will practically vanish in an instant."*

## The power struggle dilemma

Parents tend to think they have control over their children and that they have to do things against their will. That's why you'll hear them saying things like, "You'll do as I say!" or "It's for your own good!" That's precisely when the **power struggles** start happening.

Parents seem to forget that children are born with their own will and independence. They're not being defiant on purpose; they're just learning how to stand on their own two feet. Instead of trying to control their behaviour, we need to take a different approach and help them.

## Becoming your child's guide

To change things for the better, start thinking about what a parent is and what your role is in the family dynamics. Think about yourself not as a controller but as a mentor and a guide for your child.

Instead of constantly doing things for your children, such as rushing to dress them for school to avoid being late, consider taking a step back.

Think about what you can do to **empower them to become more independent**. Of course, it might take a little longer, but it's definitely the better way to go.

## Parenting through understanding

Find ways to connect to your child so they are willing to allow you to guide them. Once you **establish a close relationship**, you'll have an easy time setting boundaries they'll actually want to respect.

You can begin right now by asking for their opinion and then genuinely listening to what they have to say. If you don't like what you're hearing, look at yourself first and ask, "Why is it so important to me that they listen to my advice? What do I fear? What do I think will happen if they don't?"

When you pause for a moment and really think, you're giving your 'logical' brain the chance to sort things out. So, instead of just going on autopilot, you get to think more clearly and understand your child better.

# Hard Truths to Shake Up Your Approach With Your Highly Sensitive Child

Melissa Schwartz



*"When highly sensitive people feel empowered in knowing how to identify and express their emotions, they are the most magnetic, charismatic, beautiful, funny, caring, brilliant people in the room."*

## Seeing beyond the behaviour

When your child is acting out, there's always a reason behind it. They're not just trying to make your life difficult or drive you crazy. There's something going on that isn't working for them, and they're trying to address that need in ways that may not be ideal.

A lot of parents have trouble understanding highly sensitive children (HSC). It's tough for them to really get what their kid is going through when they're living in totally different worlds. Think of it as "The Wizard of Oz"; it's like the parents are stuck in Kansas, seeing things in black and white, while their child is off in Oz, experiencing everything in vibrant technicolour.

## More than meets the eye

It's really important for parents to truly understand what is behind their child's high sensitivity before attempting to bond with them.

Just remember **'DOES'** for a quick rundown on four key aspects: 1) Depths of processing things around them, 2) Overstimulation and over-arousal that makes these kids susceptible to tantrums, 3) Emotional intensity, 4) Sensing subtleties or picking up on things that others won't notice.

## The language of emotions

HSC won't change over time. You're not going to shift your sensitive child into working with a value pack of emotions, no matter how hard you try. It's just not possible because it's wired into their nervous system. Ideally, you want to learn how to work with these aspects so that they become their strengths.

For example, you can use language that helps them understand what they're feeling. For younger kids, ages 2 to 5, using phrases such as **"This feels big for you, doesn't it?"** can be helpful. For older kids (those around five or in school), it's important you talk about how you're feeling.



# What Your Bright and Quirky Kids Really Need From You

Debbie Steinberg Kuntz



*“Remind your child that every brain is wired uniquely, like a fingerprint, like a snowflake. It’s what makes them truly one-of-a-kind.”*

## When parents start to worry

When parents see their children lagging behind in any area, they are usually afraid to talk to others about it. Instead, they’re secretly wondering if there is something wrong with their kids. And if this goes unchecked, the kids also get the wrong impression that there’s something off about them.

However, there’s something called **‘twice exceptional kids’**. These kids are absolutely brilliant—they are gifted and bright. On the other hand, they also have ‘lagging’ skills in other areas that are most commonly related to learning disabilities.

## Discovering the hidden talents

Talk to your kids to make them understand that we all have our fair share of strengths and challenges. Get them to see that, in order to succeed in life, it’s crucial to adopt a **strength-based approach to everything**.

Instead of thinking about things your child is struggling with, take a moment to acknowledge them for all the good things they do.

Then, proceed to find out what they’re truly good at. This will help them feel good about themselves. Ask them three questions: 1) *“What are you interested in?”*, 2) *“What makes you curious?”* and 3) *“What are you good at?”*

## Breaking through the challenges

Help your kids become more self-aware. Once they understand what challenges them, it’s a lot easier to figure out how to tackle those challenges. Sometimes, the hardest part for kids isn’t actually doing the work; it’s just getting started.

So, if they’re having trouble with an essay, for example, suggest breaking it down into smaller, manageable steps. Start with the first paragraph, then move on to the first sentence or even just the first word.

It’s amazing how **taking that first little step**, like putting their name on the paper, can really change things up and make it all feel more doable.



# How Play and Emotional Connection Transform Your Relationship With Your Child

Dr. Lawrence J. Cohen



*"We need to actively work on changing negative thought patterns and forming new habits to guide our kids toward resilience."*

## Rethinking childhood

There are a lot of changes in how we raise our kids these days. One big issue is overscheduling our kids. It seems like many families feel they have to pack their kids' schedules so they don't 'fall behind' or 'feel left out'. However, this can actually increase your kid's stress levels.

Because of social media, kids these days are exposed to all the world's problems earlier and earlier. They're dealing with things that maybe they're not ready for yet. So, all these things put together are making children increasingly more anxious.

## Helping kids understand anxiety

Anxiety won't just vanish overnight. In fact, we often develop thinking patterns that become deeply rooted over time.

So, for starters, let your kids know that whatever they're feeling is totally normal. Then, take a piece of paper to show them how their brain operates or simply talk them through it. Show them what it looks like when it's all fired up versus when it's relaxed.

Explain to them how their body reacts in survival mode, and teach them how to calm themselves down using resilience tools like **breathing exercises**, **meditation**, or anything else they like.

## Overcoming anxiety one day at a time

If you want to help your child feel less anxious, make sure to help them connect with their inner voice and discover their life purpose. One way to do this is by teaching them how to manage their thoughts. Encourage them to catch negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones. By filtering out their thoughts, they'll feel less anxious about the future.

Also, encourage them to engage with their community and give back. Instil in them the habit of **practising gratitude regularly**. Don't miss any opportunity to acknowledge their strength and resilience. Instead of always focusing on trying to 'fix' them, use every chance you get to encourage them.

# Tried-and-True Techniques to Help Your Child Crush Anxiety and Fuel Success

Dr. Mary Wilde



*"While we can't offer our kids a perfect life, we can instil in them a sense of security, love, and confidence to carry with them wherever they go."*

## Logic doesn't cut it with kids

All parents want is a **loving connection** with their kids. But more often than not, we just don't know how to approach our children. As soon as we grew up, we forgot how to be fluent in the languages of childhood: play and emotions.

But the thing is, **logic doesn't cut it with kids, no matter how right we think we are.** Even if we've got all the facts on our side, trying to reason with a child or even our partner can hit a brick wall. Solution? We must meet them where they are emotionally to truly connect with them.

## Turn tantrums in teachable moments

When our kids get upset, it's understandable if we're not jumping for joy, but we don't need to resort to sending them off to their room and labelling them as "bad." **Because they're not bad; they're just overwhelmed with emotion.**

When they're going through it, the best thing we can do is simply **be there for them.** We don't have to insist they talk to us right in the heat of the moment during a tantrum or an argument. Instead, we should create a safe space and let them know, *"I'm here. It's okay to feel so many things."*

## Here's what you can do today

You want to be that reassuring voice in your kid's head, constantly whispering, *"You're capable. I'm right here for you. I'll support you."* Even when we're not physically present, it's that inner sense of us – calm, confident, loving, and warm – that guides our children as they grow.

Avoid phrases like, *"Why are you so careless?"* or even, *"Oh, poor baby. Are you okay?"* These aren't the messages we want them to internalise when they face difficulties. Instead, what we're aiming for is to **give them a solid base** so they can handle whatever life throws at them.

# Well, That Didn't Work... Why Traditional Parenting Doesn't Cut It for Complex Kids

Diane Dempster



*"It's okay for your kids to see that you're not perfect; what's important is that they see you're trying to improve and grow."*

## Passing down emotional baggage

These days, we see lots of grown-ups having a tough time dealing with their feelings. They can't handle disappointment without crumbling. That's because, over many years and generations, we've witnessed some pretty unhealthy ways of dealing with strong emotions like anger or frustration.

So, whenever kids did something that made their parents upset, the older generation thought it was okay to shame or punish the child. But that didn't really help parents teach their kids how to behave; it was more a way for the adults to vent their intense emotions.

## Teaching kids by example

Teaching our kids how to be resilient and handle emotions or failure gracefully starts with us. It begins with handling the embarrassment of our kid melting down in the grocery store.

Think about how you're going to handle yourself when your kid is watching you in the middle of a tense situation. Okay, so you've felt anger, you've felt frustration, and what now? Take a moment to think about how you can **handle this in a graceful way** before you expect the same from them.

## Growing from mistakes

When we speak about **emotional resilience**, it doesn't mean that we never get angry, we never get frustrated, we're never sad, lonely, bored, or hurt. It means that we're able to recover from it and manage our behaviours while experiencing that emotion.

So, when you find yourself screaming at your kids, cut yourself some slack. Say, *"Yes, that wasn't the ideal reaction, but I was doing my best at the moment. What can I do now to repair things with my child? Which skills can I learn to prevent this from happening again in the future?"*



# Simple Ways to Keep Your Kid Emotionally Healthy Through Ups and Downs

Emily Hamblin



*"Your job as a parent isn't to think how to help your kid finish their homework. It's about asking yourself how can you encourage them to be comfortable with seeking help when they need it?"*

## Understanding the struggle

Parenting complex kids often feels like hitting a wall. Parents usually say things like, "No matter what I do, my kid's pushing back," or "I'm at my wit's end. My kid is just so incredibly frustrating."

They are **really struggling**. More often than not, they're left in the dark about what's really going on with them. They want to take control of their life, but they don't have the tools to do so. So, they end up making up their own stories, thinking they're not good enough or smart enough.

## Taking a different approach

The old parenting methods won't cut it for our complex kids. We've learned a lot about children's behaviour since then. It turns out that they're not trying to drive us crazy on purpose. It's all connected to how their brains work.

So, instead of getting sucked into their 'drama', you want to take a step back and think, "How can I actually help them change their behaviour?" Rather than expecting them to fix things on the spot, you want to create an atmosphere where they **feel comfortable to ask for your help**.

## Pills are not skills

As parents, we need to make sure we're doing what we can to help our kid's brain work well. That might mean incorporating things like meditation, eating healthy, staying active, or taking medication in consultation with a specialist doctor (if necessary).

But bear in mind that **medication is not a magic fix** for everything. It can help with focus, but it doesn't solve all the problems with thinking and planning. As parents, we need to **proactively work on supporting our children** in developing those skills or helping them out until they're ready to do it on their own.

# Transform Your Teen's Mindset and Break Free From Entitled Behaviour

Arthur C. Woods



*"Raising a teenager can be challenging but also one of the most rewarding tasks for parents."*

## Parental reality check

Now more than ever, there seems to be a greater sense of entitlement among younger generations. But the thing is, although we tend to think it's our kids' fault for being spoiled, we, as parents, are the ones who created some of that entitlement in them.

So there's really no point in punishing the child who acts entitled to everything. Instead, it's better if we start thinking about **why they are acting this way**. How can we help them change their mindset so that they no longer even feel the need to act out in that way?

## Getting teens on board

The best thing you can do for your teen is to **include them in the decision-making process**. For starters, sit down with your teenager and discuss the expectations you have from one another as a family. Also, ask them what they think would be fair consequences when those same expectations are not met.

This doesn't mean that your kid gets to decide on what's allowed and what's not. You're still the adult in the room. You just want your teen to feel heard and valued. That way, you'll get to see what is fair, reasonable and expected from their side. Once you figure that out, your kid will be more willing to cooperate with you.

## The power of timeout

When your teen feels misunderstood, they won't shy away from showing disrespect, anger or even aggression.

When that happens, **don't try to talk to them in the heat of the moment**. They won't listen to reason 99% of the time. That's because their brain is not yet fully developed, and they're simply not able to control their emotions. Instead, suggest you **take a timeout together**.