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Importance of Positive Parenting During the Pandemic

Beena Johnson

Baby Memorial Hospital, Kozhikode 673004

Address for Correspondence: Dr. Beena Johnson, Developmental Paediatrician & Senior Consultant in Child Guidance, Baby Memorial Hospital, Kozhikode, Kerala, India. E- mail: jjacam@gmail.com

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Introduction

Parenting is the task of upbringing a child by stimulating the emotional, intellectual, physical and social development from infancy to adulthood. Positive parenting involves caring, communicating, empowering, guiding as well as providing for the needs of a child consistently. A mutually respectful parent-child relationship will be maintained. Positive parenting should start from infancy. Secure parent-child attachment leads to numerous positive developmental outcomes for the child.

Benefits of Positive Parenting

Positive parenting practices have significant impact on cognitive, emotional and social development of children [1]. It leads to better cognitive, language and social development of kids. Positive parenting practices decrease the externalizing behaviours in children [2]. Parent training intervention for the promotion of positive parental practices is effective in reducing the behavioural problems in kids [3]. The stress in family will decrease and family cohesion will improve.

Positive parenting provides affection as well as emotional security for kids. This nurturing and responsive parenting will increase the social competence of children and make them more optimistic. Positive parenting is associated with greater emotional well-being in children. It supports the child's best interests, but sets boundaries. Providing boundaries teaches children accountability and responsibility in daily life. Positive parenting will foster self-confidence, self-control, self-determination, creativity, empathy, honesty, motivation and resilience in children.

Emotional Impact of the Pandemic on Children and Parents

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is having negative impact in the life of millions of people in the world. For lots of families, there have been big changes in everyday routines. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, about 1.38 billion children are out of school,

without any access to group activities. Keeping children engaged and safe at home is a difficult task for many parents especially for those living in crowded households [4]. The pandemic has brought significant stress for several parents all over the world [5].

Social distancing and refrained outdoor activities during the pandemic have brought children into a difficult situation. Many children are anxious, bored, sad and worried by quarantines and school closures. Younger children are more likely to act out their stress through their aggressive behaviour. COVID-19 pandemic affected the emotions and lifestyle of adolescents [6]. Adolescents may become irritable as they miss events with friends and peer group.

In the study during coronavirus disease outbreak in India to analyse the psychological impact of quarantine experience on children, it was found that worry (68.59%), helplessness (66.11%) and fear (61.98%) were the common feelings experienced by children [7].

In the study conducted in China during COVID-19 epidemic, the common behavioural problems seen among 320 children and adolescents (168 girls and 142 boys) aged 3-18 years were clinginess, irritability and fear. The most common symptoms in children in the age group (3-6 years) were clinginess and fear. Inattention and persistent inquiry were observed in children aged 6 to 18 years [8].

Positive Parenting During the Pandemic

To prepare children for the pandemic, significant effort and planning are required [9]. Parents should provide the most favourable environment at home to improve the physical, social and emotional well-being of children. Give information to children in age-appropriate way about the pandemic and the challenges it brings to their life. It is very important to teach children how to keep themselves safe during the pandemic. Make the children understand the importance of the rules like hand washing, using masks and staying home which are essential for the family to stay healthy. Reassure children that parents are for them always and make the children optimistic. Tell the child in a calm voice before leaving the house for work or essential activities, where you are going as well as when you will return. Explain to children the steps which the parent is taking, to stay safe. Help the children and empower them to adapt to the sudden change in lifestyle. Consistent and empathetic approach will make the children happy and optimistic.

Care of Infants, Toddlers and Preschool Children

These children need constant supervision and attention. Face to face interactions with infants and toddlers will significantly improve the language and social skills. Scientific studies have shown that even children as young as two years of age, are able to understand some of the changes around them, related to the pandemic. While providing children with an explanation about the pandemic, the child's age and level of understanding should be considered. Always ensure that children do not feel frightened [10]. While staying home, parents can give effective training to toddlers for acquiring the self-help skills needed for daily living. Story-telling and getting involved in indoor age appropriate play activities with pre-school children, will definitely improve the parent-child bonding.

Well-being of School-Age Children and Adolescents

Plan everyday activities for the kids creatively. Drawing, painting, art works, singing, dancing and using musical instruments are some of the talents of children which can be improved while staying indoors. Reading good story books and playing indoor board games can be encouraged as leisure activities. Healthy limits should be kept on screen time.

Children should be taught healthy eating habits. Encourage activities that promote physical activity. In daily routine, parents can do exercises with the kids for at least thirty minutes.

If the child has learning difficulties, parents can help them to improve their academic skills. Children and adolescents should be encouraged to do the academic activities in the best way in the online study sessions.

A time-table for children’s daily routines will be useful. Structure the day and establish daily schedules. Set aside special time for each child. Adolescents can help parents in daily schedules. Make the children understand the value of teamwork and collaboration. Assigning tasks at home can also impart sense of responsibility in kids.

Become a role model for children and maintain harmonious relationships at home with all the family members. Listen empathetically and try to remain engaged with children. Make the kids understand the importance of human values like compassion and patience. Always reinforce good behaviours through praise, privileges and rewards.

The parents have very important role in the timely recognition and scientific management of negative emotions of children. It is necessary that parents understand the anxiety and fears of kids and try to solve their problems in a very calm way. Avoid physical punishment because it can increase aggression in children and it will significantly reduce the child's sense of safety at home. Discourage and redirect unwanted behaviours by finding something creative for the children to do. Increase communication with children to address their anxiety. Play with kids to alleviate loneliness. Parents should give attention to sleep difficulties of children and maintain sleep hygiene. If behaviour problems persist, get professional help from experts in child guidance.

Parental Well-being

To prevent stress related disorders, parents have to take good care of their nutrition, physical health and emotional well-being. They should maintain healthy eating habits, take regular exercise and get enough sleep.

Parents should learn to strike a balance between household chores, tasks related to job, activities with children and time for relaxation and recreation. Develop a time schedule for daily activities which can be kept shuffling if needed, to make the daily routines fresh and exciting. Each parent can prioritise the time and distribute it scientifically among various activities.

During the pandemic, strong emotional bonding should be built with family members to live a fulfilling life. Improve communication with family members. Consider the pandemic as a pause to break the previous pattern of life and to develop a much better parent-child relationship.

Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) is profoundly affecting the life of people around the globe. The time of the pandemic is difficult for everyone. It is significantly challenging for children. Positive parenting approach is sensitive to children's individual needs and address the challenges in daily life with empathy and respect. Positive parenting techniques with compassion and kindness will give better outcomes in child’s behaviour during the stressful period of the pandemic. Positive discipline will also lead to better emotional growth and

make the children happy and better adjusted in life. Through positive parenting, the energy of kids can be channelled appropriately for the better development of intellectual, emotional, academic and social skills. By adopting the positive parenting skills, parental stress can also be reduced. Children can be made more resilient, emotionally stronger and better equipped to emerge out of the crisis of pandemic towards a successful future life.

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