

Positive Parenting by Rabbi Abraham Twerski and Ursula Schwartz PH.D. Quotes

Parenting is a weighty responsibility, perhaps the most important task of one's entire lifetime. Yet most people approach this awesome responsibility with the assumption that all parents intuitively know how to raise their children and do not require any special preparation and knowledge. Some people operate according to the myth that "You either have it or you don't"; i.e., one is either a natural-born parent who does not need any education in parenting, or one does not have the capacity for healthy parenting, in which case education will be of no use... No parent would take a child in need of health care to someone who had no medical training. Yet few parents realize that they themselves may lack the skills to be optimal parents.¹

There is a great deal of evidence that infants are highly impressionable, and it has been hypothesized that even in intra-uterine life the fetus can be affected emotionally as well as physically. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch stated that training of a child should begin 20 years prior to his birth. What Rabbi Hirsch means is that the Talmudic principle, "Correct yourself and then correct others" (Bava Metzia 107b), applies to parenting as well to

¹ XV-XVI

other relationships. *Healthy parenting should begin not with the focus on the child, but rather with the focus on oneself.*²

While there are a few rules that are without any exceptions, here is one that is absolute. Never, but never, humiliate a child. Discipline does not require his being shamed. A child should not be humiliated in the presence of his friends or even his own sisters or brothers. When reprimand or punishment is necessary, call the child aside, and in privacy carry out the required discipline. Although the child may resent the reprimand, he will appreciate your concern for his self-respect. On the other hand, if you reprimand him in the presence of others, the pain of being humiliated may be so intense that it obscures the message of the reprimand, and the discipline is of little value.³

It is important for parents and siblings to respect a child's privacy. Parents do not like children to rummage through their things or to enter a closed room without knocking. These same considerations should be shown to children.⁴

Many Jewish homes are graced by the presence of sacred books: the Scriptures and a set of the Talmud. This is admirable indeed, but not nearly as effective as when children see their parents

² 40

³ 91

⁴ 96

reading these sacred books. The Scriptures, the Talmud, and many great Torah works are now available in English, so that they are accessible to all. We indeed indicate that we love Torah by displaying these sacred books in our home, but the message is enhanced manifold if they are put to more than ornamental use.⁵

Buy the book: <https://www.amazon.com.au/Positive-Parenting-ArtScroll-Mesorah-Abraham/dp/0899066445>

Note: As of now, there's no audiobook version for this sefer. If someone can persuade the author to create one, it would greatly benefit individuals who have difficulty reading. In the meantime, using text-to-speech software such as Natural Reader with a CZUR device, along with a physical book, may be a helpful alternative for many.