



EMPOWERING
CHILDREN
FOUNDATION



Building parent-child relationships

The adaptation, typesetting and printing of the publication is carried out within the framework of the project 'Protect minors, including unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, from abuse in centres for foreigners' financed by the Programme 'Home Affairs' implemented within the framework of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism for 2014–2021. The programme is under the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior and Administration.



EMPOWERING
CHILDREN
FOUNDATION



URZĄD DO SPRAW
CUDZOZIEMCÓW



Build your child's self-esteem

Support your child's self-esteem. It begins to form even in infancy, when the child sees itself through the eyes of its parents. Children hear your tone of voice, they see your body language, every expression on your face. Your actions and words have the greatest impact on the development of a child's self-assessment. Noticing small things and praise encourage it to be proud of itself. Conversely – when the child hears negative comments and comparisons to other children, it feels worthless. Avoid any belittling statements and do not use words that can humiliate the child. Comments ('How can you act so stupid!' or 'You act like your little brother!') affect the child as much as physical punishment. Choose your words carefully and be attentive. Let your child know that everyone makes mistakes. Let it know that you will love it anyway, even if you don't like its behaviour.

Notice the appropriate behaviour

Have you ever stopped and thought about how many times during the day you reacted to a child's negative behaviour? You may unexpectedly find that you criticise your child more often than you praise it.

It's much more effective to notice what children do well: 'You remembered and made your bed yourself – I'm very happy about that!' or 'I saw you playing with your sister. I liked how you spent time together – you shared toys, talked.' When encouraging a child to behave appropriately, such remarks are more effective than reproaches. Every day, think about why you could praise your child. Do not regret rewarding it – your love, your embrace, your praise.



Set boundaries and be consistent in your upbringing

Certain rules are necessary in every family. By applying rules, we strive to help children choose good behaviours and teach them self-control. Set clear rules at home. When the child does not listen, calmly tell it to not behave like this ('Please do not make noise') and what you expect in return, what behaviour is desirable ('Speak softly, because the sister is sleeping'). Praise the child if it listens.

A common mistake that parents make is the lack of consistency in applying the rules. From the child's point of view, it is important that parents always react in the same way to certain behaviours. When you are consistent, children know what to expect from you and feel safe. Established house rules help children understand what you expect from them and shape their self-control.

Have time for your child

It is often difficult for children and parents to meet and be together, but for children it is the greatest joy. You can set aside one 'special evening' a week when you are all together. Children who don't get enough attention often try to attract it the wrong way because they know then they'll definitely be noticed. Paying attention even in a negative way is better for a child than remaining completely unnoticed. A child's self-esteem depends not only on how much time you spend together, but also on how you spend it. Since we are very busy, often while listening to the child, we already think about what we need to do next. By doing so, we don't fully concentrate on what the child is saying to us. Often we just pretend to listen, or simply ignore the child's efforts to be with us. It is important to spend even a little time together with the child, doing something that pleases both sides.



Be a good example


Young children learn behaviours by watching their parents. The smaller they are, the more things they take over from you. Before you explode in anger in front of your child, think about whether you want it to behave like this when it gets angry. Try to control the behaviours that children see. Studies confirm that children who beat other children have often witnessed such situations in their homes before. Also vice versa – if you want to teach certain behaviours, first apply them yourself. Present the values you want to develop in your children: respect, friendship, honesty, kindness, tolerance.

First of all, talk

It is important to explain to the child why it is necessary to act in one way or another. If there are problems, name them, express your feelings and make decisions. You can present several options and let the children choose. When children choose for themselves, they are more likely to accept the consequences of those choices. Always talk about what's going on. If an angry child screams and stamps its feet, help it by encouraging it to say in words what it wants and what it doesn't like. Suggest how to behave, sympathise, do not turn your back, do not be silent.

Be flexible

If you are often disappointed in your child's behaviour, perhaps you expect something unrealistic. The environment strongly influences the behaviour of children, so you can modify these behaviours by changing the environment. If you notice that you keep telling your two-year-old 'can't,' think about where you can arrange some things so that the child can't reach them. This will reduce both your stress and that of your child. As




the child changes, you too must gradually change your parenting methods. It may turn out that what is effective today will not be any good in three months.



Show that your love is unconditional

Your responsibility as parents is to raise and teach your children, but the way you do it is of vital importance. When you talk to your child, avoid blaming and criticising, because it makes it feel humiliated. Show your child that even though you expect a change in its behaviour, it can always count on your love. Don't tell your child that it is bad, because such words also lower its self-esteem.




Let the children feel that they have power, that they are important...

If you don't, your child will find inappropriate ways to show its strength. Children feel that they are important when you ask them for advice, give them the right to choose, let them help you do everyday chores, e.g. a two-year-old can help wash plastic dishes or rinse vegetables. We often do even the simplest chores for children because we can do them faster, but then children may feel less important.

Notice your personal qualities and admit your shortcomings

You have to agree – you are not ideal parents. You have both strengths and weaknesses. Try to recognise your skills, e.g. 'I often praise and encourage my child'. Also, try to overcome your weaknesses – 'I should be more consistent and firm.' You don't have to know all the answers – be understanding with yourself. Parenting should be such a job for



you that you are able to do. Focus on those areas that require the most attention, do not try to change everything at once. Admit it to yourself when you feel tired, burned out. Try, at least once a week, to find time for yourself and take a short break from typical daily activities, so that you can do what you enjoy on your own (or with your partner). If you pay attention to your needs, it does not mean that you are selfish. You care about your own well-being, and this is another important value that you pass on to your children. If you feel good, your children will feel good too. It's hard to be a nice parent if you are tired, anxious, depressed.




Do not get involved in conflicts

If you feel that your child is testing your patience or being rude while talking to you, the best response is to stop and give yourself a moment to 'catch your breath'. If your child gets very angry when it doesn't get something or when it doesn't do well, show that you understand what is going on, but don't give in. If your son or daughter stamps his/her feet and cries in the store because you won't buy a new toy, say, 'I understand that you're sorry when you don't get what you want, but today we won't buy it, but we can play with some other toy at home.' Do not abandon your child if it is angry or disappointed, it needs your presence to cope with difficult emotions.

Be gentle and firm

Raising a child means love, acceptance and joy, but also setting boundaries, requirements or prohibitions. The child is fragile and sensitive, do it gently, with respect and love. Anger, fear, distrust do not build a happy person.





**EMPOWERING
CHILDREN
FOUNDATION**

The material was based on the publication:

“Let's grow up together – how to enjoy successful parenting?”

Copyright © Paramos Vaikams Centras

Copyright for the Polish edition © 2013 Empowering Children Foundation
(formerly Nobody's Children Foundation)

Authors: Goda Bačienė, Aušra Kurienė, Eglė Kuraitė, Skirmantė Povilėnaitė

Editor: Sylwia Romańczak

Substantive consultations of the Polish version: Joanna Fejfer-Szpytko,
Aneta Kwaśny,

Karolina Lewandowska, Karolina Mazurczak, Marlena Trąbińska-Haduch

Graphic design and typesetting: Norbert Grzelka

English translation: Translation Office Jacek Luczak

Adaptation of the material for the project 'Protect minors, including unaccompanied
minor asylum seekers, from abuse in centres for foreigners': Jolanta Zmarzlik

Copyright 2021: Empowering Children Foundation

ul. Walecznych 59

03-926 Warsaw

www.fdds.pl