

# Give up on Parenting and Start Coaching!



Parent, Life Coach, Speaker  
and author of the  
*Parent Connection, 20 Principles for  
Strong Parenting*

**I**n the last 30 years there have been two major changes in parenting: technological advancements (i.e., internet, cell phones, texting, and Facebook®) and quality time spent with children. Since there is little parents can do about the advances in technology, we have to become better stewards over the time spent with our children.

Far too many parents believe spending passive time with their children will replace giving true direction and administering large doses of L-O-V-E. As parents, we often feel that our title as “mom” or “dad” alone is enough to warrant respect and obedience from our children. Nothing could be further from the truth. One question I am consistently asked during parenting workshops is “Why won’t my child listen to me?” My response is always the same, “Why won’t you listen to your child?” I pose this question to the parents because, surprisingly, it is the same question I am asked by children during my youth workshops.

The bottom line is parents need to step outside of the traditional parenting role and into the role of a modern day Life Coach. In other words, for parents to become more effective we must add some of the powerful tools of Life Coaching. Although Life Coaching is not a new concept, its application to relationships and parenting is relatively a foreign concept to most. In order to become more effective in any area of life, especially in relationships, one needs strong guidance from a Life Coach. Often times professional counseling is conducted to address childhood wounds; therefore, it seems beneficial to take a closer look at our parenting skills and what or who could support our development as parents.

In the cyber age, children can gain access to various forms of information and are at risk of being influenced improperly. In order to become effective parents, we must begin coaching.

## **What are the benefits of coaching your child, opposed to traditional parenting?**

1. Your child will feel like they are being listened to and cared for.
2. You will empower your child to take positive focused actions.
3. You will develop a healthier bond with your child that will grow stronger over the years.
4. Your child will be able to use the same coaching tools with their friends and even their own children.

5. Coaching will decrease arguments and increase admiration and respect for the parent.

### **Reflective Listening**

Reflective listening starts with the listener not the storyteller (the person talking). Listening is an art that when perfected can foster feelings of acceptance and trust in the storyteller. To develop your listening skills, practice listening to the words, the body language and the pitch/tone of the storyteller. Try not to interpret the information, but rather reflect what you think you heard back to the storyteller in the form of a question to ensure understanding. Examples of reflective listening include the following: “It sounds like you are feeling hurt?” or “Did I hear you say you are very upset about what happened yesterday?” Don’t forget: Listening is the path to understanding.

### **Ask Powerful Questions**

The premise of Life Coaching is asking powerful and thought provoking questions based on your listening. The better listener you are, the better questions you can ask. For children, it is better to ask more open-ended questions such as: “How did that make you feel?” and “So what do you want to do about that?” Instead of leading questions such as: “Don’t you think that you were wrong?” or “Don’t you think I care?” Asking open-ended questions can relax your child and help them focus on how they really feel. Asking the right questions at the right time can empower your child to take healthy steps toward positive solutions.

### **Be Authentic**

Be yourself. Take off the “parent hat” and just be you. Children are reluctant to say how they really feel around an authoritative figure that can enforce discipline. To be an effective parent coach you must be willing to be a little vulnerable about things that you are still working on such as fears, attitudes, issues, and future goals. By doing so, your child will lower their defenses and see you as a person rather than only an authority figure. In addition, being vulnerable will create a deeper connection and cultivate an honest relationship.

Activities that support parental coaching:

- Have a family night once a week that includes dinner around the table and old fashioned board games.
- Make dinner together as a family at least once a month.
- Ask your child to teach you a part of their homework that you really don’t know or understand.
- Take a family trip and have your children film, narrate, and edit a video of the adventure.
- Take your child with you to purchase clothing to wear to work. Have a discussion about why you wear certain articles of clothing for different occasions.
- Watch one of your child’s favorite movies. Develop a dialog by asking what were their favorite scenes and characters.

Becoming a coach does not mean you are not a parent anymore, it simply means that you are a better parent.