



PARENTS COUNT

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS



“Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning.”

William Arthur Ward

Keep Curiosity Strong

Most children are born curious, but many children lose their curiosity all too soon. As a parent, you can do a great deal to keep the flame of curiosity strong.

Why is curiosity so important?

Here are three big reasons:

- 1. Curiosity is an important trait that leads to learning.*
When children are comfortable and feel safe, they are naturally able to explore their worlds. The more your child explores, the more he learns.
- 2. Curiosity drives kids to try new things.*
Strong curiosity gives children confidence to try new things. Trying new things opens up new worlds to your child.
- 3. Curiosity brings excitement to life.*
Children who are curious enjoy their lives. They are less likely to get bored and find life dull or routine. They feel that there are always new, interesting things just around the corner. It can lead them to have adventurous and interesting lives.

Now that you know the importance of curiosity, here are some tips to keeping it growing in your kids:

1. Be a good role model.

Be open to new ideas. Be open to changing your mind. Let your children know when you have had a change of mind or heart. It can help them develop the ability to be flexible.

2. Try something new once in a while.

Try something new. Take up a new sport, try a new game, adopt a new hobby. Let your children see that you don't mind being an inexperienced beginner. Your kids will learn how to become comfortable with being beginners, too.

3. Welcome and respond to questions.

Sometimes parents can feel irritated by a child's questions. Be careful with the way you respond to children's questions. Thoughtless responses like "Don't ask me so many questions," "You ask too many questions," or "Because I said so" are quick ways to kill children's curiosity. Children who hear this can feel there is something wrong with being curious and asking questions. They likely won't ask any more questions.

You don't need to know the answers to all the questions that children ask. As a matter of fact, encouraging children to think about where they could find the answers to their questions and helping them find those



answers is more helpful than giving a quick answer. So when your child asks you, "Why is the sky blue?" you can respond by saying, "I don't know. Where do you think we could find that answer?" Then look for a book or search the Internet together to get the answer.

4. Children need stable homes and calm routines.

Young children thrive on a calm, orderly family life with regular mealtimes and bedtime routines. Since children cannot tell time, the routine is their clock. When children's lives are stressful, they respond by playing and exploring less. Children who experience abuse, neglect, violence, natural disasters, or war lose their curiosity and do not explore like children raised in healthy, stable homes.

5. Let kids be kids.

Do you find yourself saying, "Don't touch," "Don't play with that," "Don't get into that," "Don't get dirty?" Curious children want to explore. Instead of saying No and Don't, child-proof your home. Put away breakable objects and use child-proof locks on cabinets where you wish to store things that you don't want your child to get into.

Looking cute is nice, but keeping clothes clean is not something young children naturally do well, and it limits their ability to play. Getting messy is a natural part of childhood. Buy washable clothes that children can play in without fear of getting dirty.

6. Don't believe in boredom.

Boredom is a great thing for kids because it forces them to find ways to entertain themselves. Don't handle boredom by turning on the TV or putting your children in front of the computer. Instead, remind them of something they like to do: "Remember how you made that maze?" or "Remember how you made that giant zoo?" You may have to help your child get started, but over time he will be able to find his own entertainment.

7. See learning as fun.

If you see learning as a burden it will take the joy out of it for both you and your child. If you instead find the fun in learning you'll want to spend time doing it and your child will share your great attitude.

8. Read, read, read!

Your library is a great place to pick up books on topics that might lead you and your child into new worlds. Take the time to read for yourself and to your child every day. Read some old favorites, but also introduce your child to new books regularly. Tell the librarian about your child's favorite books. The librarian can help you find other books that would be exciting for your child.



9. Be a reliable parent.

Children need to feel safe and secure to be able to explore. If you are distracted or distant, your child will have trouble exploring and learning. A child who can trust that the adults in his life are really there for her will have the confidence to explore and will learn more quickly.

If you are facing problems in your own life, you might find yourself being less responsive and less available to your child. Try to maintain a routine and make sure you take time to stop what you are doing to spend time with your child.

References

Dr. Bruce Perry, *Early Childhood Today Magazine*, 2001–1996, Scholastic Inc.

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