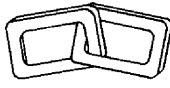


INTERACTION CONSULTANTS



Choose how you parent.

Are you concerned about your parenting skills? If so, there are things you can do.

Parenting skills are generally learned through our early life experiences with our own caregivers. The process is called “role modeling”. In most instances the role model is mom and dad, but in many other instances, this could be a grandparent, foster parent, friend of the family or other guardian. Throughout these early life experiences most persons learn healthy and adaptive ways to raise children. However, for some, their own upbringing may have included issues arising out of violence, abuse, neglect or other forms of dysfunction that interfere with their own ability to parent today.

Given poor experiences from one’s past, it can be a challenge for some persons to parent in such a way so as not to re-create the familiar. In other words, it can be difficult to parent differently from how you were parented so what happened to you doesn’t happen to your children. Some persons who have had poor childhood experiences are concerned about their parenting skills. Even some persons with good childhood experiences have concerns too.

The road to better parenting or parenting differently from what you experienced begins with the process of self-discovery. If in your past, you had experiences related to abuse, violence, neglect or other forms of family dysfunction or you are just concerned, consider consulting a social worker or finding books pertaining to your childhood experience to learn how your early experiences can affect adult life and your parenting. Talking with a social worker or reading books helps to hold a mirror to oneself to more fully and deeply examine where we come from to determine who we are and how we act.

With this deeper understanding of our self, we are then better equipped to recognize how what we learned may affect our current parenting behaviour. Then we are able to contrast our behaviour with what children really need for healthy development. If there is a discrepancy between what we now realize we are doing and what is actually best for

children, there are steps we can take to improve matters.

The next steps involve shedding the old patterns of parenting behaviours in favour of adopting new parenting skills. Even though we may not like our past experiences, they are familiar and in a sense, comfortable. As such we need reminders, support and information both for what not to do but also for help with what to do. Strategies to help be a better parent can come in several different forms and include everything from reading books, to notes on the refrigerator door, to counseling, to support groups, to parenting classes.

Along the way, you may want to consider adopting a new role model. If your role models weren’t healthy, think of someone else, whose parenting abilities you admire. This could be a friend’s parent, a fictional character from a book or even a television personality. The objective here is to pick someone who you know parents well. Then, when you are stuck and wonder what to do, you can think of what that person would do in your situation. This is a nice way to take care of yourself and your children.

Choose your role model and how you want to parent to be the kind of parent your child would choose.

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Gary Direnfeld is a child-behaviour expert, a social worker, and the author of *Raising Kids Without Raising Cane*. Gary not only helps people get along or feel better about themselves, but also enjoys an extensive career in public speaking. He provides insight on issues ranging from child behaviour management and development; to family life; to socially responsible business development. Courts in Ontario, Canada consider Gary an expert on matters pertaining to child development, custody and access, family/marital therapy and social work.

Buy the book:

To order Direnfeld’s book, *Raising Kids Without Raising Cane*, send a cheque or money order in the amount of \$12.00 to:
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