

5 NATURAL PARENTING
SECRETS THAT MAKE KIDS
WANT TO COOPERATE

*No Time Outs, Threats or
Punishment Required!*

TRACY GILLETT



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BY TRACY GILLETT

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HI, I'M TRACY

Natural Parenting Advocate
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You crave a healthy relationship with your child, built on honesty, trust and unconditional love.

But many traditional discipline techniques undermine those aspirations. Coercive methods like bullying, punishment, timeouts, threats and rewards may appear to work in the short term but not for the reasons you'd hope. Why? Because they create fear, anxiety and mistrust. Worst of all they leverage your love, communicating that it is conditional on your child's behaviour. Your child learns to perceive that you love them when they're good but not when they're bad.

Thankfully, there is a MUCH better way. Connection is the antidote to coercion. It dwarfs punitive methods in its ability to shape our children's behavior. Connection is a positive parent's superpower and is the only reason kids freely give up what they want to do and do what we want instead. The truth is that as parents we ALL choose to parent either through connection or coercion.

So what is connection? Connection describes the *relationship* we have with our kids. Children crave connection, and from birth, their instincts drive behaviours that seek it out.

"Our effectiveness as parents is in direct proportion to the strength of the bond we have with our child."
Pam Leo

What is coercion? Coercion is the basis for most of us would recognise as discipline. It's central to authoritarian parenting and is defined as "the act of coercing; use of force or intimidation to obtain compliance."

So, how do you effortlessly sidestep coercive discipline techniques such as timeouts, threats and rewards? Simple. You strengthen connection. And the bonus? Parenting will become easier and your relationship with your child will thrive as you become allies working together.

1

TOUCH

Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, says touch is “the first language we learn,” and “our richest means of emotional expression” throughout life.

We’re evolutionarily primed to crave touching our children and with good reason; without it, they fail to thrive. Positive touch is a parenting superpower connecting us to our children in the most literal of senses.

Yet, in western society, touch is becoming akin to an endangered species. Tracy Cassels, PhD., of Evolutionary Parenting, reports that on average, infants are being touched by another human only 12-20% of the time which drops below 10% before babies reach their first birthday. And the older our kids get the more we tend to withdraw physical affection.

Family therapist Virginia Satir famously said, “*We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth.*” Hug your child good morning, good-bye and hello. Snuggle in bed. Curl up together on the couch watching a movie.

Some other ideas for enriching your family life through touch?

Massage your baby, toddler and child. Rub their back as they fall asleep or tickle their toes while snuggled up on the couch.

Ditch the stroller - if not all the time, at least some of the time, wear your baby, toddler or young child instead. Not all of us are physically able to carry our children, but if you can, give it a go, you won’t regret the closeness and connection it brings.

Share sleep - if you already bed share with your baby or children, keep going for as long as it works for your family. Sharing sleep banks oodles of closeness and deepens your connection and it is never too late to start. If you’re curious about trying it check out my post [Why Babies \(and Parents\) Love Cosleeping](#) or if you’re worried about the safety aspects you may like [Shared or Solitary Sleep: Which is Safest For Babies?](#)

2

PLAY

Lawrence Cohen, a licensed psychologist specializing in children's play and play therapy, suggests many adults have simply forgotten how to play. Many parents are comfortable being silly and affectionate with young babies but as our children get older we tend to withdraw and assume that it's more appropriate for children to play with other kids, but there is more than enough play to go around.

Play is perhaps the shortest distance between a grumpy child and an overwhelmed parent. And since reading [Playful Parenting](#) I use it as a positive parenting tool every single day.

So, how can you infuse more play and playfulness into your family life?

Tap into your inner child - no matter your age, she is still there. Rouse your imagination. Make boring and repetitive tasks fun. Be silly. Use funny voices. Pretend you're on secret missions as you run errands. Rough house on the bed. Get down on the floor. Dance to music in the living room. Chase each other around the backyard with water pistols.

Most importantly, simply accept your child's invitation to play. One of my favourite quotes by Lawrence Cohen is:

*Children don't say "I had a hard day, can we talk?"
They say, "Will you play with me?"*

Always follow their lead and resist the temptation to control the play, because in play, children are in charge. Enjoy the ride.

3

SPECIAL TIME

In *Peaceful Parents, Happy Kids*, Dr Laura Markham refers to one on one time as Special Time. She suggests it can transform a child's behavior because they reconnect to their parents: they feel stable and secure again.

Special Time can serve as a calming oasis, a safe haven in which children revel in their parent's undivided attention, which they so desperately crave. It deepens connection but it also builds self worth.

How do you schedule Special Time?

- Announce you'd like to have Special Time with each child for at least 15 minutes every day
- Name the Special Time for your child, "Sarah Time" for example
- Alternate who decides what to do for Special Time – one day you decide, the next day your child decides
- Give your child your absolute and undivided attention. No phones. No agendas. No distractions
- Enjoy the ride

There are no black and white rules here - this is one way to do it, but something different may work in your home. The important thing is to make a regular commitment to each child every day or as often as you can. And the more you can commit to it when your kids are little, the more willing your kids will be to spend time with you when they're older (and isn't that what we all want?).

4

APOLOGIZE

Alfie Kohn makes a brilliant suggestion in his book [Unconditional Parenting](#). Apologize. Simply apologize. *Why?!*

First, it sets a powerful example.

And second, it helps take us off our perfect parenting pedestal. It shows our children that when we make a mistake, it's no big deal. We can admit to it, apologize, model respectful behaviour and move on. It makes us vulnerable and in that moment it creates a richer connection with our kids.

Alfie recommends making a regular habit of apologizing at least once a week. I'd suggest to do it more frequently. In my experience, not a day goes by that I don't mess up and need to apologise to my little guy. And my guess is that your kid's reaction will make you so happy you'll want to do it often.

“One generation full of deeply loving parents would change the brain of the next generation, and with that, the world.”

- Charles Raison



DARE GREATLY

Perhaps the most important piece of advice I can give you as you choose to parent through connection rather than coercion is to be willing to be different. Be brave. Be fierce. You are your child's most trusted ally. Don't break the connection you have with your child to please somebody else. Don't compromise on your family's values because they don't match society's version of "normal". As [Brene Brown](#) says, fitting in is overrated.

Have the courage to respectfully advocate for your child. It sends a strong message that, with you, they are always safe in this big, wild world. That you have their back and they needn't be fearful.

If you ever doubt yourself, remember that authoritarian parenting techniques are popular because large parts of our society believe children must be controlled through fear with practices like punishment, shaming, threats, rewards and timeouts.

It's a moral as well as a practical question. *Beyond keeping our children safe is it right to try to control them?* Personally, I don't believe it is. And even if it were, its not possible...at least not in the long run. Natural parenting techniques are the antidote. By applying simple principles to bond with your child to make them feel safe and secure in your care you're setting the stage for them to grow into independent and confident adults.

And it's always easier when you have a tribe around you. If you haven't joined already, I'd love to invite you to join the [Raised Good Natural Parents Facebook Group](#); a welcoming community of like minded parents who offer support and advice free of judgment.

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP

