

10 Parenting Ideas You Probably Never Thought Of

When my wife and I found out we were going to be parents, we immediately knew we needed wisdom. There was a couple with grown kids we asked to meet with to ask questions.

Little did we know but a number of other couples had asked them for the same thing. They ended up hosting all of us for dinner to discuss parenthood. Some of the things they said were so simple I couldn't believe I hadn't thought of it myself.

Whether you are a new father or a seasoned veteran, we all need help. There's nothing more beneficial than sharing wisdom, ideas, and best practices. So here, in all humility, are 10 random parenting ideas that perhaps you never thought of.

1. Keep it simple. We tend to overdo the rule making. Keep the rules to a number you can actually enforce. That way you will be consistent and the kids will know what to expect. Also, be able to bring it all back to one or two big picture ideas for your kids to move toward.

2. Don't go it alone. We're not talking about a "12-Step" program for dads (although it's not such a bad idea) but more of a support and encouragement of other dads in the same boat. Our All Pro Dad's Day program is perfect for this.

3. Ramp up the routine and the predictability. Children thrive on predictability. When they know what to expect (and you know what to expect), a lot of the stress evaporates.

4. Have kids take turns being "in charge" of chores for a day. (They make the assignments and you have to work too). Seriously, what's a day with the shoe on the other foot?

You'll learn something, they'll learn something; it's a win-win.

5. Try "Family Game Night." Again, make this routine. Board games and card games help reinforce the idea that "there's a bigger plan." Everyone's on the same page; problem solving skills are enhanced. It sounds "old school," we know, but there's a lot in "old school" we could all use right about now.

6. Apologize when you're wrong. As parents, we should constantly model appropriate behavior and interaction. It's called family leadership. When we're wrong, which will happen quite a bit, we need to own it. If we don't, they never will.

7. Let kids help make the rules. A family is not a democracy. But, a family is a place where we teach, we all learn, and problem solving is practiced. Studies clearly demonstrate greater "buy-in" from children who have a hand in developing rules and consequences.

8. Try a day without rules. Well, maybe one rule: They still need to stay safe. Take a weekend and let them choose everything: meals (even if it's candy), activities (you must join in), their bedtime (or lack of one), etc. They may see the value of all of your rules the next day.

9. It's not all about the kids. Strong families are built around strong marriages. Ultimately, the most important element of family life is the relationship between mom and dad. That's job one. Your kids will be happier. Even if you are no longer together, the way you treat each other will affect them.

10. Babysitting reciprocity. Find other families that are in the same season of life. Consistent date nights with babysitters can get expensive. Take turns babysitting one another's kids to keep date night affordable. Obviously, choose carefully. I recommend having medical information and

consents in place ahead of time. There may come a time when you need it.

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