



Parenting

Before the Baby Arrives

Though most of the attention is obviously on the little bundle of joy set to join the family in nine months, there's more than enough prep work to keep any family busy before the baby arrives.

HAVE THE BASICS READY TO GO

It might seem obvious, but in the frantic heat of the moment while bringing baby home, you'd be surprised how many things you might forget. From diapers to a few different sets of clothes that actually fit your newborn (it's hard to nail down that size until the baby is actually out), it's easy to forget the most obvious essentials. To avoid that, make a list at least a few weeks before the due date, and make sure you have it all on hand and ready to go.

MAKE SURE THE NURSERY IS GOOD TO GO

Though there might be some co-sleeping in the early days, baby will need his own room soon enough. Ideally, you want to get started on this a few months before the due date, to allow time to buy and assemble furniture, shop, or even reach out to family and friends for items you can use (such as a changing table and rocking chair). If you're feeling more ambitious, you'll want to handle any painting or redecorating duties long before the baby arrives. There's no time for that once the extra addition arrives, plus paint fumes are not safe



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for a newborn.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Try to think ahead to things that might make your life a little easier in the coming

weeks. Many experienced parents will tell you the best laid plans often get wrecked in the waning hours if a baby won't go to sleep and the parents are exhausted. Regardless,

there are still some basic steps worth taking. Add a night light to the baby's room. Not because they'll be scared of the dark at that age, but because you will be less likely

to stub your toe during a nightly check-in. Also, make sure to have a fan in the nursery to help provide some white noise to help baby sleep.

Your Parenting Type

Obviously, it's not easy being a parent — but having a strategy can sometimes help. Which strategy works best for you? Which model might you be following without even realizing it?

Asbury Park Press broke down the four major parenting models, which include attachment parenting, tiger moms, free-range parenting and helicopter parents.

Each parenting style has its inherent advantages, and disadvantages — and there are no “right” or “wrong” options. Typically, the correct answer for your family, and your children, can fall somewhere in the middle of all four.

HELICOPTER PARENTS

A relatively common phrase that has been around for years, helicopter parenting occurs when a parent takes an extremely active (or, perhaps too active) role in managing their teenager or young adult's life. The idea is that a parent will bring more experience and wisdom to the table and help the child make better decisions at a young age. But, in some cases, the concept can backfire.

The biggest downside: It can stunt a child's development when it comes to making their own decisions, and not allow them to learn from their mistakes.

It's great to be involved, but children and teens need freedom to make some decisions on their own.

The hard part is finding that balance.

FREE-RANGE PARENTS

This is an arguably opposite approach to helicopter parenting. Free-range parents allow their children to explore and play with minimal supervision — though rules are typically put in place to keep children safe. An example: allowing children to walk alone to a nearby park (but making sure they know exactly where to go and how to get there safely).

ATTACHMENT PARENTING

This philosophy applies more to infants and tracks with the psychological concept that children benefit from a strong parental bond, which is forged by physical closeness (co-sleeping, breastfeeding, immediate response when a child cries, etc.) at a young age. Ideally, that closeness will lead to a trusting child who feels loved and will grow into a well-balanced adult.

TIGER PARENTING

This parenting style advocates strict rules and extremely high expectations in everything from academic work to chores. The thesis aims to push children to be successful, in hopes those traits will be instilled in them as an adult. The philosophy is based Amy Chua's novel “The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother.”



Children and Anxiety

Anxiety is part of being human, but for children, regular fears can be hard to rationalize and process.

Many adults suffer from anxiety, and oftentimes, those struggles begin at a young age. Children in pre-school, all the way up to high school, can have issues with anxiety and stress. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, approximately 25 percent of 13- to 18-year-olds have a “prevalence” for anxiety, while approximately 5.9 percent may suffer from severe anxiety.

It’s a major issue for children, and most kids battle short-term bouts of anxiety over everything from a school project to a teacher they don’t like.

YOUNGER CHILDREN

For younger children, such as pre-schoolers and grade-schoolers), one approach that can help with processing anxiety is to have a discussion to explain exactly what anxiety is to them, on their terms.

For children that young, it can be hard to differentiate between what is real and what’s imaginary. Try to explain to them that just because they think of something scary (such as a dinosaur chasing them), that doesn’t mean it’s actually

going to happen. This can extend to the mundane, such as worries about success at school. Explain that just because they’re worried they won’t do well, it doesn’t mean they won’t. Take some additional time to work with your child and encourage her about whatever has her worried. It’s a relatively simple approach, but it can help.

ANXIETY IN TEENS

Anxiety gets more complex as a child grows older, and by the time they reach the teenage years, many could be grappling with the issues. One prevalent anxiety issue for teens revolves around social anxiety disorders, which are only exacerbated by the fickleness of teenagers and the challenges of navigating high school.

A good first step is to have an open conversation with your teen and be accepting of their problems. Be encouraging, and remind them of past experiences in which they overcame adversity. Also help them talk through what they’re worried about, and what could be the cause. If problems persist for a few months with no improvement, consider professional counseling.



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Free-range Parenting

You may not know all the details, but you've probably heard of free-range parenting in recent years — and possibly not in the most flattering light. But, like most things, there are two sides to every story.

There have been some recent headlines about free-range parenting that have put the parenting style under the microscope, with authorities and social services sometimes being called by neighbors after seeing children on their own in the community. But, for advocates of free-range parenting, that freedom is a common sense response to over-parenting (or “helicopter parenting”).

Basically, free-range parents believe in preparing their children to handle situations on their own, then giving them the freedom to do that.

'WORLD'S WORST MOM'

Lenore Skenazy became a poster parent for the movement a few years ago, after writing a controversial column about a learning opportunity she gave her 9-year-old son to find his way home by himself in New York.

“I gave him a map, a MetroCard, quarters for the phone and \$20 for emergencies. Bloomingdale's sits on top of a subway station on our local line, and it's always crowded with shoppers. I believed he'd be safe. I believed he could figure out his way,” she wrote on her blog. “Long story short: He got home about 45 minutes later, ecstatic with independence.”

Within two days, her story was picked up by Today Show, NPR, MSNBC and Fox News, and spawned the World's Worst Mom cable series on Discovery Life. Needless to say — free-range parenting is proving to be controversial.

If anything, free-range parenting is a throwback to the freedom afforded most baby boomers at a young age. They were often allowed to go out in the neighborhood and play, then return home at dark.

THROWBACK PARENTING

Of course, for anyone who grew up in the 1960s, '70s or '80s — this style of parenting doesn't sound so odd. If anything, free-range parenting is a throwback to the freedom afforded most baby boomers at a young age. They were often allowed to go out in the neighborhood and play, then return home at dark.

Free range advocates note the movement is essentially a more structured approach to the old school parenting style, while the culture has changed to the point that it's viewed as controversial.

As with most things, there are elements of free-range parenting that are extremely useful, though it's up to the parent to decide which aspects to use.



Creating an Atmosphere

It might sound overly ambitious, and parents obviously can't control everything, but it's important to think long and hard about the type of environment in which you want to raise your child.

It takes more than just big ideas. It takes execution, and that's not always easy.

FIGURE OUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Culture changes fast, and the ideals that were important and prioritized when you were a child may not be the same now. For parents, it can be an almost Herculean task to take things that are important to them, and how the world has changed culturally, and find a balance in how you raise a child. Some of those old ideals are certainly worth holding onto, while some of the new changes also can help foster a well-rounded child. Those are the things each family has to figure out, but it takes some early decision-making to set those standards at a young age.

MAKE RULES AND STICK TO THEM

It's easy to plan before a baby arrives, but once the rubber hits the metaphorical road, that's when it can get very tough. From a plan for (or against) co-sleeping to teaching teens proper manners, it takes consistency for those lessons to stick.

Parents need to set those expectations early, and lay out clear consequences for their



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children. For example, if you're teaching manners, be sure a child is required to say "Please" and "Thank you," before their question is answered.

UNDERSTAND YOU CAN'T CONTROL EVERYTHING

Like it or not, your children are going to be influenced by the outside world.

From peers at school, to

media such as TV and movies, it's amazing the different places children can pick up different things. It falls to a parent or guardian to teach their children how to parse and process

it all. Even if they do pick up things a parent might not agree with, a strong foundation can go a long way toward helping them figure out which influences are important.

Starting Kindergarten

Starting school is one of the biggest milestones a child will go through during his young life, and though it's obviously an exciting time, it also can be a stressful time.

There are some ways to make the transition as smooth as possible.

EASE YOUR CHILD INTO THE NEW SETTING

Most schools offer an early day for visitation via open house programs, and parents are highly encouraged to take advantage. The experience can prove invaluable and is an excellent way to help ease a child into the new school setting while also keeping them comfortable with parental support on hand. It gives both the parent and child a chance to meet the teacher and staff, plus your child will be more comfortable with the atmosphere and protocol before showing up on the first day.

SAY GOODBYE, AND MEAN IT

Many children suffer from separation anxiety, but parents can sometimes unknowingly exacerbate the problem. One way to help is for parents to say a quick goodbye when dropping off their child and not linger. It may be harder on the child if there's not a consistent exit, and he may try to further delay the exit by crying. Leave quickly so the child can start his day and class routine, and though there



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may be tears initially, it should make it easier in the long run. At pick-up time, also be sure to be extremely encouraging.

USE A 'LOVEY' IF NEEDED

Though some children adjust quickly to everything from sleeping alone to school,

others may require some extra comfort and encouragement. In many cases, that might take the form of a favorite blanket, toy or stuffed animal.

That can work fine at home, or at daycare or preschool, but when a child starts school

it can be a lot tougher to hold onto that comfort item.

One tactic that can help a child with a proclivity toward a comfort object is the "lovey" approach. Basically, the idea is to use something much smaller (such as a corner of their favorite blanket) your

child can keep on them throughout the day to make them comfortable.

Another approach can be to use a coin, small shell or stone, and let the child know if they ever miss you they can touch that item in their pocket to remember you.

Help Your Teen Land a Job

The job market can be tough at times for an experienced adult, but for a teen looking for her first after-school job, it can seem daunting.

There are some steps to take that can help your child land his first job — be it babysitting, working in food service or an internship in their chosen field.

TAKE IT SERIOUSLY

Stress to your child the importance of landing a job, as it represents her first step into young adulthood and should provide some valuable experience. She may not be excited about the prospect of taking an entry-level job, but stress the advantages of having a job (such as having spending money) and the importance of gaining experience in the workforce. Set the tone for taking the process seriously, and hopefully your teen will follow that lead.

FOCUS ON THE INTERVIEW

Many teen struggle with interview skills because they may not know what to expect or how to market their skills in a face-to-face chat. Hold some mock interviews, and try to get your teen comfortable talking about themselves and connecting their skills to the relevant position. Hold several mock interviews with your child, and reach out to a few friends in professional fields to also hold a mock interview, so they'll have



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some experience before walking in the door. For teens, especially for entry-level positions, the interview can be a make or break experience.

STRESS THE SOFT SKILLS

If he manages to land that first job, it won't last long if your teen doesn't have a strong grasp of the soft skills required to keep it.

It's amazing how many young people don't have a grasp of requirements such as following the dress code and showing up to work on time. A first job is an excellent time

for your teen to learn and hone those skills, but be sure to brief your child before the first day. Make sure they know what's expected in the workplace.