

Which Of The Three Parenting Roles Is The Appropriate One For You Right Now?

When we have a baby and become a parent we take on a brand new role in our lives. But do you know that this role is one that needs to change as your child grows and matures? There are in fact three different roles we need to fulfil as we parent our child from birth to adulthood.

1. Our first role is that of our child's "Earliest Teacher" and this is our role for about the first six or seven years of our child's life.

During this period we are the centre of our child's universe and it is through us that our little ones learn principally about the world. It is such an important time, as this is the time when a child's brain is developing so rapidly. It is important for parents to think about teaching their child to be a well rounded individual by including experiences that focus on developing their child socially, emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually.

2. Our next role, during the primary school years, until our children are about 12 years of age is that of "Manager".

During this time our child's universe is expanding and the parent can shift away from their earlier teaching role and take on the new role of manager as they organise this busy time with social activities: sport, cubs/scouts, ballet, music etc. The best managers support others to set goals and work towards them. This is an important part of the parenting role at this stage, so that children in their primary years are guided towards becoming more responsible.

3. Our last parenting role is that of "Coach" to our teenagers.

Parents can choose now, to take on the new role of coach, giving up control of their emerging adult as their teen tries figure out who they are for themselves. A good coach doesn't give answers or tell others what to do. They bring a system, a process for helping the person discover the answers for themselves. The role of coach is the appropriate parenting role to take with our teens, as it encourages them to become responsible, independent thinkers.

These three roles are such a wonderful progression for us as parents. We establish clear boundaries and teach about the world; we help manage our child's expanding universe at a period when they need guidance and we support our teens by walking with them as coach not controller. As we parent our growing child and our role changes, we learn to take steps to increase choice for them and reduce our control.

If parents are flexible and adapt their role as their child grows they will encourage their child to flourish and become an independent well adjusted adult, which is after all our ultimate parenting goal.