

## Have you set any parenting goals this year?

The New Year is a time for people to take stock and to make plans for the coming year. People often set personal or business goals but how about considering what you would like your goal as a parent to be? What do you want to achieve in your relationship with your child this year? What would you like to be doing more of with your child? What would you like to be doing less?

As our children grow and develop it is never too late to reassess our way of being with them and to make changes towards having an even more loving and fulfilling relationship, while letting go of control and allowing them to develop responsibility and independence. Here are seven ways to improve your relationship with your child, be they a youngster or a teenager. Perhaps some of these may help you to set your own parenting goal for the coming year.

1. Think about respecting your child more. What are their qualities that shine for you? Tell them about them.
2. Consider how well you listen to your child. Do you stop what you are doing and look at them when they are talking to you? Do you allow them to express their opinion without interrupting or taking over from them?
3. Reflect on how well you understand and know your child. Do you know what their favourite song or movie is, for example? Do you listen to them deeply and encourage them to share their feelings?
4. Think about how you show your child you appreciate them. Do you tell them? Do you spend time with them or give them hugs? Do you very occasionally give them a little something with no strings attached?
5. Consider how you are supporting your child. Are you offering age-appropriate support for their physical, emotional, intellectual, financial and spiritual development?
6. What are your current ways of encouraging responsibility in your child? Are you increasing opportunities for them to do things on their own as they get older? Do you encourage your child to try new things and learn from their mistakes, putting more emphasis on their effort rather than success?
7. Reflect upon your child's independence. As they develop how are you ensuring they gain independence from you? Are you letting them go gradually as they get older?

Perhaps your goal as a parent for this year may be to keep on learning. This truly is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children - to continually learn more about them as they grow and change as well as to learn to keep pace with our parenting role. Some suggestions to consider may be reading a parenting book or two this year, keeping up to date about drugs if you have a teenager, or attending a parent-coaching workshop - a wonderful opportunity to learn and grow as well as be with other parents.

Whatever you choose for your own parenting goal for this year - one thing is certain - that because you care enough to think and plan your parenting, your child will definitely benefit.

All the best for your parenting - may it be a year of loving and close connection between you and your child.