

## Parenting.....it's both a joy and a challenge!

Did it ever think that when you became a parent that it would be the hardest job you would ever have? A career that would last a life time? A job that provides you with joy, laughter, pride, frustration and yes sometimes even anger all in one day? With all of that is it not also the most rewarding job you could ever have?

As a parent it sometimes is hard to know what to do. Friends are full of advice, not to mention grandparents. To top it off there are a zillion books out there and don't forget the internet. It is a challenge to know what to do! Being a parent is very important and raising children can be a challenge.

No one has all the answers about parenting. It's a job and always changing. How you bring up your child may be quite different from how your parents raised you. Parenting differs from child to child, parent to parent and family to family. It can also differ by generation, community, country and culture. For all its differences, however, effective parenting is based on parents choosing what's best for their children, and valuing their child's uniqueness, dignity and worth.

The dictionary defines parenting as "the experiences, skills, qualities and responsibilities involved in being a parent and in teaching and caring for a child." In fact parenting is everything a parent does in raising a child. Although knowledge about parenting is growing, in practice, parenting is as much an art as it is a science.

Today, what was thought of as the "traditional" family – a married man and woman with children – still exists, but it is now part of a mix that includes families headed by single parents, step-parents, same-sex parents, parents who both work for pay and parents who have chosen to stay at home.

Our knowledge of parenting and children has also changed, giving us new options and approaches to raising our children. Picking up a crying baby will not "spoil" a child. Children should be seen and heard. Fathers are taking a much more active parenting role. Children can learn to behave responsibly without experiencing fear and punishment.

As if a day of handling on – the –job stress isn't enough, coming home means facing dinner, laundry, and sometimes tired cranky kids. Keep it simple for the most part; remember that your children like to be with mom and dad. Find a job for them to do while you cook. Let them pull out the plastic bowls and keep themselves occupied while you cook (no need for fancy toys), better yet if they are old enough enlist their help setting the table, washing vegetables etc.

Although sometimes children don't wish to do so, they do respond and develop better with some regular routines. Establish routines that work around bedtime, mealtimes, homework, etc.

Remember what childhood fun was like? Your children will love to hear about your favourite toys or activities, - was it hide and seek or looking out the window at all the stars. Don't forget that a good part of your role as a parent is to be a positive role model, have fun, play – Parents are naturally good at it.

And finally, our world has changed. No matter what your family structure or culture, as parents, you are nurturing our citizens of the future. What could be more important?

A team of writers from Family Services of Central Alberta – which include, Parent Group Facilitators, Counsellors and Outreach Home Visitors will be writing a weekly Positive Parenting column on a variety of topics of interest to parents. Watch for the column in the Red Deer Advocate and Central Alberta Life.

Happy Parenting!

By Judy Scott. Judy is a Parent Link coordinator/Ages and Stages Screener.

For further information about parenting, play groups, or child development contact Family Services of Central Alberta, your Parent Link Centre at 403-343-6400 or [www.fsca.ca](http://www.fsca.ca).