



Parenting with Intention

1/4/2023

Lisa here. Happy New Year! I hope you ended 2022 on a bright note and are heading into 2023 with optimism. If you read last week's blog, you've spent some time reflecting on how you want to embody your parenting values this year.

You may also be asking yourself why it's important to think about how you want to parent. Knowing your parenting values and intentionally using them to guide your parenting makes your life and your kids' lives easier. You parent more cohesively and your behavior is more predictable to your kids. When they know what to expect from you, they can relax and choose their behaviors more easily.

Parenting with intention also allows you to evaluate your own behavior more clearly. You don't have to spend time worrying about whether you're doing things "right" or whether you're doing a "good job" as a parent. You immediately know when you're off track because you have a compass for your own behavior and reactions. This allows you to more easily make adjustments to your parenting that are more in line with your values.

Intentional parenting also increases your confidence. When you have a roadmap, you feel more confident in your direction. You know where you're going. You don't have to figure things out as you go. You may not be able to predict all the speedbumps, but you will always know whether you're heading in the right direction.



Now, that's not to say that parenting with intention is always easy. The main challenge is that you have to match your actions with your intentions. In other words, you have to walk the walk. Once you have identified what is important to you as a parent, you must take the necessary steps to live by that. This requires frequent check-ins with to determine whether you are living by the values that are most important to you.



There's also some work on the front end. You need advance preparation – you have to figure out what you're being intentional about. Are you planning how you interact with your children, how you'll handle misbehavior, how you'll make decisions about their care/schooling/activities/etc.?

If you've already figured out your parenting values and goals, you have a head start on your preparation. You already have a compass that will help guide your actions. You can decide how you want to interact with your kids, how you want to make rules for them, and how you want to handle conflict based on your parenting values.

However, there are some roadblocks that can make parenting with intention harder. What happens when you're tired, frustrated, or stressed? What happens when your kids do not cooperate with your master plan (e.g., you value spending time with your kids, but they would rather hang out with their friends; you value speaking calmly and keeping a cool head, but your kids are yelling or not listening to you)? These kinds of situations make parenting based on the values you hold more difficult, as you will tend to fall back on old habits or behave in ways you might not be so proud of. That's why advanced planning is so helpful. You can decide in advance what you will do to help yourself stay true to your parenting values (e.g., take a break before talking with your misbehaving kids, create a mantra or saying to remind yourself of your values when you're stressed, tag your co-parent or another trusted adult to help when you need a break, etc.).



Remember, parenting is not different from any other relationship – you will be affected by other things going on in your life, most of which have nothing to do with your children. But, if you plan ahead, you can make some decisions about how you will still parent according to your values even when conditions are not ideal. That's what intentional parenting is all about – thinking through your values and then creating a plan for acting on them in your daily life.