

How Satisfied Are You?

2/16/23

Lisa here. Last week, Sarah got you to think about how you define success as a parent. This week, I want you to think about how *satisfied* you are as a parent. Success and satisfaction are related but not identical concepts. Oxford Languages defines satisfaction as “fulfillment of one's wishes, expectations, or needs, *or* the pleasure derived from this.”



In a perfect world, when we are successful according to our personal metrics, we are also satisfied. That's what happens a lot of the time. Unfortunately, in the real world, that's not *always* the case. Most of us have accomplished a goal, checked off everything on our to do list, or finished a project we've been working on and then felt let down when we did not feel satisfied.

That happens with parenting too. Last week you thought about how you personally define success as a parent. But when you have successes as a parent, how often are they accompanied by feelings of satisfaction? Do you only feel satisfied with your parenting when you experience a success? Or are there times when things are not going well with your kids or with your co-parent that you still feel satisfied as a parent?

Satisfaction can be tied to individual parenting wins (successes) *or* to your overall feelings about your parenting. You're not likely to feel super successful when your child is not listening or is having a tantrum in the middle of the grocery store, but what if you take a step back and consider your parenting overall? Yes, they're having a meltdown in the moment, but otherwise their behavior has been great all week. Is there some satisfaction there? Or maybe your teenager does not want to be bothered with you today, but last weekend they were happy to spend time with you and you enjoyed each other's company. Parenting satisfaction is often tied more to the overall view than to the in-the-moment occurrences.

Here are some other things to consider when thinking about parenting satisfaction.

- When I take a step back, do I feel like I'm doing a good job?
 - o This is where some of those parenting success metrics come in. If you're feeling successful, you have a better chance of also feeling satisfied.
 - o Alternatively, you may focus less on the specifics and more on *how you feel as a parent*. Remember, satisfaction is a feeling, and you may not be able to fully explain why you feel the way you do.
- How often do you think about your level of parenting satisfaction? Is it only when you're feeling unsatisfied or like something is wrong? Do you periodically check in with yourself to gauge how you're feeling about your parenting?
- If you're feeling unsatisfied, why? What's not satisfying? How can you make adjustments to increase your satisfaction?
 - o Some parents get so bogged down in the day-to-day that they stop enjoying their kids, which decreases satisfaction.
 - o Sometimes co-parents are not on the same page. When this happens to often, parenting satisfaction can decrease.
 - o When arguments or disagreements with your kids are more frequent, you might feel less satisfied.

A major factor in your parenting satisfaction is whether your parenting behaviors are in line with your parenting values. If you are focusing on things that are not as important to you, it makes sense that you feel less satisfied as a parent. If you've found that you've drifted from your parenting values, give some thought to how you will get back on track so that you can find some joy in parenting again.



Our year-end-review blog post (12/27/2022) gives some tips on how to determine your values and set your priorities as a parent. Now might be a good time to revisit (or visit for the first time) those ideas to see if you're matching your behaviors with your values. Are your priorities the same as they were in December? What do you need to add, drop, or change to increase your parenting satisfaction? Remember, you don't need to make massive changes. Small adjustments can lead to big increases in your parenting satisfaction.