



Top Ten Reasons to Take a Parenting Class

23% of Canadian parents passed a test on basic child emotional, cognitive and physical development. That means 77% of parents do not understand their child's basic development and therefore behaviour. It's like steering a ship through icebergs with no previous training or experience. –Invest in Kids, survey 2002

By Judy Arnall

Who? Me? Take a parenting class? Why not? We take golf lessons in order to play golf, or driver training to learn how to drive. We sign up for internet navigation, basement renovation or scrapbooking classes. Any endeavor that's worth doing is worth taking the time to gain more knowledge in order to do a better job. Consider how your children pass through various stages: babyhood, toddlers, school age, tweens, teenager, young adult. Wouldn't you like to be better equipped with information about their emotional, physical and cognitive development so you know how to build and enhance a better parent-child relationship? Here are ten great reasons to take a parenting class:

1. **It's fun**, interactive, respectful and informal.
2. **It's great to learn from other parents that have children the same age and are experiencing the same stages as your family.** Those parents may have great ideas that might work for your family, and you can share your gems with them. Besides, it's sometimes a relief to hear that little Johnny is not the only one in "that stage".

3. **It's proactive.** Many parents want a range of tools in their parenting toolbox so they can prevent relationship problems in the future.

4. **It's current information.** Often, doctors and nurses don't have the time to dispense parenting information. They specialize in disease and cure. Teachers are experts in classroom management and curriculum, not positive parenting practices. Psychologists and therapists are also experts in cognitive function, but not up to date on the newest research in parenting and family trends. And although it's nice to get well-meaning advice from friends and relatives, unfortunately the information is often based on heresy, beliefs, opinions and values, which may have little scientific basis. The information from a parenting class is based on the most recent research available. Current studies show that parenting skills and knowledge can greatly affect children's outcomes. Information about child development has exploded in the past twenty years with new research focused on brain development that helps us understand how children feel, think and behave. Classes will help you put the latest information to use.

5. **No one will judge you.** Every parent is at a different point on the continuum of knowledge and that's okay. Each day is a new beginning to practice new skills.

6. **You are supported as the expert on your children.** Equipped with current information, you will be best able to make decisions regarding your child's upbringing.

7. What works for your first child may not work for your second child. **Lots of ideas** equals lots of choices.

8. **Love alone is not enough.** Parents mean well, but in times of stress, they often repeat unhealthy generation passed-on parenting practices. Effective parenting skills are learned skills that take time and practice.

9. **The investment of time is worth it.** Think of all the wasted time that you spend on disciplining bad behaviour. The time it takes to learn effective parenting techniques saves time in the long run.

10. **Did I mention that they are fun?!**

Parenting is a difficult, joyous and rewarding endeavor and nobody can do it perfectly. Regardless of income, education, or marital status, everyone can benefit from a class. There are many choices on length, topic and location. Consider parent education as professional development. Your children are worth it!

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