



## **You Don't Have to Be Like Your Parents: How to Change Your Parenting Style**



by Judy Arnall, BA, CCFE

Do you come from a "dysfunctional family?" Is your ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) score so high that you worry about doing the same to your kids? Can parenting habits change in one generation? Yes, you can change your child's destiny! Many parents with ACE scores as high as 7 has raised children with 1 or less. You can too!

If you were raised by less than stellar parents, here are some changes you can make to become the parent you wished you had, for the next generation that you are raising. You do not have to repeat negative parenting habits with your own children. You can change your parenting style from over permissive or authoritarian, to a collaborative/democratic positive parenting style.

- Fake it until you make it. Act like the parents you admire. Copy what they do.
- Start with yourself. Learn to love you. Change self-talk into positive, loving thoughts about how you look, and what you do, and who you are.

- Learn the language of respectful communication. Take a course through colleges, universities, churches, parent centers or community centers. Learn how to use I-statements, active listening and problem-solving.
- Learn child development through courses, or books, to help you know what to expect from children at different ages. Only 23% of parents know child development past the infant stage, and it's essential for parenting.
- If you were excessively criticized as a child, consciously make the effort to encourage your own children and hold back the negative.
- If you were not hugged or touched as a child, make a concerted effort to hug, cuddle and hold your own children, even if it feels alien to you.
- If you were hurt, upset or sick and were told to "buck up, suck it up, or shut up", give your child comfort by saying "It's okay to feel what you do." And hug, caress and pat your child with non-sexual touch.
- If you were ignored as a child, respond right away to your own children. Give focused attention when they need it and even when they don't. It's ok to have fun with your children.
- If your parents never played with you as a child, read, talk with and play with your own children.
- When you are angry, take a time out. Your time-out. Not your child's. What need of yours is not getting met? How can you meet it? Work on your anger first and you will make better parenting decisions when you are calm.
- Forgive your parents. They probably did the best they knew how at the time, with the resources they had.
- Know what your triggers and hot buttons are. We all have sensitive areas in parenting, no matter what our background was, and our awareness of them helps us to come up with alternative behaviours and coping strategies.
- Start looking at your life through the lens of gratitude. Being grateful enriches life.

Parenting, for the most part, is a learned pattern. We can change parenting patterns and develop new ones. When we become aware of our shortfalls and make a conscious effort to change how we behave, we become really good at parenting after lots of practice. Don't worry if you make mistakes. Rome was not built in a day. Even with new learned behaviours, in times of stress, we tend to fall back on our old habits. Apologize and vow to do better next time. With renewed commitment, we get better at changing old habits with time, practice, information and continuance. You can change family dynamics in one generation and give your child the healthy gift of less ACES in their childhood. It all starts with you!

**Judy Arnall, BA, CCFE, DTM** (Distinguished Toastmaster Speaker) is a Certified Family Life Educator, and keynote speaker who specializes in non-punitive (no time-outs and consequences) parenting and education practices. She currently teaches family communication and child development at the University of Calgary, Continuing Education and has taught at Alberta Health Services for the past 13 years.

She is the Mom of five adult children, and author of the best-selling print books, ***Discipline Without Distress: 135 tools for raising caring, responsible children without time-out, spanking, punishment or bribery*** (translated into 5 languages) and ***Parenting With Patience: Turn frustration into connection with 3 easy steps.*** [www.professionalparenting.ca](http://www.professionalparenting.ca) (403)714-6766 [jarnall@shaw.ca](mailto:jarnall@shaw.ca) Join her list for monthly notifications of free parenting webinars.

Copyright permission granted for “reproduction without permission” of this article in whole or part, if the above credit is included in its entirety.

**Judy has written these print bestsellers:**



**Judy is authorized and certified to teach:**

