



WHAT'S SO FUNNY?

Modern day parenting has become so stressful that many of us forget to take the time to just be silly with our kids. And yet, as Jutta Dempsey explains, a sense of humour is vital in the process of raising children.

The joys of parenthood are often overshadowed by the everyday reality of nagging kids to get ready for school, racing around to different after-school activities, preparing meals, 'encouraging' homework and keeping a household semi-organised. Coupled with this, many parents are turning to parenting 'gurus' and self-help books to work out how to be the perfect parent and make it all work.

Modern parents seem to take their role very seriously, but studies have shown that humour and good mental health go hand in hand. Laughter is not only an important life coping skill, it also has many documented health benefits, yet somewhere between childhood and adulthood many of us lose our sense of humour as we take on the burden of being a 'responsible adult'.

Lucky for us, children are the experts in fun and playfulness. In fact, we couldn't have better teachers when it comes to lightening up, and in this respect we have a lot to learn from them. If only we can find the time to stop, take a breather and get into the right headspace to reconnect with our own inner child.

It's important for children to see their parents being silly, especially with so much pressure being put upon them these days. Having fun with your children and teaching them how to see the funny side of life's challenges is possibly one of the most valuable lessons you can give them.

Ways to inject humour into your parenting style:

[1] Surprises

Start doing the opposite of what your children expect. For example, if they are arguing over a toy put on a wacky headdress and tell them they're driving you crazy. The goofier you sound; the better. This will divert their attention and hopefully turn a quarrel into a laugh.

[2] Getting Jobs Done

When a job is not getting done have the 'job' do the talking. For example, instead of instructing them to go make their bed, let the bed do the talking, "I heard your bed whimpering this morning about being cold, it said "Please cover me, I'm cold."

[3] Disarming resistance

Children know from your face when you're going to say no and they're already mustering up their resistance but you can break through this by putting on your best comic mask.

[4] Second Chances

If your child is being disobedient try using some humour and 'rewind' tactics to give them a second chance to get it right. Just say, "stop, rewind, take a step back and let's start over" as you make a grand gesture towards them to indicate their cue to change their words. This approach usually results in both laughter and obedience.

great advice

The ability to laugh will give you the ability to recognise and appreciate the humour of life's idiosyncrasies as well as providing a cleansing of emotions and a release of emotional tension. One good way to keep your family laughing is to keep a good book with humorous stories or jokes in handy in places like the car. This is a great way to break the boredom of long car journeys by sparking the recall of funny memories and is timely advice for all those families taking road trips over the holidays!

