



Parenting during pandemic

Day 10: Staying positive while surrounded by difficulties during pandemic

There are lots of things happening in the world that seem uncontrollable right now and we've talked a lot in our Parenting During Pandemic series about difficulties, stresses, anxieties, worries and so on. If we focus on all of these things then we will feel emotions attached to them whereas today's focus is the positive. The same principle applies that if we focus on the positive, we will feel emotions attached to this. The idea of just suddenly thinking positively when surrounded by difficulties, however, is...well...difficult! So this is more than just thinking positively, here are some tips on how to focus on the positive and the potential benefits of doing so.

One way to focus on the positive is to write a daily log of things we are grateful for. This takes just a few minutes each day and even if there is only one thing on the list, over a few days, it adds up to something more. You can get the children involved in this too. Writing a list of things they are grateful for will allow them a focus on the positive while sneakily getting in some writing and spelling practice.

Linked to this, you can think about the detail of those positives. How did they happen? Who made them happen? What skills does it show in the people at home that those things happened? This is a deeper level of thinking about positives and allows a focus on building self esteem of the people involved. Building self esteem allows us a positive self concept and image of ourselves and can help make us resilient.

Resilience has many definitions in the research literature but it is generally the thing that allows us to "weather the storm", to "bend but not break", to manage things that are really difficult and things that others may not manage. By focusing on the positive and on the coping skills you are building up as a family during a difficult time, you are building resilience in yourself, in your children and in your family.

It may be helpful to talk about some of this with your family. It doesn't need to be a big family discussion, just saying something like "I think it's great that during this time at home

together we've managed to...". By pointing out the positives and your strengths and coping skills as a family, you are building on the bonds you have as a family. You'll remember from our other blogs that we've mentioned talking about yourselves as a team and modelling that even when things are difficult and you don't have all the answers, you problem solve this together as a family.

Something else to note is the response you get if you focus on the positives. Often if you present positives to someone or communicate in a positive way, they will respond similarly. It won't happen all the time because people can be coping with their own issues that we are not aware of at the time, but presenting negatives and communicating in a negative way will usually get a negative response so trying for the positive means there's more chance of a positive response. For example, saying "if you don't stop doing x then you won't get y" is not likely to make children feel good and it's not motivating. Saying "if you do x then you'll get y (reward)", it's more positive and more motivating. This is not about rewarding all the time because rewards are only for positives and you'll remember from our first blog that we thought about what rewards should be and when they should be given to be most effective. There are studies showing that motivating with rewards increases the likelihood of behaviours being reinforced and therefore happening again. Think about how you would prefer people to communicate with you – is it positive or negative?

You will be aware that there is sometimes criticism of news programmes for focusing on negative rather than positive stories. If you are watching news programmes to keep up to date with developments about the pandemic, try counting how many positives you hear about. At present there are lots of people helping and supporting others in positive ways. People are out in the streets showing their gratitude for frontline staff. There's a focus on us all keeping fit and healthy both mentally and physically and if you look for it, there are lots of positives and lots to be grateful for.

We hope these tips are helpful. Well done on managing another day off school and we hope you will join us again tomorrow.

Monday's topic: The importance of sleep during the pandemic and how to ensure you and your children get the best sleep possible

Please [contact us with questions, comments or topics](#) you'd like to see covered. We'd love to hear your feedback.

Wishing you a safe and healthy path through this pandemic.