

Top Ten Takeaways

Janelle Durham, MSW. Parent Educator, Bellevue College. GoodDaysWithKids.com

1. Every child is a unique individual and needs a unique parenting approach. What's right for someone else may not be right for your situation. Trust your instincts and reach out for support when needed from people who understand kids like yours.
2. Children behave better when they know what to expect and what's expected of them. If a child is not behaving well, ask yourself: What support do they need, what systems would make it easier for them to be successful, what skills do they still need to learn?
3. All feelings are OK, but not all behaviors are OK. Validate your child's emotions and offer support, while still setting appropriate limits. Teach appropriate ways to express big feelings, and model self-calming skills.
4. With food: parents decide when and where it's offered and what is offered. Children decide whether to eat and how much to eat. With all choices: Parents decide what options are on the table, children choose amongst those appropriate options.
5. Kids need time to run, to be loud, to be silly, to explore their world. Make sure there are a lot of "yes" times and places in their day. Taking small and manageable risks builds skills and independence, even if it means an occasional bump or bruise.
6. We learn from mistakes. Embrace them! Teach your child the Power of Yet: "you can't do it yet, but someday, if you keep trying, you'll be so good at it!"
7. Children learn best when they feel safe and happy, so play-based learning is powerful. Brains develop through novelty – being exposed to new experiences – and repetition – having the chance to do something again and again till they master it. Explore art, the outdoors, large motor play, building things, doing crafts, and more.
8. Music and stories build language skills, vocabulary, memory, emotional intelligence, and knowledge of diverse life experiences. And they bring joy!
9. There is no one right way to parent. If you, your child, and other family members are happy, healthy, and succeeding at your goals, then all is well. If you're unhappy or not feeling successful, seek out new ideas and seek out support. (Parenting classes, counseling, support groups or just connecting with other parents!)
10. You will have good days and bad days as a parent. When you have a bad day and are not the parent you want to be, acknowledge that, forgive yourself and commit to doing better in the future. When you are having more good days than bad, celebrate that! You're doing a great job.