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PARENTING TIPS

1. Parents are the emotional regulators of their children's nervous system.
2. Parental interactions, especially early in life, become imbedded in the biology of the child.
3. The organization of the emotional/social brain begins in the third trimester, and is complete by age two.
4. The organization of the rational brain does not begin until about age two, and is complete at about age 3.
5. Interactions between parent and infant develop the baby's brain, and lay the blueprint for all future relationships.
6. How parents talk to their child is as important, or more important, than what they say. Parents must pay attention to their tone of voice, eye contact, facial expression, and body posture.
7. How parents are feeling inside (their own emotional regulation) drives their relationship with their child, and their child's emotional regulation.
8. It is the relationship, and only the relationship, **not behavior modification, logic, and control** which leads to desired behavior.
9. Negative behavior, including perceived willful manipulation, is a signal that the child genuinely needs attention in some manner. It is a form of communication. It is up to the adults to determine what type of attention is needed. The core of negative behavior is usually fear.
10. Frequent parental interactions of joy, delight, and empathy lay the foundation for healthy development in all domains.
 11. Just the physical presence of parents alone can be comforting and soothing to children, and help emotional regulation.
 12. Time out usually exasperates the problem, causing an escalation in behavior and control battles, or compliance out of fear of disapproval, rather than true learning. Time-in is recommended as a tool to help parents and children have a calming period so they can reconnect, and the

parent can help the child figure out more constructive approaches to the situation.

13. When in a stressed and worked-up state, a child (and adult) does not have access to their “thinking” brain. Emotional responses automatically by-pass the “thinking” brain (hippocampus/prefrontal cortex). Thus a child cannot learn, and a parent cannot teach.

14. During times of stress our thinking is distorted, and our short-term memory is suppressed.

15. Many everyday experiences are stressful, and can remain in the body as trauma, if the experiences are not processed and understood. Children can be very resilient, but only with our focused attention and empathy.

16. The physical separation of parent and a young child (and sometimes an older child) during the day can be a strain on a child’s nervous system. Thus the child needs numerous touch base experiences during the day while at daycare or preschool, such as a phone call, a visit at lunch, a laminated picture of mom or dad in her pocket, a conversation about mom or dad, or simply a reminder by the substitute provider that mommy or daddy made her snack or lunch.

17. Children need the undivided attention (at least 10-20 minutes) of their parents at the end of the school day to help them recover from the day’s separation. They also need undistracted time in the morning and before bedtime.

18. It is through responsiveness to cues given by children that children grow to be independent, successful, and emotionally regulated adults. This is not about indulgence or spoiling, but rather, helping children learn to cope with their reactions to the world, helping them understand their emotions, and teaching them mastery of emotional skills.

19. The process of relationship is more important than the immediate outcome of a specific behavior or achievement.

These concepts are drawn from decades of attachment research integrated with neuroscience. An academic bibliography is available upon request.

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