

**‘How to be a good enough parent’
A survival guide for parents during times of self doubt**

Good enough parents do not strive to be perfect parents and do not expect perfection

- Perfection is not within the grasp of ordinary human beings
- We cannot expect perfection of ourselves, any more than we can expect it of our child
- Children need to learn that mistakes are a valuable part of learning

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- We cannot expect perfection of ourselves, any more than we can expect it of our child
- Children need to learn that mistakes are a valuable part of learning
- The belief that perfection is possible promotes a tendency to blame
- Even love is never perfect, and tinged with annoyance, discouragement and disappointment

Good enough parents respect their children and try to understand them for who they are

A relationship between equals in the sense that both parties are:

- Equally important
- Equally deserving of happiness
- Equally deserving of the opportunity to create their own goals, and strive to achieve them

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A relationship between non-equals in the sense that when the child is young, the parent is:

- bigger, stronger, wiser
- better at reasoning
- in control of the resources that the child needs for survival

“The grown-up’s superior ability to argue and his greater command of relevant facts—so convincing to the parent—can be experienced by the child as simply the beating down of his opinion. ... So the child feels outreasoned, and to be outreasoned is a frustrating and debilitating experience. It is a far cry from being convinced. “

Bruno Bettelheim (1987)

Good enough parents are more concerned for the child's experience of childhood than with the child's future as an adult

- A child's future is the child's responsibility, not the parent's
- The parent's job is to ensure that the child has a satisfying childhood
- Children who feel:
 - secure in their relationship with their parents
 - supported rather than controlled
 - trusted and therefore trustworthy
 - and who have a good enough environment in which to play, explore, and learn
 -will be best able to chart their own satisfying futures

Good enough parents provide the help that their children need and want, but not more than they need or want

- Children come into the world wanting to do as much for themselves as they can
- When we provide help, the goal is to enable the child to do more himself or herself, to abet the child's striving for independence, not interfere with it

The primary tools of good enough parenting are conscious reflection, maturity, and empathy

- Their purpose is to help their child achieve what the child wants and needs to achieve, not to prove to the world that they are wonderful parents or to protect themselves from criticism
- Maturity matters. For security, children need to feel that their parents are more competent to deal with the problems of life than they are
- It is the parent's job to understand the child; it is not necessarily the child's job to understand the parent
- Empathy is the key to any successful relationship, and good-enough parents know that they must take the lead in empathy, because it is easier for them to enter the child's mind than for the child to enter the parent's mind

Good enough parents are confident that their good enough parenting is good enough

- Parenthood exposes like never before, our relationship with ourselves
- While we are not perfect, we are indeed good enough parents if most of the time we love our children and do our best to do well by them
- Our children's actions are not motivated primarily by a desire to please us or to hurt us, but by motives that have to do with their attempts to find their own places in the world
- Don't take much credit, nor much blame, for our children's actions; just concentrate on understanding and helping where help is required