



COUPLES OVERCOMING PTSD EVERYDAY

How to NOT Mess Up Your Kids ...or Any of Your Other Relationships

Family and other close relationships are like training camps for life... You have tremendous opportunity to “experiment” with healthier thoughts and behaviours at every turn.

If you really don’t want to mess up your kids-or anyone else who matters-consider each of the following:

1. Model acceptance and uniqueness in your family/workplace

Accepting those who have different or unique personalities, characteristics, talents, or learning styles will help those who matter to you work with anyone later on... Acceptance helps to instill respect for authority, different religious points of view, ethnic backgrounds, etc., so your children and others will be more comfortable and ready for anything.

2. Don’t try to save them from all things difficult or unpleasant.

If you want to really mess up your kids—or even your other relationships—solve all their problems for them! This will breed limited responsibility for their actions and a sense of entitlement. Others will come to depend on you like you’re a super hero! Yet, because you’re human, at some point you’ll let them down—and hard.

We often rush in and rescue those we love to “save” them from difficult consequences; we naturally don’t want to see them in pain. Yet our love must be strong enough to stop ourselves from rushing in... this takes courage, but it’s worth the self-empowerment you’ll begin to see in others.

3. Praise them for their achievements AND in spite of their failures.

Another great way to mess up your kids or your relationship is to praise those you love ONLY when they are “good”—or never praise them at all. In that case, the message you send is “I only love you when you are good”; your love becomes conditional and those you love become insecure.

The message you most likely want to send is “I love you no matter what” which instills a greater sense of security.

So find a way to express your love. Even if YOU didn’t get it, change your legacy! If it feels awkward to express your love, say it awkwardly. But say it—or write it—at least once each week.

- 4. When you tell those you love what you expect or hope for, follow through on your consequences. (Be realistic: ask only for what is really important and reasonable.)**

When you tell people what you expect again and again but never follow through on your consequences, they stop believing you—and often stop respecting you.

Knowing when to give them consequences and following through on your words creates greater trust and respect. As long as you’re coming from love (and not a threatening or angry place), kids learn to know where they stand and enjoy a greater sense of security.

- 5. If you don’t want to mess up people in general, take responsibility when you make a mistake.**

If you’re one of those people who find it difficult to say you’re sorry, you’re not alone. Yet it can really mess up those you love—and anyone else who matters to you. We don’t enjoy saying we’re sorry because it can make us feel weak... So we pretend to be “perfect”, when clearly we are not.

If you don’t admit you’re wrong when you are, you’ll see your kids start to hide in life; believing that dad or mom are perfect, they know they won’t be able to live up to that. They begin to feel insecure and less than. Instead, just a simple, “I’m sorry, please forgive me, I love you” will do wonders.

Based on a talk by John Smith, Loveland, CO, 2012. Distributed by Mary M. Scott for National Veterans Wellness & Healing Center, Angel Fire, NM, November 2012.