



Raising Kids, Toddlers to Teens, to Become Competent Adults

Too many kids today are heading off to college or work only to discover that they lack the skills they need to navigate adulthood successfully. What does it take to raise children to be competent adults? How early can you start? And why aren't more parents doing this? Developmental psychologist Dr. Marti Erickson, co-host of Mom Enough®, offers practical tips on how parents can help children of any age to develop the skills they will need for adult life – using this holiday season as a perfect time to practice!

I. Why have parents fallen into this pattern of overparenting?

- Thinking that our goal is to make our children happy in the short run
- Compensating for guilt about things we are not doing with or for our kids
- Forgetting that a main goal as parents is to put ourselves out of that job!

II. Practical ways to raise kids to become competent adults

- **Give them responsibilities (meaningful work) from the early years**

From toddlers learning to put away their toys or helping to set or clear the table, to teens doing laundry or participating in meal preparation and clean-up, kids are building the skills they will need when they are out on their own. Contributing to the smooth running of a household builds confidence and self-worth that last a lifetime.

- **Engage them in family decisions and support them in making wise decisions for themselves**

Whether it's planning healthful meals, figuring out a budget for a family vacation, or determining a reasonable schedule of activities for the next semester, kids of any age benefit from full participation in those decisions. They also are more likely to cooperate with plans they have helped to create.

- **When children have a problem, support them in figuring it out**

Too often when our kids get in trouble – not completing homework, fighting with a sibling, or repeatedly losing things – we bail them out or impose a consequence and never follow through. How much more effective to sit down and strategize with them about how they can resolve the problem and prevent it from happening again. Skills for life!



- **Teach them the concept of service and contribution**

Successful, happy adults have empathy and concern for others and they know that “we all do better when we all do better,” as the saying goes. Even toddlers can begin to learn this concept when they see their parents serving and giving and when they are allowed to participate at a level they understand.

The holiday break is a perfect time to practice these tips with kids of all ages. Share responsibilities for holiday celebrations (planning, decorating, cooking, cleaning). Involve kids in gift-giving decisions and in setting and maintaining realistic budgets. Engage kids in thinking about how your family can give back to the community during the holidays, through donations or service. And then make that a year-round (and lifelong) habit.

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