



Parenting

This activity can be used in any type of group whether it be substance use treatment, mental health, or both; Good parenting is global across all types of situations. However, parenting struggles are often linked with substance use issues because substance use, when it progresses to addiction, often has a negative impact on parenting just like any other disease. The degree can vary from one situation to another as no two situations are exactly the same, however two things that almost every parent can agree on are:

1. **Being a parent is challenging (for anyone – regardless of addiction)**
2. **Everyone can improve their parenting skills in some way as no one is a perfect parent**


Group question: Based on your experiences does everyone agree with the above two statements?


“Selfing” – If for some reason you are participating in this group and you are not a parent, you can look at the skills that are going to be discussed in terms of “selfing” instead of parenting. Selfing would involve looking at these skills from the perspective of how you can better manage your self and your own life. Although this list of skills is specific to parenting, many of these skills are effective for anyone when it comes to improve their life. So, if you are participating as a non-parent, simply think about how you can help yourself with the following skills:


Parenting Skills and Qualities Discussion

Directions: Everyone should get a copy of the list of the parenting skills list and the parenting qualities list. First everyone should review the lists on their own and mark some of the skills on the list with the following symbols:

 All of these skills are important, but place a **HEART** next to a few of the skills that really stand out as extra important and meaningful to you at this point in your life (regardless of whether or not the area is a strength or an area you need to improve)

 Place a **STAR** next to a few of the areas that you feel like are strengths for you. Perhaps these areas come naturally to you or you have learned a lot or have a good deal of experience with these areas

 Place a **QUESTION MARK** next to areas that you would like to learn more about. These areas may be strengths or weaknesses, it does not matter. What matters is that it is a skill you may want to understand better.

 **CIRCLE** some of the answers that you can honestly admit that you need to work on. There is no shame in admitting that you need to make some improvements: Everyone does so just be honest and open about areas you would like to improve upon

**Remember you can have more than one symbol for any skill.*

**When complete, discuss your lists as a group,
reviewing areas of importance, strengths, questions and areas of need**

“What it's like to be a parent: It's one of the hardest things you'll ever do
but in exchange it teaches you the meaning of unconditional love.”
– Nicholas Sparks



Parenting Skills List

- **Building Bonds** – A bond is a close relationship created by spending quality time with someone resulting in a connection. Ask yourself: As a parent do you feel a strong connection with your children? Do you think that they feel a strong connection with you?
- **Being Available** – You may need to work, do household chores and other important things which is important – However, is there time in your schedule when your children can count on you being there?
- **Meeting Needs** – “Wants” are things like gifts and presents which are nice for children. But needs are even more important as meeting needs helps a child to thrive long term. Are your kids physical, mental, social, educational, emotional and spiritual needs being met?
- **Setting Limits and Boundaries** – Kids of all ages from toddlers to teens need parents to help them learn boundaries and rules which would include how far to go or not to go with things. This can be a challenge but are you doing what you can to set limits with your children whenever needed?
- **Decision making** – As a parent, do you make the kinds of decisions for your own life that you would want your kids to imitate? Are you teaching your kids how to make good decisions for themselves?
- **Teaching Skills** – The older a child gets the more life skills they need. Even toddlers can learn basic skills for managing the challenges of life and this gets even more important as kids get older.
- **Focusing on the Positive (over the negative)** – Growing up in a negative or critical environment is not a constructive situation for children. Even if life has struggles, (which it often does for most people), are you doing your best to keep the focus on the positive?
- **Teaching Empathy** – Caring about others and taking the time to understand where others comes from is essential to positive human relationships. Ask yourself: Am I teaching my child not only to care about him or herself but to also care about others and to try to understand different people?
- **Communication** – A child’s primary source for learning how to communicate is through parents or caregivers. You might ask yourself if you are doing your best to teach your children to express themselves openly and assertively?
- **Modeling Positive Relationships** – It can be tough to expect your children to learn to develop friendships with positive peers if your own friends or romantic relationships are with others whose lives may be a wreck.
- **Resilience** – It is a sad reality that disappointment, hurt feelings, loss, mistakes, and failures happen to everyone. As a parent, are you helping your children to develop the skills to bounce back when things do not go as expected?
- **Respect** – To get ahead in life, a person needs to know how to respect themselves and how to respect others. Parents/caregivers are usually the ones who teach this deeply personal but vital quality
- **Emotional Security** – There is a lot to teaching children to be emotionally secure. This includes teaching kids to identify and express emotions, anxieties, and fears as well as hopes and dreams. Skills for managing difficult emotions and anxieties are also an important part of this
- **Meaning and Purpose** – Life is much more than seeking fun and pleasure. It is a parent’s job to teach their children to set goals for a meaningful life and to guide them as they search for answers to life’s big questions



Parenting Qualities List

LOVING	PATIENT	GOOD LISTENER
CARING	RELIABLE	RESPONSIBLE
HARD WORKING	LOYAL	TRUSTING
TRUSTWORTHY	MOTIVATED	FORGIVING
FLEXIBLE	PROACTIVE	LEVEL-HEADED
GENEROUS	SELF SACRIFICING	AFFECTIONATE
SUPPORTIVE	DEPENDABLE	ADAPTABLE
COMFORTING	REFRESHING	NURTURING
STEADY	RESPECTFUL	ENCOURAGING
SAFEGUARDING	WISE	RESOURCEFUL
WARM	UNDERSTANDING	REASONABLE
THOUGHTFUL	UNSELFISH	KIND