Unsolicited Advice about Parenting by Tania Hino, Parent Educator

There is no such thing as a perfect parent! So please do not sweat it. Parents and Caregivers - You are doing the best you can raising your children. As a parent educator and parent of three children, I know it can be hard to deal with everyone’s picture of what parenting should be or how we should be raising our children. I remember my first unsolicited advice from one of the nurses when I just had my first son. Keep in mind that my son was just born and being breast fed for the first time. The advice was “Your milk is not coming fast enough so you should give him formula before your starve him.” The advice and opinions have not stopped since then. There isn’t a time or place - at the market, on a plane, in the park you don’t hear it. It comes from family, friends, and my favorite, people who have never babysat or dealt with a child but read about child development.

Who has not encountered unsolicited advice? I am sure you can think of some of your own to add to this list. Do you feel overwhelmed with all the parenting classes? Do you feel like you are getting mixed messages on how to deal with parenting issues? Which parenting technique works better? Do we do too much for children? Do we do too little? How many articles or books have you read about parenting or want to read? The doctor says one thing and your parents and neighbors tell you the opposite.

We have people at the market or in the park telling us what or how to raise our children. We receive general comments too, like “Don’t worry, that’s normal for a boy.” Or, “If you carry your son all the time he will be spoiled.” Everyone has an opinion on how to raise our children. The list goes on and on.

I am going to tell you an old story a wise teacher once told me when I was a girl. She told me not to worry about what people think or say. Listen to your heart first and listen to your heart last. Everyone has something to say but the important thing is that you know what is best for your family and what fits your traditions. This story has three scenarios.

Long, long ago there was a grandfather and a grandchild who went to the market to sell their vegetables. They took their donkey, the child’s favorite animal, along with them.

Scenario One: “The Donkey” The grandfather and his grandchild were walking and holding the donkey’s leash. They were having such a good time talking about their morning and the child who was about seven

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Separation
Some Survival Tips
By: Cesily M. Crowser, Parent Education Instructor

We have all been there. Those tearful and clingy “good byes” that tear at your heart and make you want to pick up your child and never let them go. The truth is that children need to learn how to separate from you. For some it comes easy. For some it is hard to let go of the comfort and security of mom or dad. Some seem to be doing just great and then out of nowhere parting becomes difficult. The reasons for this are as varied as there are people. Sometimes it is developmental, sometimes it is temperament, and yes sometimes it is even that you the parent are having a hard time and they sense that. Whatever the reason the 6 tips below should help things go a little smoother.

**Prepare your child for the changes ahead.** Make sure your child knows what to expect. Talk with them about school (what is the teacher’s name, what will they be doing, are any of the old friends going to be there, etc.) This is also the time when you start to prepare them for the fact they you will be leaving.

**Create a “Good-bye” ritual.** Decide, with your child, how you will be saying goodbye – and stick with it. Will it be one kiss, one hug and a high-five? My son and I did one kiss, one BIG squeeze and an extra kiss for each of our pockets. Then I left. Knowing that we had this ritual and needed to be **consistent** with it was helpful on those days when one or both of us wanted to delay.

**Give your child something from home to keep at school.** A family picture is great. It is a wonderful conversation starter for the teacher and others in the class who are trying to comfort you child. Some parents even get a second of their child’s favorite snuggle object to keep in their cubby.

**Tell them when you will be back.** “I am going to do errands now, but I will be back to get you after the goodbye circle.” Make sure you put it in terms your child can relate to. For many young children telling them you will be back at 12:00 or in a few hours does not make much sense, the concept of time is too abstract. Instead put in terms of which part of their daily routine you will arrive — then **be on time**. Little minds will remember waiting, if you are late, and will be less relaxed the next time you leave and promise to return.

**Arrange a carpool with a classmate.** This can be a miracle cure. Arrange to have your child picked up by a friend and the “good bye” takes place in a familiar surrounding. They get excited about riding with someone they know and school is now no longer a part of the separation equation.

**Remember to have Patience.** Find the tips that work for you, remain consistent and trust that in time things will work themselves out.

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Unsolicited Parenting Advice

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...was retelling a story about how he climbed a tree with his friends. After a little while, they came across a married couple in their middle age. The woman said to the grandfather, “You are an old man and you have a donkey. You need to take care of yourself and rest your legs. You need your rest and that is why you have a donkey”. The man and the child smiled, thinking this was a great idea. The old man got on top of the donkey.

Scenario Two: “The Old Man”

The old man was riding the donkey while the child pulled the donkey’s leash. Both the grandfather and the child were telling jokes to each other as they traveled. They passed by a mother carrying her two year old child. The mother starts a friendly conversation and speaks about the amazing weather and the beautiful donkey. The mother then said “Wow! Poor child walking and pulling the donkey while an adult takes advantage of a young child. The child is too young to be walking and pulling a donkey. This is not a criticism or judgment but think of how you are endangering your child.” The grandfather felt so guilty and sad that he had not thought of his poor grandson. He jumped off of the donkey and helped his grandson get on top of the donkey.

Scenario Three: “The Child”

The child is riding the donkey while the grandfather is holding the donkey’s leash. They were singing and just having a good time. They stopped by a lake to have the donkey drink water. By the lake was an old man about the same age as the grandfather. They said hello and the old man said to the child “Aren’t you embarrassed of yourself? Such young boy full of energy riding the donkey while your poor grandfather walks?” Good thing the child had good self-esteem and a good relationship with his grandfather. He replied “Life is good from up here”. The grandchild then stepped off of the donkey and both the grandfather and child smiled and hugged each other. They went back to holding hands and singing and walking along with the donkey by their side.

The moral of the story is it’s important to listen to your heart. As we know, we will be judged regardless of what we do by someone who may believe that their way is the right way but the important thing is for us to be happy with our choices that we take.

You are doing the best you can and the important thing is to be consistent with your parenting discipline style. Yes, maybe you scream more than usual, or maybe you do not scream enough. Just keep trying and be consistent about your love towards your children. We are not perfect but our children do not have to be perfect either. We all make mistakes.

Just remember the donkey story next time you get an opinion/unsolicited advice.

Something to Remember:

1. Get to know yourself and your traditions.
2. Make a choice on a parenting style technique and stick to it (consistency is the Key)
3. Get to know your child/children (everyone is different even if they have the same genetic pool)

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Frank Selden
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From his beginnings on a family dairy farm, Frank has experience as an Investment Banker and Attorney, while serving in The National Guard, including 2 tours in Iraq. Frank brings a welcome mixture of humor and practical advise.

➢ University of Washington, B.A. in Psychology and Political Science

➢ University of Washington School of Law, J.D.

➢ Novus University, LL.M. in Taxation

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