



1. Invest, Invest, Invest! While most parents are willing to invest heavily in their children financially and academically, they often fail to invest in their social and emotional needs. Children need to know they'll be heard by their parents if no one else hears them. As parents, we should be our children's first point of contact when they're feeling hurt, wronged, or when they simply need comfort after a long day at school.
2. Allow your child to be just that: a child. "Parentified" children — those who are expected to fill adult roles even though they're not adults — often see themselves as equals to their parents when parents place them in that role. This can be confusing for children as they may be given the responsibility to care for younger siblings while their parents have to work or "live their lives"; yet, they're still expected to "stay in a child's place" when at school or in other environments. Believe it or not, some children actually enjoy being their age when they're allowed to engage in age-appropriate activities with other peers their age.
3. Try to lead with praise; skip the criticism! Ms. Moore didn't realize how her negative comments affected Sonny until they were openly discussed. Yet when she recognized what she was doing and resolved to make changes, Sonny's positive reactions came quickly and happily.
4. Parents can be big kids too! Our children need to know and see their parents being kids at heart. It gives our children permission to explore and express their feelings when they see us do it. Get on the floor with your children; run around with them; be wild and crazy (without hurting yourself!) They'll continue to love and respect you when you keep healthy boundaries in place. Being playful with your children doesn't make them lose respect for you; it actually helps them gain respect for you. **JPA**