

Purposeful Parents, Thriving Kids

Summer is here! The warmer weather and longer days mean more time with our little ones. It is the perfect season to slow down and connect. In fact, July is Purposeful Parenting Month.

Being a purposeful parent means being active, present, and intentional. It is not about being perfect. Instead, it is about creating a safe, predictable world where kids can thrive. To help you this summer, child development experts suggest practicing the 6 Ps of Purposeful Parenting.

The 6 Ps of Purposeful Parenting

1. **Purposeful (Having a Goal): Think about your long-term goals.** Your daily connections build your child's future. When you pause, take a deep breath, and say, "I see you are very mad that your block tower fell down," you are doing more than managing a tantrum. You are teaching them how to handle hard emotions as adults.
2. **Protective (Keeping Them Safe): Keep your child safe on the outside and the inside.** Children thrive when their world is predictable. You can protect your child's summer routine by keeping nap and meal times the same. This simple step helps prevent major meltdowns.
3. **Personal (Loving Them as They Are): Show unconditional love, even during tough moments.** Staying calm during grocery store meltdowns or spilled juice accidents helps your child know they are always safe with you. Try to spend 10 minutes of uninterrupted "Special Time" together each day. Turn off your phone, let your child choose the game, and just play along.
4. **Progressive (Growing with Your Child): Change your parenting style as your kids grow.** A 1-year-old throwing toys is just testing gravity, while a 4-year-old saying "No!" is practicing independence. When you understand these stages, it is easier to see difficult behavior as a sign of healthy growth.
5. **Positive (Using Kind Words): Focus on teaching rather than punishing.** Praising good behavior works much better than pointing out the bad. Swap strict commands like "Don't run!" for helpful guidance like "Please use your walking feet." Try to offer five positive comments or hugs for every one correction.
6. **Playful (Having Fun Together): Make time to join your child's world.** Play is how young children learn to solve problems, handle big feelings, and get along with others. Get down on the floor to build blocks, blow bubbles, or have a quick kitchen dance party while making dinner.



Building Brain Power: 7 Essential Life Skills

When we combine positive parenting with brain science, our long-term goals become clear. True success comes from “brain tools” called executive function. These tools help children manage their feelings, thoughts, and actions. You can build these seven essential skills during regular summer activities without any expensive toys.

1. Focus and Self-Control: Help your children learn how to pay attention, remember rules, and wait their turn. You can practice this naturally by playing games like “Simon Says,” “Red Light, Green Light,” or “Freeze Dance.” These games force kids to stop their physical impulses and listen carefully to changing rules.

2. Seeing Another Point of View: Teach your child to look deeper than just being nice. This skill means figuring out what someone else is thinking or feeling so we can solve problems. When reading books together, pause to look closely at the pictures and ask, “Look at their face, how do you think they feel right now?” or “Why do you think they did that?”

3. Communicating: Practice true communication, which is much more than speaking or memorizing words. It involves understanding how our words affect others and learning how to listen. You can build this skill by intentionally talking about your day, asking open-ended questions, and patiently waiting for your child to finish speaking without interrupting.

4. Making Connections: Encourage the core of creative thinking. This skill helps children see what is the same, what is different, and how objects fit into groups. You can turn a backyard walk into a treasure hunt by challenging your child to find objects that are all the same color, or by sorting garden rocks by size.

5. Critical Thinking: Give children the tools to look at information, see cause-and-effect, and make smart choices. Try to avoid fixing minor problems for them right away.

If a toy gets stuck, guide them by asking, “What could we do to get it out? What will happen if we pull this piece?”

6. Taking on Challenges: Build deep resilience so your child is willing to try hard things instead of giving up. You can support this by praising your child’s effort rather than just calling them smart. Try saying, “I love how hard you worked on that puzzle, even when it got tricky!”

7. Loving to Learn: Nurture the natural scientist inside your child. When children are allowed to explore what truly interests them, they stay motivated for life. Follow their lead by borrowing library books about insects or hunting for caterpillars under backyard leaves if they suddenly become obsessed with bugs.



Presence Over Perfection: The Power of Repair and Compassion

Children do not need a flawless parent. They need a steady, real parent who shows up honestly. Research shows that even the best parents are only perfectly “in sync” with their kids about 20% to 30% of the time. The rest of the day is filled with normal mismatches where we get distracted, tired, or lose our tempers.

Letting go of the myth of perfection lowers our stress and helps us truly connect. By actively fixing our mistakes and practicing flexibility, we teach our children how to bounce back from life’s everyday problems.

Tips to Repair the Bumps

Fixing a hard moment shows children that relationships can bend without breaking. It teaches them how to be responsible, show empathy, and solve real-world problems.

Managing Your Own Outbursts: Avoid the temptation to ignore a parenting blowup or pretend it didn't happen. You can get down to your child's eye level, take responsibility for your big feelings, and apologize cleanly. For example, you might say: "I'm sorry I raised my voice when we were trying to leave. I was feeling stressed about being late, but it is my job to stay calm. I love you, and I want to try that moment again."

Closing the Distraction Gap: Step away from screens and tasks when your child asks for attention. It is easy to let phones, chores, or mental checklists crowd out our children. When you realize you have been mentally absent, close the gap right away with a focused moment of connection. You can put your phone in a drawer, sit on the floor next to your child, and say, "I am sorry I didn't give you my full attention while you were building. I'm ready to look now—can you show me how you made this tower?"

Resetting a Sideways Day: Do not let a bad afternoon mood ruin the whole evening. When a morning routine completely falls apart or an afternoon turns into a power struggle, you can intentionally use the very next quiet moment to invite your child back into connection. Even if the day was full of arguments, keep your bedtime story routine and use that cozy time to cuddle and ask, "Was there a moment today I could have handled better?"



Practice Compassion and Flexibility

Allowing yourself and your child to be imperfect human reduces parenting guilt and models healthy emotional resilience.

Giving Your Child Room to Be Messy: Remember that young children are still learning how the world works. They cannot always control their sudden impulses or big behaviors. You can create a safe space where they can express big emotions without facing immediate anger. If a giant meltdown occurs over a broken crayon, validate their feelings by saying, "Your feelings make sense. It is really frustrating when a toy breaks. Let's sit together until you feel calm."

Being a "Good-Enough" Parent: Let go of unrealistic expectations. Chasing perfection sets you up to fail because there will always be more parenting advice than there are hours in a day. You can practice kind self-talk and cut yourself some slack on stressful days. On a chaotic summer afternoon, pause and tell yourself: "I am a learning parent raising a learning child. We don't need to be perfect to be close. Everyone is safe, we shared a hug, and the rest of the chores can wait until tomorrow."

Local Library Spotlight

Don't forget to visit your public libraries in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties. Beyond Summer Reading programs and children's activities, libraries frequently partner with local organizations to host free parenting classes and family events. Check their community boards for upcoming gatherings!



Local Parenting Education & Resources

Local organizations offer excellent workshops and classes for families. Many are free or provide scholarships:



Pollywog Classes & Workshops:

Lists regional classes, childbirth workshops, and support groups. Visit pollywogfamily.org/classes-and-workshops or call/text 541-917-4884.



Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) Parenting Education:

Offers parent-child classes for ages 0-5 focused on growth through songs and activities, plus parenting classes for parents of children ages 0-10. Visit www.linnbenton.edu/community/family-resources/parenting-programs.php or email parentinged@linnbenton.edu.

 [Pollywog Facebook](#)

 [Pollywog Website](#)

 [Pollywog Instagram](#)

 [Pollywog YouTube](#)



Parenting Success Network:

A group of agencies offering trusted, evidence-based classes and family events across Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties for families with kids ages 0-18. Learn more at parentingsuccessnetwork.org.



One2Another:

Provides a supportive community for families handling behavior and mental health challenges. Hosts free support groups and child skills groups in Albany, Corvallis, Lebanon, and Sweet Home. Visit one2another.net or call 541-570-0284.



Parents as Teachers (Lincoln County):

Free, voluntary program by Lincoln County Maternal, Child, and Family Health serving coastal families (ages 0-5) with home visits, developmental check-ins, and group activities. Visit www.co.lincoln.or.us/676/Maternal-Child-Family-Health or call 541-270-9827.



Strengthening Rural Families (SRF):

Philomath-based non-profit supporting rural areas (Alsea, Monroe, Santiam Canyon) with parenting classes, child development classes, financial coaching, and sensory workshops. Visit www.ruralfamilies.org or call 541-929-2535.



Young Roots Oregon:

Albany-based Family Hub empowering young parents (ages 24 and under) with play-based classes, peer networks, and school-readiness programs for ages 0-4. Free childcare is provided. Visit youngrootsoregon.org or call 541-791-7462.

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