

Parenting *ideas*

INSIGHTS

Building parent-school partnerships

WORDS Michael Grose

Are you amongst the 10% of smart parents?



Parenting is challenging but you don't need to go it alone. We all need help from time to time. Here are some ideas to help parents build their support network.

New Queensland research revealed that half of parents struggle with the stress of raising children, but only 10 per cent regularly ask for help. They are the smart 10 per cent!

Parents need assistance, advice and support from others to help them successfully raise their kids. Yet, 90 per cent of them do not regularly ask for help.

My experience suggests this is an Australia-wide phenomenon.

Help-seeking behaviours are healthy

Traditionally, Australians have not been great at asking for help of any kind. The term 'battler' is an endearing term attributed to someone who is doing it tough.

But for every battler who has fought against the odds and succeeded there are at least ten who struggled alone and never really got anywhere. And their families suffered as a result.

Fear of judgment

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many parents don't seek help through fear of being judged as poor parents. Of course, the reality is that ALL parents struggle from time to time coping with their children's behaviours and attitude. We can all use some help, as it's easy to get STUCK in your parenting.

Help comes in many forms. It's essential to build your network of support. Here's how:

1 Start with family and friends

You need between three and five trusted, non-judgemental people who you can call on for help. Count how many you have right now. If you fall short, look for ways to build your social capital.

2 Work alongside your child's teacher

Develop an open and communicative relationship with your child's teacher so that you can work with them, seek support and develop ongoing strategies. Understand the best time to touch base with your teacher and establish how regularly this contact is needed.

3 Find counselling, parent education services and professional assistance

Whether paid or free (such as Parentline), there are various services that you can go to when you need significant assistance. Foster a relationship with a professional (general practitioner, psychologist, specialist in a child's disorder, social worker) that you can trust and return to over time.

4 Follow a voice you can trust

Part of modern parental stress comes from the plethora of information about raising kids. Answering the basic question, "Am I doing a good job?" is now super-confusing. Choose expertise wisely.

5 Don't blaze trails

Many parents think like the Lone Ranger, they are blazing a trail through uncharted territory. Raising twins on your own? You're not the first. Got a child with ADHD, another with autism and your 15 year old wants to get a tattoo? You're not the first. Seek out like-minded parents or experienced professionals who have been down these paths, or have helped people navigate similar situations and get their perspectives. Trail-blazers are easily lost.

If you are like the majority of parents who find the job tough from time to time then I encourage you to be one of the smart 10 per cent and adopt help-seeking behaviours. The alternative, struggle along with the majority of parents, is just not necessary.

Michael Grose

Stay one step ahead of your kids with great ideas & expert advice from Michael Grose. Join Michael's **NEW Parentingideas Club** today at parentingideasclub.com.au. You'll be so glad you did.

