

The Enneagram and Parenting

(These Tips are adapted from Ian Cron's Typology Podcast)

TYPE 1 (Moral Perfectionist)

Enneagram 1s make great parents. They conduct themselves with the utmost integrity, lead their kids by example, and instill a strong sense of responsibility in their children.

But, like all types, 1s have a shadow side they need to monitor or it will hijack their personality and make a mess of their relationship and interaction with their kids. When 1 parents lack self-awareness and feel stressed, they can become overly critical, controlling, and express anger in unskillful ways.

Tips:

1. Resist making snap judgements. Resist pointing out faults in your children that don't conform to your high standard. This makes the child feel inadequate and like they can't do anything right in their parent's eyes. Take a deep breath and "pause" before acting.
2. Let your children be your teachers. Ask them about their opinions and viewpoints. Do it with genuine curiousness and kindness and without judgement. Observe and don't evaluate.
3. Celebrate your child's differences. Don't assume a replica of yourself is best for them.

TYPE 2 (Supportive Advisor)

A type 2's God-given superpower is sensing and meeting their children's needs in a wise and skillful way. What an amazing parenting skill! As parents, self-aware 2s are nurturing, attuned to their children's feelings, intuitive, great listeners, and approachable.

But when a type 2 parent scores poorly on the self-awareness quotient, their superpower becomes a hindrance. They become manipulative, smothering, proud of being needed by their children, and confuse flattery for words of encouragement.

Tips:

1. Set boundaries. Type 2 parents can become overly permissive for fear of rejection by the child. Children need to know there are boundaries to feel secure.
2. Resist rescuing. It deprives children of developing their own coping strategies. You don't want your child to think, I can't do life without Mom or Dad.
3. Invest in yourself. Don't make investing in your kids your sole identity. Find other hobbies, relationships etc... that don't include your children. This is healthy for you and your kids. It is good for kids to see parents enjoy other things.

TYPE 3 (Successful Achiever)

There's so much to love about healthy Achiever Parents! Typically, their kids experience them as dependable, motivating, optimistic, and full of ideas about fun things to do.

But when they're operating on "autopilot", type 3 parents can work themselves into relationship problems with their kids. They can become too image-conscious and distracted.

Tips:

1. Practice intentional listening. Listening can be difficult for type 3 parents as they often multitask in their head while listening.
2. Let your kids accomplish tasks in their own way. Resist stepping in to tell children how they can complete a task more efficiently. Not everyone values efficiency as much as a type 3. "Your kids require you most of all to love them for who they are, not to spend your whole life trying to correct them." (Bill Ayres)
3. Fully feel and share your own feelings. Type 3 parents often have trouble identifying their own feelings. They tend to express their love by doing things for their kids (I.e. work hard). Practice hugging children and saying you love them for no specific reason. Tool to help widen vocabulary of emotions: Positivepsychology.com/emotion-wheel.

TYPE 4 (Romantic Individualist)

Individualists can make great moms and dads. They are empathic, compassionate, creative, and can help kids get in touch with their feelings. They are intuitive about what's going on in their kid's hearts and can model an appreciation for beauty and the finer things in life.

But like all types, Individualists can use a little type-specific parenting coaching.

Tips:

1. Don't take things personally. Type 4 parents can be overly sensitive and can read things into people's behavior that isn't there. For example, if a 4's son isn't in the mood to talk to them, they might read it as rejection. Or perhaps a 4's daughter says I really love spending the night at Jane's house because her family is so cool. A type 4 parent might read that as abandonment and begin comparing themselves to Jane's parents and always come up short.
2. Don't focus on what's missing. Type 4s can tend to focus on what's missing in their relationship with their children and make negative comparisons with other parents who seem to have it together, then beat themselves up for always falling short of their imagined ideal. DW Winicott says, "You don't have to be the ideal parent, just be a good enough parent." Type 4s may not like the idea of just being an ordinary parent, but that's all you have to be.
3. Forgive our own parents for their failures. Peter Krause says, "Parenting is about guiding the next generation and forgiving the last."

TYPE 5 (Investigative Thinker)

Many Investigators have said that parenting doesn't come naturally to them. It requires effort and intentionality on their part. Don't be discouraged. Every type has parenting challenges!

Many 5s are model parents. They're balanced, cool and calm in a family crisis, and objective sources of wisdom and counsel for their kids. I've learned a lot about good parenting from friends who are self-aware Investigators.

Tips:

1. Practice making emotional connections with your kids. Express emotions as they arise. Daily offer verbal and physical expressions of love. Many adult children of type 5 parents report that they never felt like they made an emotional connection with their type 5 parent. The

parent seemed distant, secretive, and emotionally disconnected. The message that gave to the child was that the type 5 parent was not interested.

2. Be present. Type 5 parents can lapse into observing rather than participating in the present moment. Regularly ask yourself if you are mentally present in the moment or have you retreated into your mental castle (attic of the mind).
3. Be spontaneous. Kids love it when parents spring a surprise a game or an adventure on them. Spontaneously express emotion and affection.
4. Share as much of your internal world as you can.

TYPE 6 (Loyal Guardian)

Guardians are reliable, loyal, down-to-Earth and practical. They are well-prepared, witty and detail oriented. These are but a few of the wonderful virtues Guardian parents bring to life's table.

Children of skillful Guardians feel harbored and secure, and the Guardian's natural sense of humor ensures there's always a lot of laughter in their homes.

But when Guardians lack self-awareness, their admirable qualities become overshadowed by predictable unhelpful behavior patterns. They can become self-doubting, alarmist, procrastinating, and start hovering over their kid's lives out of fear for their safety and well-being.

Tips:

1. Fear is contagious; rein in your anxiety. You don't want kids to believe they are in an arbitrary, random world. We want them to believe they are in God's good hands.
2. Avoid making too many rules- this will anger and frustrate kids.
3. Resist the temptation to "catastrophize". In psychology common worlds used are "catastrophizing" and "awfulizing". Anxiety is a vague feeling of apprehension about a perceived but not necessarily real threat. When left unchecked, this can lead a type 6 parent to catastrophize and awfulize. If they keep doing this, their kids will see them as "the boy who cried wolf" and tend to ignore them when a real crisis emerges.

TYPE 7 (Entertaining Optimist)

What kid doesn't want a type 7 parent? They are fun, spontaneous, imaginative, creative, energetic, optimistic, and of course, unrivaled entertainers who will captivate you for hours with the stories of their adventures.

As with all types, Entertaining parents have blind spots that can undermine their effectiveness as parents.

Tips:

1. Be reliable. Type 7s can have racing minds and can tend to over commit and lose track of time. They sometimes make promises and don't follow through. If not careful, type 7 parents can develop reputation of being flaky and unreliable. Type 7 parents need to slow down, monitor their schedule and commitments, set reminders and have a to do list
2. Be mindful of the moment. A 7's energy can overwhelm their children. Type 7s need to think about what is required in the moment. A type 7 parent should perhaps talk less and listen more, lower their energy level, and sit with their child in the pain rather than reframe it.
3. Be the authority. A type 7 parent may tend to flatten the hierarchy and make everyone equal

to avoid being the bad cop. No child wants to feel like no one is in charge, it creates anxiety.

TYPE 8 (Protective Challenger)

There's never a dull moment when you have a type 8 Parent. They are energetic fireballs who are always on the move. When they've done some work on themselves, they're protective, empowering, and lead their children with kindness, humor, and clarity.

But when type 8 Parents are on "autopilot" things can go sideways fast. They become impatient, blind and insensitive to their kid's feelings, occasionally explosive, and they can make and expect others to follow rules that they themselves can turn around and break themselves.

I know MANY skillful type 8 Parents who have worked hard to maximize their many strengths and minimize their challenges.

Tips:

1. Practice the pause. There is always a space between stimulus and response. There is time to pause before speaking. Pause before "shooting from the lip".
2. Dial it back. Type 8s are often unaware of their intensity and they are doers. Boredom can quickly set in if they are not on the move. If not careful they can exhaust their kids. Self aware 8s know when to get the troops moving and when the troops need down time. Type 8 parents can fill a room and not leave space for others.
3. Own your part. 8s can struggle to accept that they are part of the blame when things go wrong. For example if child shares a hurt, an unaware 8 might say, "you are too sensitive." Type 8 parents need to learn to say I am sorry out loud and model humility.

TYPE 9 (Peaceful Mediator)

Self-aware type 9 parents are easygoing, unselfish, great listeners, accepting, generous, incredibly supportive, and they see and value every family member's perspective. What a menu of virtues!

As with all parents, 9s have room to grow and improve their parenting game. When they're asleep to their own lives, type 9 parents can be conflict-avoidant, stubborn, disengaged, in denial about their own anger, and overly permissive with their kids.

Tips:

1. Don't merge with the lives of your kids. Your presence matters. Type 9s can merge with the pursuits and agendas of their kids and neglect what they want in life. Type 9s should take time everyday to journal about their own needs and desires as separate from their children. Then commit to express and take action on them.
2. Avoid being too permissive with your kids. To avoid conflict and maintain peace, unskillful type 9s can be too lenient. Kids want clear directives.
3. Build healthy boundaries. It's hard for 9s to say no. It's important for type 9s to know that saying NO, does not equate to I don't love you. Paradoxically kids will respect you more and feel safer when you take a stand for yourself.