Motherhood: what does it take?

There is no such thing as a perfect mother, but most of us are far more successful in the role than we give ourselves credit for. Many women today are juggling parenthood, social demands and elder care responsibilities, along with demanding careers. Succeeding at parenthood involves the same qualities as devotion, hard work and common sense.



Be a role model. Mothers are role models for their children—both sons and daughters. Children learn to absorb the values you live by—tolerance, honesty, generosity, courtesy, consideration and respect for others, for example. And teach your children by example how to handle disappointment, anger, stress and conflict. The more you're able to demonstrate a love of life and a lively interest in the world, the more your children will experience the same.

Foster independence. Tough though it may seem, one of a mother's key tasks is to prepare her children to leave the nest. Encourage them to participate in extra-curricular activities to expand their skills and social life. Make sure they learn basic skills like cooking. Give them chores around the house. And most of all, encourage smart decision making by allowing kids to make small choices of their own in life—and by letting them learn from their mistakes.

Read to them. Let your children see you reading and encourage them to read. The years before five last the rest of their lives—encouraging literacy at home, from a young age, will stand your kids in good stead for many years to come.

Build self-esteem. Praise your children's abilities and efforts. By remarking on the things they do right, you encourage them to continue to try, and give them the confidence they need to succeed. Keep an eye out for the little things they do right, the little efforts they make, and watch their confidence blossom.

Streetproof your children. Helping your kids to feel comfortable in their neighbourhood and in a larger community is an important part of your job as a parent. Walk to accessible local destinations. Take public transit with them to a destination of interest—if it's not a regular activity for you, you might even enjoy the experience yourself! As your children grow older, gradually give them a little more rope. They need to begin to experience independence while they are securely under your roof.

Offer a lot of love and support. As much as possible, provide a loving environment and show your children affection. Encourage open communication—and take the time to really listen to your children. Let your children know that your love for them is unconditional. Be sure they understand that although you may not always like their behaviour, your love for them will never falter.

Being a mom is clearly one of the most exciting, exhausting and rewarding challenges a woman can face. By taking into account the tips above, you set the stage for a life-long relationship of support and caring between you and your child.

As much as you might like to prepare in advance for being the best parent you can be, the process of raising children is something you have to roll with, keeping your wits about you and living your values to the best of your ability. If you feel you would like more support in coping your role as a mom, talk to friends, family members, or a professional.