

# The very best ways to parent (it's not what you think)

There are very few “rights and wrongs” in parenting (despite what the Internet and your Facebook feed may tell you). If there's one thing we believe, it's that parents have to trust themselves. But it's no secret that when it comes to raising kids, there are a lot of opinions out there. And sometimes, this can lead to the "shame game," when a caregiver feels shamed by others for the choices she's made.

## Let's call a truce!

Because parenting is already hard. And we need all the support we can get. So with this in mind, here are a few hard and fast rules that you must follow when you have kids. (And trust us, it's not what you think.)

## Feed your kids.

You breastfeed? Awesome.

You formula feed? Awesome.

You insist on only organic, grass-fed, locally-sourced beef? Awesome.

I think we can all agree that our kids need to eat and grow strong and healthy from an early age. The truth is, that can take many forms. So let's stop shaming parents who don't share our exact same views or have made tough decisions for their own families.

## Love your kids.

You truly love your kids. But how you show that love may look a lot different from another caregiver. You know what? That's okay.

Whether you are a hugger or you typically show your love in other ways, it's really just important to relay that affection early and often. Reading books, setting boundaries and establishing traditions can also be great ways to show your kids you love them.

So can hugs, kisses and other physical displays of affection.

## Keep your kids safe.

Whether you love to wear your baby in a carrier or prefer to power walk with a stroller, you want to keep your kids safe from birth through adulthood. There are even those times you wish you could just bubble wrap them and keep them safely in the confines of your house.

But since that's not possible, the best way you can show your kids you love them is to keep them safe. There are a lot of ways to do this (like setting boundaries, asking questions, talking about tough topics



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Tand focusing on online safety).

The safety rules your family implements might look different from the family's down the block, and that's also okay. You alone are an expert at caring for your child's needs.

## Keep your sanity.

It's great to take pride in parenting - but that doesn't mean it should be done in isolation. There's no award given to parents who do it without the support of others. Instead, find a parenting tribe, learn new things, and remember you are not alone.

And remember that other parents need support, too.

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Instead of fighting about the "best ways" to parent, it's time to focus on what matters. That means it's also time parents support and uplift other parents, even if their choices are different.

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Originally posted on the Now What? Blog 7/15/15. The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention
2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse
3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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