



Triple P

Positive Parenting Program



Ask Nicole: Positive Parenting is Vital to Well-being

Dear parents, foster parents, grandparents, relative caregivers, and other adults raising children and teens: **we're celebrating YOU in January 2021!** The County Board of Supervisors has partnered with First 5 Santa Cruz County to declare January as Positive Parenting Awareness Month for the ninth year in a row. Other California counties are doing the same, and the California Assembly will pass a resolution any day now, declaring January 2021 as Positive Parenting Awareness Month across the state.

What does this mean? It means that local and state elected officials recognize that positive parenting is vital to the current and future well-being of children, families, and the entire community. It means that across the state, we're calling attention to the fact that raising children and youth to be confident, capable, caring, and independent is the most demanding, exhausting, important, rewarding (and underpaid) job many of us will ever have. It means that as a community, we recognize that being a parent or caregiver can be difficult, confusing, stressful, and isolating during "normal" times, and this past year has been nowhere near normal.

The multiple health, financial, and social-emotional crises created by the global pandemic, wildfires that ravaged communities, and continued racial injustices have led some people to wonder whether this is the right time to emphasize the joyful, rewarding aspects of positive parenting when so many people are sick, grieving, or struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, others have pointed out that the crises and chaos of this past year make positive parenting more vital than ever.

Decades of research show that a child's relationships and experiences shape the developing brain throughout childhood and adolescence, laying the foundation for future social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Children and youth who experience responsive, nurturing caregiving in safe and engaging environments are better able to learn, grow, and thrive. Positive parenting acts as a protective "buffer" that supports children's emotional well-being, even when families are experiencing hunger, unemployment, unstable housing or homelessness, social isolation, or discrimination and racism. Positive parenting alone won't solve these enormous challenges, but we also can't afford to wait to promote positive parenting until there's are "better days" with fewer problems or challenges.

So, dedicating the first month of the year to parents and caregivers is an opportunity to renew our commitment to the five principles of positive parenting:

- 1) **Create a safe, interesting environment** for children and youth of all ages;
- 2) **Create a positive learning environment** that promotes growth and development;
- 3) **Use assertive discipline** that teaches (instead of punishes) and helps children and youth develop skills for communication, cooperation, problem-solving, and managing emotions;
- 4) **Have realistic expectations** of yourself and your children (because there's no such thing as a perfect parent or child); and
- 5) **Take care of yourself** so you have the emotional, physical, and mental energy it takes to be a positive parent/caregiver.

This program is made possible by a partnership between First 5 Santa Cruz County, Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency & Santa Cruz County Human Services Department





Positive Parenting Awareness Month is a reminder that community members, businesses, early care and education providers, schools, and faith-based, non-profit, and government organizations all play a crucial role in supporting parents and caregivers to apply these positive parenting principles – even (or especially) during challenging times. Thankfully, many organizations in Santa Cruz County offer support and concrete resources such as food, housing, health care, financial assistance, childcare, and other essential services for families (Dial or text 2-1-1 or visit <https://www.211santacruzcounty.org/> to get help with accessing resources).

Another resource for families is the Triple P - Positive Parenting Program, an evidence-based program that offers a “tool kit” of strategies to strengthen relationships, promote children’s development, and handle common parenting challenges. Triple P providers have helped thousands of Santa Cruz County families in English and Spanish since 2010, and they quickly shifted to

providing virtual services during the pandemic to maintain continuity of support. Check First 5’s calendar (<http://first5scc.org/calendar/parent-trainings>) and follow Triple P on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/triplepscc>) to find Triple P classes, fun family activities, and a chance to win prizes throughout January!

Final Thoughts: During January – and every day throughout the year – let’s recognize positive parenting as vital to the well-being of children and families and essential to the community’s health, economic, and environmental recovery and revitalization. Although life will not magically return to “normal” on January 1, Positive Parenting Awareness Month sets a hopeful tone for the year by elevating the importance of positive parenting and everyone who’s doing their best to raise healthy, happy, resilient children. Parents and caregivers: we see you, we celebrate you, and we’re here for you!

Nicole Young is the mother of two children, ages 17 and 20, who also manages Santa Cruz County's Triple P - Positive Parenting Program, the world's leading positive parenting program. Scientifically proven, Triple P is made available locally by First 5 Santa Cruz County, the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency (Mental Health Services Act) and the Santa Cruz County Human Services Department. To find a Triple P parenting class or practitioner, visit <http://triplep.first5scc.org>, <http://www.facebook.com/triplepscc> or contact First 5 Santa Cruz County at 465-2217 or triplep@first5scc.org.