

The Parenting Advice I'm Ignoring

We've all heard parenting advice that sounds good... until we try it.

Whether it's from well-meaning family members, social media influencers, or even parenting books from decades past, there are ideas floating around that simply don't stack up - either with the research, or with what we know from experience builds strong, connected families.

So today, six pieces of parenting advice that I'm choosing to ignore - and that I believe all of us would do well to leave behind. These are ideas that not only miss the mark but can actively harm our connection with our children.

1. "Controlled crying teaches independence."

Letting babies "cry it out" is often framed as a way to help them learn to self-soothe. But the truth is, when we ignore our baby's cries, we're ignoring their primary form of communication and cutting them off from the care and comfort they need. Especially in the first six months, leaving a baby to cry without comfort can disrupt secure attachment and cause unnecessary stress for both parent and child.

Better approach: Comfort and respond. Independence and health come from security - not separation.

2. "Timeouts teach consequences."

Timeouts are often used as a tool to manage misbehaviour. But here's the issue: they isolate children when they most need connection. Rather than helping children understand what went wrong, timeouts can increase feelings of shame and disconnection. They ignore reasons, rupture relationships, and undermine motivation to behave better. Rather, they simply push unwanted behaviour underground.

Better approach: Use time-*in*. Stay close. Help your child process what's going on with compassion and clarity.

3. "Being too responsive will spoil your child."

This old-school myth suggests that if we're too loving or attentive, we'll create clingy or manipulative kids. But love is not a finite resource. Responsiveness builds trust, emotional regulation, and resilience - not entitlement.

Better approach: Be there. Again and again. Kids thrive when they know someone's got their back. Boundaries and limits matter, but they're best encouraged by being with your child, not sending them away to "toughen up".

4. "Ignore the tantrum and it will stop."

The idea here is that if we give no attention to a tantrum, it will eventually disappear. But tantrums are a child's way of expressing overwhelm, not manipulation. Ignoring a child in distress doesn't help them learn how to manage big emotions. Instead, it teaches them to hide those emotions.

Better approach: Offer empathy in the moment. Let them know, “I can see you’re having a tough time. I’m here.”

5. “Children should be seen and not heard.”

This idea still lingers – especially when kids push back or express strong emotions. But silencing our children doesn’t build respect. It builds resentment. Our children need to learn how to use their voice with confidence and kindness.

Better approach: Teach respectful communication rather than silent compliance.

6. “Kids need to learn to self-soothe.”

Yes, self-regulation is important. But emotional regulation isn’t something that magically appears. It’s something kids *learn through* repeated experiences of being soothed by a calm, caring adult. It’s not weakness to need co-regulation; it’s developmentally appropriate.

Better approach: Model calm. Be the steady presence your child can draw from in tough moments.

So, what do we do with all this?

As parents, we’re not looking for perfection. That doesn’t exist. We are looking for connection. That’s why we need to be thoughtful about the advice we follow. The best parenting strategies are grounded in respect, compassion, and evidence. They help us build strong relationships that can weather the ups and downs of childhood and adolescence.

If there's one takeaway, it's this: **connection always trumps control**. When we lead with warmth and wisdom, our children are far more likely to grow into emotionally healthy, respectful, and resilient young people.

Make Connection Your Goal This Summer

As the school year winds down and the summer holidays approach, we’re gifted a rare window: more time together. And while long days and unstructured time can sometimes feel chaotic (especially if you’re juggling work or multiple children), they also offer a powerful opportunity to reconnect. These coming weeks don’t need to be filled with elaborate outings or constant entertainment. What our kids need most – whether they’re five or fifteen – is *us*. A little one-on-one time, relaxed conversations, shared laughter, and simply being present can do more for your relationship than any parenting strategy ever could. So this summer, let’s make connection the goal.

Everything else is just a bonus.

For more parenting help, grab a copy of my book [The Parenting Revolution](#).



Dr Justin Coulson is a dad to 6 daughters and grandfather to 1 granddaughter. He is the parenting expert and co-host of Channel Nine’s Parental Guidance, and he and his wife host Australia’s #1 podcast for parents and family: The Happy Families Podcast. He has written 9 books about families and parenting. For further details visit happyfamilies.com.au.