

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Raising Optimistic Kids in Pessimistic Times



BY KIM DEMARCHI

Each passing generation is supposed to have better times and have it be a little bit easier, but if you are raising kids today it seems we are living in extremely pessimistic times. We are pessimistic

about politics, our government and America's future. We are pessimistic about the media, technology and bullying. We are pessimistic about our safety, violence and religion. We are pessimistic about education, the economy, and entrance into college and debt beyond. Raising kids in this climate is sometimes depressing, but we do have tremendous power to pass down our attitude to our kids.

Model optimism

We know that we are modeling for our children and that they'll be better off maintaining a positive outlook as opposed to a negative one. So it's time to start practicing what we are preaching, for our children's sake. Our attitudes, whether they are optimistic or pessimistic, can be a huge predictor of how our children will look at life.

Deliberately pay more attention to the positive

Our brains tend to naturally pay more attention to the negative, but if you really think about it, we have made tremendous progress throughout our history. Although

it's sometimes hard to remember how far we've come, try to remember it, acknowledge it, don't take it for granted, and give it at least equal weight to the negative.

Tweak your language describing current events

When discussing depressing current news with our children, try and find some positive hope. Even though something in the news may be terrible, perhaps point out all the people that are doing good and trying to combat the bad to make a positive change for the better. It can also reassure our children.

Put things in perspective

We relive tragedy with 24 hour news, social media and cell phone notifications. Explain to your children how the media can amplify things. Kids don't usually understand the relationship between the loudest voices getting the most listeners and viewers. So, help them sift through what is real and fake news. Encourage them to always check and verify themselves or to check in with you on what they are seeing and hearing.

Moderate your news intake

Know when to put down the tablet, turn off the television, change the channel, and turn off the notifications. When we get in the habit of hearing all the terrible things going on 24/7, we get immersed in it and it creates more fear and anxiety for us and our children. If we are constantly upset,

we lessen the security our children feel in their big world.

Frame struggles as opportunities

Of course our kids are going to be upset at times, and we should definitely validate their feelings and make sure they feel heard and understood. We can also help point out any positive things that have come from something happening, or what has been or can be learned.

Get involved in your community

Instead of only engaging in scary news which tends to promote helplessness, jump in and get yourself and your kids involved in something that makes you feel like you are making a difference. Taking small steps to make big changes can be seen all the time. We just need to find where our contribution feels meaningful and hopeful.

Ultimately we have a choice whether to focus on the positive or negative. We can be optimistic or pessimistic. It's not easy to always choose to be optimistic, but with practice and thought, it can become easier with time. Optimists tend to be more resilient and I want my children to have resiliency to help them get through life's difficult moments. Choose the happier outlook!



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