



Which Parenting Role is the One for You?

When you have a baby and become a parent you take on a brand new role in your lives. But do you know that this role is one that needs to change as your child grows and matures? There are in fact three different roles you need to fulfil as you parent your child from birth to adulthood.

1. Your first role is that of your child's "Earliest Teacher" and this is your role for about the first six or seven years of your child's life.

During this period you are the centre of your child's universe and it is through you that your little ones learn principally about the world. It is such an important time, as this is the time when a child's brain is developing so rapidly. It is important for parents to think about teaching their child to be a well rounded individual by including experiences that focus on developing their child socially, emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually.

2. Your next role, during the primary school years, until your children are about 12 years of age is that of "Manager".

During this time your child's universe is expanding and you can shift away from your earlier teaching role and take on the new role of manager as you organise this busy time with social activities: sport, cubs/scouts, ballet, music etc. The best managers support others to set goals and work towards them. This is an important part of the parenting role at this stage, so that children in their primary years are guided towards becoming more responsible.

3. Your last parenting role is that of "Coach" to your teenagers.

Parents can choose now, to take on the new role of coach, giving up control of their emerging adult as their teen tries figure out who they are for themselves. A good coach doesn't give answers or tell others what to do. They bring a system, a process for helping the person discover the answers for themselves. The role of coach is the appropriate parenting role to take with your teens, as it encourages them to become responsible, independent thinkers.

These three roles require progression from you as a parent. First you establish clear boundaries and teach about the world; then you help manage your child's expanding universe at a period when they need guidance and finally you support your teens by walking with them as coach not controller. As you parent your growing child and your role changes, you learn to take steps to increase choice for them and reduce your control.

How will you adapt your parenting as your child grows? How will you encourage your child to become independent and to maintain a close connection with you?

If you would like to know more about parenting roles you may wish to come along to one of our **Need2Connect** workshops about connection or one of our 4 week courses.