

Want kids' Independence? Responsibility? Good behaviour? These questions have them and more covered.



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The right questions can reveal solutions to your most worrisome parenting issues, but asking the right question requires wisdom.

- If you're a parent, you are **constantly asking questions**. *"Is she safe?" "Is that behaviour normal?" "How do I teach them to be more respectful?"*
- Sometimes, the questions are **directed inward**. *"Am I too strict?" "Are we doing a good job?" "Can I accept that they have different interests?"*

Not all questions are equal. Some questions are flaky and inconsequential. Others are potent and strategic. These five questions are deep, enduring, and uncover the parenting wisdom you never realised you possessed.

1. "What does this situation require?"

The discipline question.

This is my go-to question for children's behaviour. It's the shortened version of:

What does this situation reasonably require of my child at their age, stage of development and state of mind?

It's your job to socialise your child to fit into the different social situations they enter.

- To do this, they must learn the **rules of social living** and develop **an awareness of others' needs**.
- Your expectations of their ability to do this are influenced by their age, specific needs, and the situation the child is in.

For instance, it's reasonable to expect a six-year-old to keep themselves occupied for five minutes while you are talking to a friend while out for a walk. That may be stretching it for a two-year-old. But expecting a ten-year-old to wait patiently for twice that long is reasonable.

When using the question, account for their state of mind. Are they Stressed? Hungry? Tired? Adjust your expectations when necessary, but don't let their state of mind excuse their poor behaviour.

So when you're unsure whether your child is acting up or you're expecting too much, ask yourself, *"What does this situation require?"* If they act outside what you think is reasonable, respond appropriately and let them know how they can do better next time.

2. "Whose problem is it?"

The resourcefulness question.

Kids are adept at bringing their problems to their parents. And we're good at solving them.

"I'm hungry." "Here's some food."

"He hit me." "Don't hit your sister."

"I left my lunch at home." "I'll bring it to school."

Sound familiar? Sometimes, it's easier to resolve a child's problem ourselves. But in doing so, our children's problems become our problems.

- A child who doesn't eat enough at mealtime becomes our problem because his hunger at bedtime is also our problem.

This makes kids dependent on us, reducing their capabilities, resourcefulness and resilience. Asking this question will help us assess whether to solve a child's problems or give them the tools to do so.

3. "What does my child do that someone else relies on?"

The leadership question.

Toddlers love to help, but we often push them away because...let's be honest...we can do most things quicker and better than they can.

However, early childhood is the perfect time to accept their efforts to help, as this is the beginning of independence and responsibility. **The results in terms of real help come later.**

Give your child a real responsibility from an early age. Whether emptying the dishwasher, feeding a pet, or hearing a sibling read, giving kids real responsibilities is empowering, super helpful, and character-building.

Ask this question regularly, **especially if you have more than one child.** It will take you into leadership development mode.

4. "What type of parent does my child need me to be now?"

The flexibility question.

Most of us default to a particular parenting style, with permissive (non-intrusive), authoritarian (controlling) or authoritative (democratic) among the most popular. I'm a natural teacher, so I reverted to this mode far too often with my kids, even when they didn't need this mode. But I was always at my best when I asked myself this flexibility question.

- *If students are experiencing friendship problems at school, they may need someone to listen to their stories. Less teaching, more listening.*
- *They need a forgiving parent if they're struggling to transition into adolescence. Rules are meant to be bent.*
- *They need an understanding but strong parent if they're anxious about returning to school after the holidays. Confidence is contagious.*

This question will take you out of your default parenting mode and into your child's space. It will enable you to respond appropriately to your child's needs. Your flexibility is a gift.

5. "What is my child built for?"

The strengths question.

Parents naturally have hopes and dreams for children. These often reflect our aspirations rather than children's interests and abilities. This aspirational push is most substantial for firstborns and diluted if more children come along. It's better to base your expectations and aspirations on your children's strengths, abilities and preferences. These questions will help:

- *What is my child good at and can do without struggle?*

- *What does my child enjoy doing the most?*
- *When is my child at their best?*

This will help you reveal their strengths both academically, physically and psychologically. We all have in-built preferences, but often, it takes a lifetime to understand them.

Pose the strengths question early and often and help your child play to their strengths and interests. It's the shortcut to happiness and success.

Finally...

A gifted speaker colleague poses multiple questions during a presentation rather than giving information. He maintains that good questions can be challenging, but ultimately, they bring out the best in his audiences.

Similarly, asking ourselves good questions helps us look beyond the obvious and find those little gems of wisdom that set our children on positive paths.

And that is pure parenting genius.