



FREE LIFE-CHANGING ONLINE PARENTING COURSES

In these video-based, interactive classes—available 24/7—you'll learn a consistent, encouraging style of parenting that will benefit you and your children for a lifetime. With this self-study course, you have the option of when to participate based on your own schedule and at your convenience. Gain additional insight from your online group leaders as they provide support and feedback.

Choose from four available courses:

- **Active Parenting: First Five Years:**
For parents of children from birth to age 5
- **Active Parenting 4th ED:**
For parents of children ages 5 to 12
- **Active Parenting of Teens:**
For parents of preteens and teens
- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce:**
For divorced and divorcing parents

Continue your experience as an “active” parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

Visit [ACFCcares.com](https://www.acfc.org/activeparenting) for more information and to start your Active Parenting journey today.

6 Keys for Parenting Children with Autism or Other Functional Needs

Children who face special challenges like autism and other functional needs present special challenges for their parents and other caregivers.

Functional-Needs Children are best served when parents and other caregivers:

1. Avoid overcompensating by becoming permissive.

When a child with functional needs is rewarded with special privileges, does not have to follow reasonable rules, is immune from accountability for their actions and is able to use their functional needs to put others in their service without good reason, they are in danger of developing a condition known as “learned helplessness.” An Active (or “Authoritative”) style of parenting, modified to account for the real needs of the functional needs child can help them learn to do what they are capable of learning to do—what you might call “learned competence.” A simple rule of thumb for all children is this: Do not do on a regular basis what the child is capable of doing for themselves... or capable of learning to do for themselves.

2. Show empathy, not pity or annoyance.

Responding to the feelings of a child with functional needs, especially the ones that do not verbalize, is a skill that can help build a cooperative relationship that leads to effective problem-solving. However, there is one particular feeling we do not want to show them, and that's pity. Compassion is a good thing, but when we slip into pity, we put the child in a position of inferiority that can become severely limiting. To show compassion for the child's frustrations, without pity, acknowledge the child's feelings (and those of your own), but then move on to helping the child learn to solve problems and succeed in spite of them.

3. Provide respectful, non-violent discipline.

All children benefit from the freedom to make choices within the limits of their ability and circumstances. Sometimes this means offering the child choices. At other times it means offering logically connected consequences and other limit setting discipline. These tools help them learn to become independent...within limits... and learn to become successful. To be effective, discipline is best given in a firm and calm manner. Discipline delivered in anger or violently is not only less effective in the long run, but can also be damaging to the child's character development. Learning to manage our own anger and to help our functional needs children learn methods of managing their own can help.

4. Help stimulate their independence and build on their strengths.

Children need to struggle with solving problems and doing things for themselves in order to develop the skills and “emotional muscle” to become as independent as possible. One of the challenges of parenthood is learning when to step in and help and when to step back and let the child work it out themselves. When parents focus on what the child can do by building on existing strengths, children feel encouraged to persist, to learn, to cooperate and to succeed.

5. Take care of themselves physically, mentally and emotionally.

“Taking care of the caregiver” is a reality of caring for children that “you cannot do your best if you do not get your rest.” More than just rest, it is important for parents and others who care for children with functional needs to monitor their own physical, mental and emotional well-being. This includes taking time away from your child, engaging in stimulating adult activities and learning to manage frustration and anger in positive ways. You should balance your child's needs with the understanding that a happy, healthy caregiver is important to your child. Your child needs a healthy you.

6. Give lots of hugs and kisses.

Brain science has learned that hugs, kisses, and other loving touches releases the “bonding hormone,” oxytocin. When paired with loving words (like “I love you”) the words themselves can create the same feelings. There is more to this than just feeling good. When children, and especially children with functional needs, feel that their parents and others accept and love them, they develop the courage, self-esteem and resiliency to tackle challenges and eventually succeed. We encourage parents to be generous with their hugs and kisses at any time of day.

To learn more about effective parenting skills, visit the Active Parenting Online Video Library. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. Guidance and help are available for parents of children of all ages. To access the Online Video Library, go to the [ACFC website](https://www.acfc.org), click on the Active Parenting tab, and follow the instructions on how to view the videos.