

Combining Traditional Yup'ik Parenting Techniques with 21st Century Parenting Techniques in the Modern Yup'ik Environment

A. Ellangellrani: When a child is becoming aware of his or her environment

1. Speak to them in Yup'ik.
2. On a daily basis: "Kitag'at ernerpak ilaten assikurluki pikiki. Pingraatgen ilangcivkenaki unitaqluki." (Today, be good to your playmates. If they bother you, don't retaliate, but leave them.) This is also a good age to start teaching manners: to ask first instead of taking and saying thank you. **Try not to spoil them!**
3. You are the first teachers. Your child will learn not only from your words, but even more from your actions. As parents, you will be the first role models of your children. Role models are very powerful in our children's lives because kids tend to copy those they look up to as they get older.
4. If your child should ever come crying to you because another child made him or her cry, comfort him or her but do not retaliate for them no matter how much you want to. Why? Because your child can become a bully knowing that you will protect him or her. They can also become conniving by telling lies about other kids or even adults to get what they want. Instead, if it is something that is bothersome to you, let the parents of the other child know in a nonthreatening way about what their child was said to have done by your child and work it out with them.
5. Bring them to church with you and teach them to sit quietly by your side. This will help you and the child later in many ways. The same goes for other social gatherings in the community.
6. Be aware of what you say to or about others while your child(ren) can overhear. Children are like tiny recorders, even when we think they are off in a world of their own. In other words, don't gossip or vent your frustrations to another person in front of your kids. They hear everything even though they seem like they are not listening. Remember this throughout their growing years.
7. **Very important:** beware of developing an addiction to anything that will lead you to neglect or abuse your spouse and children, like too much bingo, TV, visiting, computer, work, or anything else in your life that is done to excess. For example, too much bingo might mean that you are addicted and if you are, this addiction can be worse than an addiction to mind-altering substances in some ways because you have all your mental capacities available to you. In other words, you will not be able to use the excuse of saying that you were passed out if someone were to ask why you leave your kids or your spouse by themselves a lot. Bingo is okay as a pastime but not as a daily activity.
7. Drugs and alcohol are bad news for couples, especially with children. If your parents used them, you know this all too well. Remember the pain, and break the cycle. Never forget that your children will look to you for protection throughout their growing up years and that you will be their role model, whether you model good or poor choices and behaviors. Give them good memories of caring parents, so that someday, they can do the same with your grandchildren.

8. Tobacco (smoke and chew) is unhealthy. Even if you yourself are addicted, discourage your child from using it. Just tell them it is against the law and that you have to be a certain age.
9. Don't develop the habit of bribing. Bribing can lead to bad behavior because it opens the possibility of blackmail. For example, if a kid has a tantrum and you give him a dollar to get him outside or out of your hair, then you have shown how he can get dollars from you in the future. Instead use rewards. Good behavior that is rewarded with praise, treats or healthy alternatives encourages positive self-development.

B. Head Start: This is your child's first exposure to a structured group learning setting away from the safety of the home, parents and family. It can be a traumatic experience so spend a few minutes there each day with your child until he or she gets used to this new setting.

1. On a daily basis: "Kitag'at ernerpaq niicucaarluteng piurqina; ilaten-llu assikurluki, pingratgen ilangcivkenaki unitaqluki." (Today, please be obedient and be good to your playmates. If they bother you, don't retaliate but leave them.)
2. Sometimes the child will bring home activities to do at home. Spend time with the child doing those. Nothing is more important to your child than to know that you care about him or her and approve or like what they do or make. Remember, you're not only your child's first teacher but their teacher and role model for life. They need to learn from you throughout their lives, and they especially need to learn from your actions as well as your words that learning is extremely important and that this is how you go about learning. Learning doesn't just happen at school, but at home, out in nature, at uppa and macuung's, and while playing with friends, to name just a few. If the child doesn't bring home anything, ask the child to share with you what he or she learned that day. This will develop skills the child will need to use in the upper grades.
3. It is very important to support your child's school; please visit your child at school and attend the monthly parent meetings. Volunteer often.
4. In the winter, turn the TV off and spend time with the child for an hour at least once a day. Call it family time. Undivided attention develops a sense of being loved and cared for and leads to a positive sense of self-worth in a child.
5. Teach your child the Yup'ik kinship terms your family uses and have him or her use them. Teach the child to respect not only those they need to in our kinship tree but also their elders.
6. Start helping your child develop a sense of responsibility by giving him or her small chores to do and lavishly praising him or her when he or she does. Making it easy for them succeed when they are just starting out helps them to keep seeking success later in life especially when they experience failure. The best way to keep the development of learning going on throughout the years is to keep the situations challenging at times. If things continue to be too easy for them, they will get bored doing them. On the other hand, if they are too difficult and they seldom succeed, they will learn to avoid even trying to do them. A challenging task is one that is slightly above his or her present skill level, one that requires him/her to reach beyond but in a safe, supportive environment that leads to many successes as well as some setbacks and mistakes. As the teacher you'll want to show that these setbacks and mistakes are not failures, but a regular part of the learning process. You want your child to develop the courage to learn.
7. "Good touching, bad touching..." Start protecting them from possible abuse. This used to be considered taboo (something that isn't talked about) but better to be safe than sorry because it can happen.

8. Read or tell your child a bedtime story. This will help
9. develop your child's natural curiosity better than TV.
10. In the summer, take a walk with them, go on a trip away from the community and spend quality time with them. Good memories will help them through tougher times if they should arise as they get older.
11. Relatives love children, but only you can answer for your child's behavior. Grandparents mean well, but sometimes they tend to spoil grandchildren.

C. Kindergarten: If your child had a good learning experience in Head Start, he or she should be ready to go, but every child is unique and precious. If the child needs you a few minutes each day to start feeling comfortable, please stay. The teacher will really appreciate your caring thoughtfulness.

1. On a daily basis: "Kitag'at school-ami niicuaarluten piurqina, ilateng-llu assikurluki. Pingratgen ilangciksaunaki, unitaqluki. School-arteten ni'cugniaqluki-llu." (Today at school, try to be on your best behavior, listen to your teachers. Be good to your classmates. If they bother you, don't retaliate but leave them).
2. Teach your child to respect the work or property of other children, whether at home, in the classroom or at play.
3. Read to your child every evening. This will help your child nurture and develop his or her natural curiosity and make learning much easier.
4. Teach your child to share with friends, whether it is toys or food.
5. As Yup'ik parents we are trained not to raise our voices or our hands against our children, and normally we tend to let some behavior slide, such as running or screaming, which is OK at home but can be disruptive at school. We need to let our child be aware of "classroom rules" and that those rules need to be followed.

D. Elementary School: Grades 1-6 (ages 6-12). In a perfect world, all our children would be able to breeze through these grades without any problems. But we do not live in a perfect world, and it is in these early grades that certain problem situations begin to develop. Through no fault of their own, some children have mental or physical disabilities that can affect their ability to learn. As their education intensifies and they begin to realize that they are "slower" or not as "smart" as the other kids, these kids tend to become "problem" children because they learn to act out to compensate for their feelings of insecurity. The school system used to categorize these children as special education students and set them aside, but that didn't work out too well for some. So now they are being "mainstreamed," but this causes some major problems in the classroom because children who have a short attention span tend not to be on task and disrupt other children. If you have a child who seems to do well at home but doesn't do as well at school, it is not your fault as a parent nor is it the school's fault; it may turn out that your child has special needs.

1. On a daily basis: "Kitag'ata ernerpak school-ami niicuaarluten piurqina; ilaten assikurluki. Pingraatgen ilangcivkenaki unitaqluki. Classroom-ami mur'ilkurluten piniartuten." (Remember today to be on your best behavior at school. Pay attention in class. Don't bother your classmates. If they bother you, don't retaliate, but leave them.)
2. If you have time, this is a very good opportunity to spend 10 to 15 minutes with your child in the classroom because it will give your child a good jump-start for the rest of the day. Better yet, volunteer for an hour or two, especially if your child has special needs.

3. This is the age when you should be reading to them on a daily basis because they are ready to learn and they really enjoy it. As soon as they come home from school ask them about their homework and do it with them. Make doing their homework a fun and early habit for them; this will help them do well in school right through high school.
4. It is very important to give your child regular chores to do in the house and also to include them during subsistence activities during these years so that they can develop a sense of responsibility and develop important skills. Continue to praise them for the good that they do and correct them gently when they need to be corrected.
5. Encourage them to be helpful to those in need, especially elders, without expecting rewards.

E. Junior High: This is an awkward age for many children. They feel too old for some kids games and yet too young to do what the older kids are doing. They are beginning to adjust to the changes in their physical growth and beginning to become aware of the other sex. This is the age when parents should really make an effort in the molding of these kids. If there are corrections that need to be made in behavior then this is a good time to do it.

Daily basis: “Kitag’at ernerpak niicucarturluten piurqina, ellami, school-ami-llu; ilaten-llu assikurluki. Pikatgen-llu illangcivkenaki unitniaten.” (Remember to be on your best behavior today, both at school and outside, and be good to your friends. If someone should bother you, remember to leave them.)

Don’t let them get lazy. Let them help in and outside the house on a regular basis.

Schoolwork gets a little harder and they begin to get more homework. Let them know that you have high expectations of them and trust in their ability to do the work. But give them help in any way you can, because if you don’t, they will get discouraged if they have trouble with schoolwork.

Have them read to their younger siblings.

Encourage them to get involved in clubs or sports but don’t pester them. Attend extra-curricular school activities in which your child(ren) is/are involved.

Start talking to them about behavior that will be expected of them if they travel to other places, and about the need to respect their chaperones and the people of other communities they visit.

Most important, tell them about the need to respect property, yours and others. Caution them against getting involved in drugs and engaging in vandalism and other behavior that will get them in trouble.

F. High School: This is the age where children begin the real process of maturing into adults. They are very sensitive emotionally. Everything is new and exciting and scary all at the same time. The teenagers begin to get more independent. For most of them, the part of the brain that warns them of danger is still developing and not fully functional yet. Depending on their personality, the high school experience can be fun most of the time or a time of soul searching; for many, it will be a combination of both.

1. On a daily basis: “Kitag’ata ernerpak niicucarturluten piurqina. Murilkurluten piurniartuten tua-i-wa.” (Remember to be on your best behavior today. Try to be aware of your actions and how they might affect others around you because...)
2. Beginning in the ninth grade, talk to them about how boy-girl relationships can be beneficial in many ways but how unwise it is to go steady. Talk to them about the dangers and risks of teenage sex and how hard an experience it will be for both sexes if a pregnancy is to occur. Keep your fingers crossed, but if a teen should get pregnant, don’t get too bent out of shape because mistakes do happen and it is not the end of the world; things can still work out if you work with your child.

3. Remind them of their status in the family. If they are the oldest, tell them about the need to care for their siblings and the need to be a role model. If they are younger, remind them of the need to obey their older siblings, and their responsibilities of being a role model for those younger than they.
4. As a parent you will need to **constantly** support their educational efforts in any way you can; from appropriate bedtimes to getting up in the morning, to providing quiet times in the evening to study and do homework, etc.
5. Give them more responsibilities and trust in their ability to accomplish new duties. Talk to them repeatedly about their fast-approaching adulthood. If they break something, remember that material things may break but can be repaired. Talk to them about what broke, how and why it broke, and help them repair it if it can be repaired. Yelling will only make things worse. Elders say that material things can be replaced; a person cannot.
6. Not all of our high school graduates will go on to college, but there are other alternative educational opportunities and we should encourage our kids to try these. Some parents will need to actively help their child do this, from finding a vocation to filling out whatever papers need to be filled out.
7. When your child becomes 18, the government may consider him or her legally in charge of their own choices and behaviors, but the kid is still your child. Never forget this even when things don't seem to be working out the way you hoped. A parent's love and responsibility don't run out at a certain age. Remember that our job as parents is to be their teacher for life but also that our children should realize we won't be around forever to provide for them.