

TOP TIPS FOR BLACK PARENTS

Using Traditional Cultural Practices and Values that have been discarded to improve and strengthen Parental Practices – Using Afrikan Jamaican cultural heritage as an example

“Culture is to people like water is to fish, invisible, all pervasive and essential.”
Professor Wade Nobles

Everyone has a culture, the question is, are we in the right culture?

Introduction

This paper is designed to provide practical tips and advice for Black parents seeking to improve their parenting practice. Parenting is a craft that is taught and learnt within a cultural context. It is the author's belief that Black children should be raised within a Black culture if they are to grow into fully developed (emotionally, psychologically, spiritually and physically) human beings and it is the abandonment of traditional Afrikan cultural practices and values that is a major contributor to Black people's inability to effectively resist the belief system referred to as Racism or White Supremacy that controls so much of what takes place in the world today.

There are set out in this paper, examples of cultural practices and values, taken from Afrikan Jamaican culture, which if reinstated would bring about immediate, significant improvement in parent/child relationships in the Afrikan community in the UK. Although taken from Jamaica as an example, these values/practices are Afrikan cultural retentions which survived the Mangalize (sometimes called Black Holocaust) and can be found right across the Afrikan world.

TOP TIPS

- **Your children are not your private property** – ‘It takes a whole village to raise a child and many compounds to make a village’ (Afrikan proverb). Any adult should be able to speak to you or your child about your child's behaviour without automatically receiving a hostile response, since what your child does affects the wider community; not just you.
- **Big people's Talk** – Certain conversations are not suitable for children/young people. As Jamaicans say ‘Force ripe never good.’
- **Me an yu is not Quabs/Size** – Do not abrogate your responsibilities as a parent with liberal notions of treating your children as small adults. The tail does not wag the lion and your children will never be size with you. Parenting is not a democracy.
- **If you are a day older you have a responsibility to the younger one** – This idea comes from the Afrikan cultural practice of age grading. Our culture is to teach the older child to take care of the younger ones.
- **Proverbs and Parables** – Afrikans all over the world teach morals and values via proverbs and parables. The Anancy stories which originated in West Afrika and were taken across the Atlantic are great examples. Use proverbs, parables and stories to teach ancestral wisdom. E.g. ‘Patient Man ride Donkey, the fool will always walk.’
- **Auntie, Uncle or Mr and Mrs** – Why are our children now calling adults, even elders, by their first name? Afrikans believe in age grading and respect for elders. We believe in non-biological aunties and uncles. Let's re-teach these principles.

- **Eating together** – Families that eat together (with the TV off) stay together. Everyone is busy, however we need to find some time to come together and talk.
- **Bed time** – Children need more sleep than adults. This includes teenagers. A five year old child needs around 13 hours sleep a night. If a young person is still growing they need more sleep than an adult.
- **Bad Company** – Parents need to get to know their children's friends and the parents of these friends. Make a point to introduce yourself to your child's friends' parents. Children are always in communication with each other, parents also need to talk to each other. Remember 'The Fruit never falls far from the tree.'
- **Rebuilding the Extended Family** – Remember when family and friends used to just turn up and they would be welcome and there would be food in the Dutch pot for them? Let's try to visit family and friends more often, go on group holidays together and rebuild our extended family (non-biological as well as biological).
- **Household Chores** – All children should have age appropriate chores for which they should not be paid. This is about Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility). Boys should not be excused from housework.
- **Control of Media** – There is a media onslaught promoting a degenerate 'Black' sub-culture. Do not put TVs in your children's bedroom, it is hard enough to control their media diet without adding to the problem. Watch their favourite programmes with them and decode the imagery with them. Do not allow them to watch particular films just because their friends have watched them. Their friends' parents do not necessarily share your value system. Listen to your child's CD collection. Do not allow 'slackness' to be played in your house even if they will hear it outside. Hold firm to what is acceptable within your house. Reconsider your own media diet and the values you are being exposed to. Try listening to conscious Black media e.g. internet radio stations such as www.libradio.com www.gap-radio.com www.innerlightradio.com www.blakeradio.com
- **Electromagnetic down-time** - Afrikan-Caribbeans watch more television than any other ethnic group in the UK (the same applies for Afrikan-Americans in the USA). Reduce TV and other electromagnetic media consumption. Have some time when the TV/Radio/MP3 Player/Playstation etc. are switched off. Children can go to the park, play in the garden, play board games, read etc. After a while they will stop saying "Mum/Dad I'm bored"!
- **Go read a book** – If we want our children to read they need to see us reading as well! Ensure your children read with you or to you on a regular basis. A little regularly is better than a lot infrequently. Buy and read books that will uplift and empower you. Support Black bookshops and conscious writers.
- **It's OK to say NO!**
- **Stop cussing bad wo'd** – Afrikans culture teaches about Nommo, the power of the word. Think before you speak and speak to your children appropriately or eventually they will bring inappropriate speech back to you.
- **Immediately correct negative non-verbal communication e.g. cut eye, kissing teeth**
- **Pardner** – Pardner was a tool to not only build financial capital but also social capital (community networks, community participation, community identity, reciprocity [sense of obligation to others, confidence that others will help oneself] and trust). We need to use these kinds of cultural inheritances to rebuild community, show our children Black trust and co-operation in action and teach our children financial literacy.
- **Role Models** – The best role model for your child(ren) is the person you see in the mirror in the morning.

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