

The Tip #5

“My father didn’t tell me how to live. He lived and let me watch him do it”

Clarence Budinton Kelland. (Ahh – a great example of a dolphin parent outlined below.)

“We are all imperfect parents and that’s perfectly ok. Tiny humans need connection, not perfection” L.R. Knost (So if we connect, let’s do it without stifling, criticising or disabling)

The Tale #5

Tiger mums, helicopter mums and now dolphin parents - a new parenting term touted as the key to raising happier children.

Dr. Shimi Kang, a Canadian child and adult psychiatrist, author of [The Dolphin Way: A Parent's Guide to Raising Healthy Happy and Motivated Kids without Turning into a Tiger](#), says a dolphin parent acts as a guide, is firm but flexible, and engages in role modelling, collaborating and communicating with their children. It is a balanced approach to parenting when compared to tiger or jellyfish approach.

Dolphin parents trust their own instincts when parenting and as a result allow their kids to learn how to become adaptable, develop a sense of community, become creative and critical thinkers; important traits to help navigate a complex world. As wild dolphins live and play together in their pods, humans are also social by nature and are meant to live in families and a community promoting a sense of happiness and wellbeing, explains Kang on her website.

Role modelling

Dolphin parents discipline their children through role modelling suitable behaviour and providing transparent rules and consequences if the rules are broken. Kang says a parent needs to act as a guide while allowing children to make their own choices and learn from their mistakes. Adopting a firm but flexible approach to discipline is a key aspect of dolphin parenting where expectations and outcomes are very clear.

In her blog, Kang says that dolphin-style parenting allows children to develop internal control and motivation. Other benefits include an authoritative parent-child relationship, a balanced lifestyle with unstructured play time (doing away with over scheduling), involvement in community and time to relax and recuperate. This observation comes straight from wild dolphins which do the same things to keep themselves happy and healthy. Kang believes that over parenting interferes with a child’s ability to survive in the 21st century because it discourages self-motivation and flexibility.

Strategies to adopt dolphin style parenting (according to Kang):

1. Be firm and flexible by having clear rules and consequences in place while respecting a child’s freedom and independence to choose.
2. Resist over scheduling children into extracurricular activities. Allow time for free play and relaxation to prevent burn out.
3. Allow children to make mistakes and learn from them instead of being overprotective.
4. Nurture a sense of community and connection to others and encourage children to help others out as often as possible.

5. Play with your children as often as you can; play helps a child develop social, thinking and emotional skills which cannot be obtained in any other way.
6. ALWAYS AIM TO BE AUTHORITATIVE – in my humble view, the mistake most commonly observed is that too many parents are rearing their children from the ‘Permissive’ quadrant.

	Supportive Parent is accepting and child-centered	Unsupportive Parent is rejecting and parent-centered
Demanding Parent expects much of child	Authoritative Parenting Relationship is reciprocal, responsive; high in bidirectional communication	Authoritarian Parenting Relationship is controlling, power-assertive; high in unidirectional communication
Undemanding Parent expects little of child	Permissive Parenting Relationship is indulgent; low in control attempts	Rejecting-Neglecting Parenting Relationship is rejecting or neglecting; uninvolved

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