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# The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years

By Lisa Coyne, Amy R. Murrell



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Parents are supposed to be at their best when their children are at their worst. The only problem is that parents are people, too, and are susceptible to knee-jerk reactions, anger, and fears that make perfect parenting nearly impossible. But it is possible to keep your long-term parenting goals in mind, give yourself credit for what you're doing right, and most importantly, enjoy the rewards and joy of raising a child.

**The Joy of Parenting** is a compassionate guide for parents who sometimes feel overwhelmed—that is, all parents. The acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) skills in this book will help you develop the flexibility and mindfulness to help your child make critical transitions and gracefully move past the bumps along the way.

This guide offers practical skills-based exercises to help you:

- Handle tantrums and defiance with grace
- Refocus on big-picture values when you feel overwhelmed
- Act compassionately toward yourself when you make mistakes
- Adjust your parenting as your child works through typical developmental transitions



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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"This book will help you become a better parent by helping you to more effectively deal with parenting situations and to deepen your understanding of your own values, thoughts, and feelings. Take some time to read this work, let go of the past, and take your child's hand to move more mindfully into the future."

—Thomas J. Dishion, PhD, codirector of the Child and Family Center, professor of psychology at the University of Oregon

"Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) is one of the newest, most influential, and most powerful forms of therapy to be developed by psychologists in a long, long time. As scientific support for ACT grows, so too has the breadth of its application. This book is an example of a new frontier for that growth—parenting. By reading and carefully following the advice this book contains, you can not only become a more effective parent, but also a more effective and happier person."

—Patrick C. Friman, PhD, ABPP, director of clinical services at Boys Town, clinical professor of pediatrics at University of Nebraska School of Medicine

"For many, the joys of parenting are lost, hidden by the mind's chatter to 'parent the right way' or by the heart's desire to escape the emotional pitfalls of parenting. But the joys of parenting are found in the space that lies between parent and child—in a relationship where parents know the value of simply being with their child. Lisa Coyne and Amy Murrell wisely and gently guide readers to that space."

—Timothy A. Cavell, PhD, author of *Working with Parents of Aggressive Children and You're Not the Worst Parent in the World*

"Parenting is always challenging, no matter how much we love our children. This book offers practical ways to accept the challenge, choose what matters most in our relationship with our children, and take action to build this relationship one day at a time."

—Jean E. Dumas, PhD

"Most people know that parenting is a supremely difficult job and no one ever gets it right all the time. This book is filled with examples, questions, exercises, and strategies to help you look at who you are as a parent: your values, your limits, and your fears, and thus enable you to do what's right (for you and your child), not what's easy."

—Carolyn Boehne, LICSW

"I was at the end of my rope with my daughter. I called around and was able to find this program, ACT, and it was very helpful. I had hope that things would work out when they gave me ways to deal with the issues at home. My daughter is doing great, and I think it's because of some of the things I was able to use from the ACT program."

—Liz S., client

"ACT taught me that there isn't a perfect or easy fix to my problems, but I learned not to get so wrapped up in my child's behavior. I am calmer in most situations now, and that facilitates my understanding of myself as well as my child."

—Traci S., client

From the Publisher

In **Parenting with Mindfulness and Acceptance**, two acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) experts provide parents with the tools they need to cope with disruptive and oppositional behavior, acknowledge that they don't have to be perfect, learn to recognize normal childhood transitions, and alleviate their own anxieties to become more responsive, flexible, effective, and compassionate parents.

About the Author

Lisa W. Coyne, PhD, is an assistant professor of psychology and director of the Early Childhood Research Clinic (ECRC) at Suffolk University in Boston, MA. She has adapted and used acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) for families of young children struggling with emotional and behavioral problems, and applies her research to clinical work with young children living in poverty.

Amy R. Murrell, PhD, is an assistant professor of psychology at the University of North Texas. She has been actively developing and conducting ACT programs for children and parents since 2000 and is a recognized leader in the field.

**Kelly G. Wilson, PhD**, is professor of psychology at the University of Mississippi. He is a central figure in ACT, and was one of the authors of the landmark *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. Wilson is among the most sought-after ACT trainers. His popular experiential workshops touch thousands of clinicians and students each year. Find out more at [www.onelifellc.com](http://www.onelifellc.com).

## Users Review

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**Daryl Pena:**

Reading can called head hangout, why? Because while you are reading a book especially book entitled *The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years* your head will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in most aspect that maybe unfamiliar for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging each word written in a publication then become one type conclusion and explanation that maybe you never get just before. The *The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years* giving you one more experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful facts for your better life within this era. So now let us demonstrate the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning a sport. Do you want to try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

**Alex Tipton:**

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