

Script – Broadcast – Providing a light for our children

INTRO

The chaotic world we live in can often have parents scratching their heads about the best way to raise their children. Now, more people are turning to a concept called lighthouse parenting.

According to experts, lighthouse parenting combines important traits such as nurturing, loving and protecting while giving their children space to grow and learn on their own.

(((SOS)))

Victor Mendoza, behavioral health provider, OSF HealthCare

“[It’s like] a regular lighthouse that guides the ships from one place to another. That’s how it is with parenting. Just being there for your child and helping them get through difficult times. Sometimes [parents can] step in when they need to, and sometimes they let them try things out.” (:17)

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The lighthouse parenting concept has been talked about for nearly a decade. It was coined by pediatrician Kenneth Ginsburg, MD, who literally wrote the book on the topic.

Mendoza says lighthouse parenting falls somewhere between two other styles — helicopter parenting and free-range parenting. A helicopter parent tends to hover, may be over-involved and is always evaluating risk that can prevent children from developing a certain skill. Free-range parents believe giving freedom promotes independence and self-confident children.

For example, a helicopter parent might stand with their child on the tee-ball field, helping him or her get to the ball or run to the right base. A lighthouse parent might give their child some guidance before the game and watch the action from the sidelines.

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Mendoza says the biggest benefits of lighthouse parenting include encouraging healthy boundaries, building coping skills and creating a supportive relationship between parent and child.

And it’s OK for your children to fall short of expectations from time to time. Mendoza stresses that lighthouse parenting may not work for all parents and children. He says it’s important to consider the child’s age, needs, temperament and development. Lighthouse parenting is going to look different for younger children than school-aged kids or teens.

(((SOS)))

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"Lighthouse parenting is not like this strict set of rules that you have to follow," Mendoza says. "It's like a guideline that you can incorporate into your parenting to help you be a more active parent or a more lighthouse parent and be there for your child." (:17)

Mendoza says the lighthouse parenting concept works in his practice. Some parents, he says, are willing to try a new style because of the way they grew up – in a home that lacked a good support system or parental involvement.

He adds children should understand that while they are loved, there are rules and boundaries for their behavior and actions.