

Parenting Tips

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Catch the child being good

Attend to your children when they are behaving appropriately. Describe their positive behavior and offer praise and encouragement. Praise effort and improvement. Put more emphasis on rewards than on punishments.

Establish reasonable rules and routines

Children behave better and feel more secure when their lives are predictable. Make sure that rules are clear and well understood. Whenever possible, establish routines around regularly occurring activities such as bedtime, getting ready for school, etc. Be consistent in enforcing rules.

Always enforce commands

Reserve commands for times when you are prepared to follow through. State them clearly and without question. Give commands one time and then militantly follow through. This will teach your child that you mean what you say and your directives must be respected.

Use punishment wisely

When a child acts with defiance, punishment should be given immediately, calmly, and reasonably. The best punishments are those that “fit the crime,” e.g., cleaning up a mess. The time out technique is often very effective.

Ignore certain inappropriate behavior

While this idea does not always apply, there are times when our attention itself is enough to keep a child misbehaving. Turning your attention away from the child or to other children who are acting appropriately may help eliminate the misbehavior. This technique works especially well with such things as whining and tantrums.

Be a good model

Children learn well from observing what their parents do and say. If you handle your goofs and frustrations in a reasonable manner, it shows your children the way. If you become unglued by the irritations of life, expect your children to do the same.

Build your child's self-esteem

Give your children regular individual attention. Build “legends” around their positive characteristics. Help them learn new skills. Teach them to do for others. Encourage them to make choices, confront problems, and find solutions.

Use good communication skills

Express yourself directly to your children and use “I messages”. Even more importantly, attend to their needs and feelings. Practice using reflective listening.

Teach values and character

Encourage hard work, fairness, respect for others, honesty, stewardship, civic duty, and courtesy. Give your children regular responsibilities. Involve them in your family's religion.

Recommended Books

1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children by Thomas Phelan

The Kazdin Method for Parenting the Defiant Child by Alan E. Kazdin

The Incredible Years: A Troubleshooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3 to 8

Your Defiant Child: 8 Steps to Better Behavior by Russell A. Barkley and Christine M. Benton

Parenting the Strong Willed Child by Rex Forehand and Nicholas Long

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish