

GENERAL PARENTING GUIDELINES



***Set a good example for your children.** Children often learn how to act by observing how their parents act. For example, if parents handle frustrations well, their children will probably learn to handle their own frustrations well. If parents swear and become upset when things don't go well, their children may learn to act the same way. Parents should avoid resorting to the old saying "Do as I say, not as I do."

***Don't take your children's good behavior for granted.** Parents should praise their children when they are behaving appropriately instead of just waiting to praise them only when they do something special. Parents should give their children the message that they notice appropriate behavior as much as inappropriate behavior. Catch them being good!

***Provide your children with a lot of verbal and physical affection.** Frequent physical contact between parents and their children (such as hugging or brief "love pats") is very important. This positive affection should be provided on a regular basis whenever children are behaving appropriately. Parents should avoid providing this affection soon after their children have misbehaved.

***Discipline should be immediate and should be administered in a matter-of-fact manner.** Parents need to avoid becoming upset while disciplining their children. Time-out and grounding techniques can be very effective if they are used correctly. After being punished, children should start with a clean slate. Parents should not remind or nag their children about their misbehavior.

***Be consistent and predictable with your children.** Children function best when they know what to expect. Parents should make it very clear exactly what are and are not acceptable behaviors. Children's appropriate and inappropriate behavior should be handled in a similar manner by both parents (e.g., both parents should use the same punishment techniques for misbehavior). Consistency is not only important between parents. It is

also important from day-to-day for individual parents. Parental management of children's behavior from one day to another should not vary according to parental mood. Rather, it should always be based on their children's behavior.

***How directions are given to children can have an effect on whether or not the children will follow them.** Parents should make eye contact with their children before giving a direction. Yelling directions from another room is often not very successful. Directions should be given in a very specific and concise manner. Parents should avoid giving vague directions such as "Be good." A parent's idea of being good and their children's idea of being good may be very different. Parents should praise their children when they follow directions. They should also be prepared to enforce directions their children do not follow. If parents do not enforce directions, children learn that their parents don't mean what they say. Parents should avoid giving more than one warning following a direction.

***Make rules clear and specific.** Parents should avoid making rules that they cannot or may not enforce. Enforcement of rules should be as matter-of-fact as possible. The

penalty for breaking rules should be stated in advance. When a rule is broken, children should be appropriately punished (e.g., time-out).

***Let your children help with as many everyday tasks as possible.** Most children enjoy spending time helping their parents, and it can also be a good learning experience. With younger children, "helping" may involve pretend work in the same area.

***Closely monitor your children.** For younger children, parents should praise them when they are behaving. Parents should avoid the trap of not wanting to disturb children while they are behaving. Parents should make sure they know where their children are and what they are doing.

***Avoid lecturing, nagging, yelling, and screaming to manage your children's behavior.** These approaches are typically not effective and often make problems worse.



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