

Tips for Parents

Make sure your child knows you love him every single day.

Listen calmly and quietly. Parents talk too much, that's why *kids* don't listen!

When your baby cries, gently check for what might be wrong. She might be hungry; she might need a diaper change. Maybe she's cold or hot. Maybe she wants to be picked up. Maybe she wants to burp. And sometimes, what she wants is to be put down and left alone! When nothing seems to work take her outside. Sometimes sunshine is the best cure. By paying attention, and through trial and error, you become the expert on your child.

Respect your children and they will learn to respect others. You can't demand respect -- it must be earned. Model respect and stand up for yourself.

Look your child in the eyes when you talk to her. Eye contact, loving touch, and verbal interaction are all required for healthy bonding, as well as for your child's emotional, intellectual and psychological development.

Make chores a family project. After dinner, *everybody* helps clean up. Put on some music, make it fun.

If nothing can be done about a problem in the here-and-now, don't bring it up. When the child is getting out of the car in front of the school is NOT the time to say, "Do you have your homework?"

Every so often, make an effort to see yourself through your child's eyes. How do you want to be remembered by him when he grows up?

If your child is annoying you while you're trying to get something done, just stop. Sit down and spend a few minutes playing with her. The dishes can wait. If you can give yourself over to that moment with your child it will be fun and valuable for her AND FOR YOU!!

When more than one child needs your attention at once, listen intently to one, and touch the other one on the shoulder or arm. That touch says, "I know you are there and as soon as your sister finishes, I will listen to you."

Have each parent spend some time one-to-one with each child, regularly if possible.

Spend some quiet time with your child before bed. Read, talk quietly, practice deep breathing. Allow enough time in the morning for conversation. Share dreams and plans for the day.

Don't say "You don't mean that!" Even when the child says "I hate my brother!" in that moment, *she means it*. Reflect back to her what's going on. "You are so mad at him for doing that!"

Be brief and to the point.

When your child begins to walk, he can begin picking up his toys. Make it a normal part of the routine before bedtime. Don't get impatient and do it for him, but be there to help. Toys that don't get picked up in the allotted time, land in "toy jail." The bonus is that when a car trip is coming up, or your child is sick, you can bring out some forgotten treasure and it'll be new all over again.

If she asks for something you don't want to give, say no, give a reason, and an alternative, and then shut up about it. If she keeps bugging you, ignore her. Arguing gets you nowhere. "You can't have a piece of cake now, it's too close to dinner. You may have some of these carrot sticks or a slice of apple."

Avoid questions when possible. Comment and then wait for a response. Suppose your child comes in looking sad. Don't say "What's wrong?" Say, "You look sad," and sit down ready to listen.

All parents and children *know* that the answer to "What happened at school today?" is "Nothing."

Make sure your children know your values.

Follow through on your promises.

Make expectations clear and explicit. Tie logical consequences to specific misbehaviors, and follow through consistently.

When the child says, "You don't understand!" tell him you'd like to understand, and ask him to help you.

Be a good role model, not a critic.

Live your life. Have your own interests.

Don't tie your love and attention to what the child is doing. Love her because she exists.

Get straight on what are *your* goals for your child and what your child's *own* life goals are. They might not be the same, and hers take priority.

Remember what you wish you had gotten from your parents and give him that. If you really think about it, you'll realize I'm not talking about material goods here. Most kids want more time with you, more attention, more help, more guidance, more acceptance.

Keep only healthy food and drinks in the house. Serve nutritious meals. If your kids don't eat what you serve, the natural consequence of that is being hungry. Don't worry. They won't starve to death.

Go outside and run, jump, and play with them.

Involve kids in family decisions when appropriate. Their input is valuable, and many things can be left up to them. But always let them know that in some matters, it's the adults who make the final decision.

Don't expect your children to make you happy. It's not their job. Don't confide in them about your problems.

Adolescents don't care about the things you care about. Educate yourself on their world - friends, music, interests, skills. Invite friends along on family outings. It'll make the occasion more fun, and you will get to know the people your child knows.

Don't judge your children by what they're friends are doing, what you see on TV, or what you read.

Pay attention to your feelings when your child is misbehaving. When you feel annoyed, chances are your child is seeking attention. Give him some!! When you are feeling angry, the child's goal is power. Don't argue. Children always win power struggles one way or another. State the rule, and then withdraw your attention. When you are feeling hurt, the child is also feeling hurt and is lashing out for revenge. Respond to the underlying issue. What's up for her? When you feel helpless, chances are that's what your child is feeling - not good enough, inadequate. Give supportive assistance, but don't "do for" your child. When you are feeling nervous or worried, your older child or adolescent might be seeking excitement. Calm yourself, trust her and the job you have done so far, and let life's natural consequences do their part. When you are feeling abandoned, your child is doing his job - which is to grow up! Check in with your own life satisfaction. Are you happy in areas of life other than parenting? If not, do something about it! When your child is putting down others, she is probably trying to boost a sagging self-esteem. Gently suggest that we do better when we stop comparing ourselves to others, favorably or unfavorably. And praise and encourage your child whenever you can.

Educate yourself on basic child development and family dynamics.

When you are spending time with your children, really be there. No cell phone, no email, no magazines.

Be consistent.

Stay calm.

Have the television and computer in a common room.

Don't pay for everything. An adolescent can get a job to earn money for her cell phone and clothes. And children can do extra jobs around the house for money.

Say what you mean whenever possible without hurting.

Show respect for other adults and other children.

Take good care of yourself. What issues do you have left over from childhood? Get some support in being as healthy as you can be.

Kids respond well to:

I'm glad you told me about that.

That seems important to you.

You were really hurt by that.

In your view, I should not worry so much about what your room looks like.

Let's watch this show together.

You seem to be enjoying baseball.

You seem really proud of your art. Do you have all the supplies you need?

Kids hate it when you say:

You've got so much potential!

When I was a kid.....

You don't know what you're talking about!

You don't understand.

You're too young.