



# Parents & Caregivers

## Helpful Resources

### *Parenting is both joyous and hard work*

Parenting is a life-long learning process and no one has all the answers. Hitting on the right solution or parenting strategy is a matter of trial and "error." And even when you do all the "right" things, your child may not respond the way you think she/he should. It often seems that by the time you figure out a good way to handle something, you're on to yet another challenge.

Everyone makes "mistakes." Every parent has ups and downs and no parent gets it all "right." Fortunately, most children are quite flexible and bounce back quickly. The challenge for parents isn't to do things perfectly. Rather, it is to see your mistakes as opportunities to learn about yourself and your child. Over time, you'll discover what works and what doesn't.

Parenting can be very stressful. Learning to recognize when you are about to reach your boiling point, and developing strategies to step away from your child before you boil over is critical. This may mean putting an inconsolable child somewhere safe, like a crib, and taking a brief time-out. All parents need support. The fact that we need support is not a sign of inadequacy.

Take care of yourself and your important relationships. Taking care of both your needs and the needs of your child is a difficult balancing act. Most parents are inclined to let their own needs slide as they attempt to do everything and be everything for their children. But the truth is that taking care of yourself-physically, emotionally and spiritually-as well as the important relationships in your life with your partner, friends and family is crucial for the healthy development of your child.

For more information visit:  
[http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/parent\\_links/index.shtml](http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/parent_links/index.shtml)

# The Power of Choice



**Would you like to get your kids to willingly cooperate? Stop the daily battles? Teach your kids valuable life skills? If your answer is Yes, Yes, Yes, read on:**

**Do you sound like a drill sergeant?** There are so many things we must get our children to do and so many things we must stop them from doing! *Get up. Get dressed. Don't dawdle. Do your homework. Eat. Don't hit your brother.* It goes on and on. And to make matters worse – our kids resist our orders and demands.

**There is an effective solution!** We can get our kids to cooperate and at the same time allow them to learn self-discipline and develop good decision-making skills. How?

## Offer choices

**Children love having the privilege of choice. It takes the pressure out of your request and allows a child to feel in control, and thus be more willing to comply. This is a powerful tool that can be used with toddlers through teens.**

- **How many choices?** Younger children can handle two choices: Milk or juice? Sneakers or shoes? You do it or me? Walk or run? As children get older we can offer more choices: Before dinner, after dinner, or in the morning? Wear your coat, carry it, or put on a sweatshirt? Teens can be given general guidelines and rules.
- **Be specific.** If you ask, “*What do you want for breakfast?*” and your child answers “*pizza*” you’ve set yourself up for a battle. Instead offer choices or options that are all good for her, “*Do you want toast and fruit, cereal or waffles?*”
- **Use time as a choice.** Often there really is only ONE acceptable choice. You wouldn’t say, “*Do you want to go to bed tonight or tomorrow?*” You could say, “*Do you want to watch 5 more minutes of TV or 10?*” “*What do you want to do first, brush your teeth or put on your pajamas?*”
- **If your child won’t choose?** Offer a choice! (!?What??) Yes! It still works! “*Do you want to choose, or shall I choose for you?*” If your child gets stubborn, you can say, “*I see you want me to choose.*” Then follow through! For example, what if you ask your child if she wants to do her homework before dinner, after dinner or in the morning and she “*decides*” to go to bed without doing her homework. Just wake her [cheerfully] at 6:00 am with a gentle reminder that it was her choice to do it this way.
- **Giving choices ends struggles.** Offering choices is a peaceful way to encourage cooperation while avoiding the power struggles that so often erupt when a parent gives an order. When a child chooses his own plan of action he is more likely to follow through with a pleasant attitude, and learn decision-making skills that he will carry with him to adulthood. So, do you want to start offering choices today or tomorrow?

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of “Kid Cooperation and Perfect Parenting.”

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# To discipline means to teach!



## What discipline is:

Discipline is a *strong effective way to teach...*

- Positive behaviors
- Positive ways to express feelings
- Positive ways to play
- Family values
- Safety for the child, other people and things.

## What discipline is not:

Discipline is *not punishment*. Punishment may:

- Make young children feel unloved
- Make them feel they are bad
- Focus on what is wrong without teaching what is right.

## What's important to remember:

- **Your toddler is beginning to find out that she is her own person.** She may say, "No!" and "Me do it!"
- **Your toddler has a memory, but it is very short.**

He needs to repeat something over and over before it stays in his memory. He is not trying to be bad when he plays with the TV buttons after you've told him to stop. He just doesn't remember the rule yet!

- **Toddlers act without thinking.** If they see something to climb, they'll climb it... without thinking how to get down.

- **Toddlers can't plan ahead.** They can't wait. They want things NOW! This doesn't mean your toddler is greedy, selfish or bad. It's just a normal part of growing up.

## Here's the secret to teaching a toddler:

- **Help the toddler want to do what you want him to do!** For example say, "I'll bet you're not strong enough to carry your plate to the sink."
- **Teaching a toddler with love and respect will earn you two rewards.** Right now, you will have more fun and fewer messes. In the future, your child will see you as loving and caring and will want to please you.

## Smart discipline

- **Make your house safe for your toddler.** She is curious and will taste and touch everything she sees. Move things out of reach if they are dangerous or can be broken. That way you won't have to fuss or say, "No!"
- **Distract your child from something you don't want him to do.** For example, if he starts to chew on a crayon, give him a toy or cracker instead.
- **Praise your toddler again and again for doing something right.** For example, "You are growing up. You put the jello in your mouth instead of your hair."
- **Use DO rules so your toddler can learn what to do instead of what not to do.** For example, "Use your inside voice" instead of "Don't yell in the house."
- **Set routines for meals, bedtime, bath time.** Toddlers behave better when they know what to expect.
- **Make sure your correction fits the situation.** For example, if your child draws on the wall, take away her crayons for a while – and help her clean up the wall.

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# Say What You Mean Mean What You Say



*"I wish you'd get dressed."*

*"I think you should start on your report."*

*"It would be nice if you cleaned your room."*

*"Be good."*

**Fuzzy statements like these leave kids wondering exactly how they should respond. Kids interpret them at face value, which leads to battles. It helps kids cooperate when parents are very specific with their requests.**

## **Say please**

We learned that one in kindergarten! Saying please softens our request and when followed with a specific call to action it can get a kid moving. And adding a "thank you" in closing with your expectation that your request will be followed. *"Please take the trash out before dinner. Thank you."* The added benefit here is that you are modeling the behavior you want your child to learn.

## **Be specific**

When you say, *"Clean your room."* your child hears, *"Shove everything under the bed so I can't see it."* In essence, he is doing what he was told. Prevent this miscommunication by being very clear - *"Please put the toys in the toy box, and books on the shelf."* Now THAT is very clear.

## **Think**

Often we make half-hearted requests of our child, and when he doesn't respond we just drop it. Usually, this happens over little issues, and we drop it because it's not worth fighting over. The problem is, a child gets in the habit of ignoring you, on both little issues and big ones. When you take a breath, take a minute and think first, you can then be clear about your request and willing to follow through to the end.

## **Eye-to-eye**

How often do you call to your child from another room and expect her to listen? Do you then follow-up with, *"Did you hear me?"* Instead, take the time to get eye-to-eye with your child. Make a clear, specific request and ask, *"What do you need?"* When your child tells you what you said it helps her to remember. For example, your child is in the other room playing. Go to her, look her in the eye and say, *"Mara, please take the trash out before dinner. Now, what do you need to do?"* When Mara says, *"I need to take the trash out before dinner."* she has given herself clear instructions and is likely to follow through.

## **Pick your battles**

Parenting is a 24-hour a day job. If you try to deal with every issue, fix every problem and be a constant teacher and coach, you will drive yourself CRAZY! Before you open your mouth, take a minute to decide if this issue is worth a battle. If you decide it is – then win at all costs. This will prevent you from choosing the wrong battle, realizing it in midstream and backing down because it's really not important. The danger is that your child doesn't know you've changed your mind due to a better decision. He figures you changed your mind because he put up a good fight, which leads him to try again the next day and the next. Fight the important battles, and using good skill and a level head – WIN! It's good for you and best for your child.

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# Time Out!



**It's been around since dunce caps and corners. With a modern twist, Time Out can be a valuable discipline tool.**

As we go about the business of teaching our children proper behavior, there are times when emotions threaten to get out of control. When this happens, it's wise to separate yourself from your child so that you can both cool off. *Time Out* can be used as an effective, positive tool. There are three different ways to use *Time Out*, each having a different purpose.

## **1. To give the child the time and space to cool off and calm down.**

The key here is in the attitude of the parent. In advance, let your child know that when her behavior is out of control she'll be asked to go to her room. Tell her that when she is calm and under control she may join the family. How she chooses to use the time is her business, as long as it's respectful of people and property. Screaming or pounding the door is not acceptable, reading a book or other activities is fine. This is a valuable life skill that will prevent your child from "*flying off the handle*" and saying and doing things she might regret later. Never drag a child to his *Time Out*. This

robs you of the upper hand and makes you look foolish. Let him know in advance that when asked to remove himself he needs to do so immediately. If he does not, he'll be choosing to give up a privilege [one you have specified in advance], in addition to *Time Out*.

## **2. To give a parent the time and space to cool off and calm down**

There are times when we get so angry at our children that we want to scream, hit or ground them for life! This is the time to use a four-letter-word: EXIT. Make a brief statement, "*I'm so angry, I need a minute to think.*" Then go to your room or send the child to his room so that you can calm down and regroup. This will help you get yourself under control, and it provides good modeling for your children.

## **3. As a method for stopping a specific misbehavior**

This can be an excellent way to put an immediate stop to a child's action. It brings a strong message, "*This behavior is unacceptable and it will stop now.*" There are several keys:

- **Be quick.** Catch your child in the act. Delayed reactions dilute the effect.
- **Use selectively.** Use for hitting, talking back, and whining or other specific problems. Don't over-use.
- **Keep calm.** Your anger only adds fuel to the fire and changes the focus from the behavior of the child to your anger. This prevents you from being in control.
- **Stick with it.** Once you say "*Time Out*" don't back down or be talked out of it. If you decide to use *Time Out* to control hitting, for example, use it every time your child hits, even if he spends most of the day in *Time Out*! Eventually, he'll decide that it's more fun to play without hitting than to sit alone in his room.

**Time Out is one more effective discipline tool for parents. When used with other positive parenting methods, it helps you feel good about the job you are doing with your kids.**

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# Handling Resistance



**From toddlers to teens and all ages in between, children often say “no!” to whatever it is we think they should be doing. Here are some ideas for working with them.**

**1. Set clear and consistent expectations, and establish a time when you expect to have things accomplished.** *“Tina, put on your uniform, have your gear together, and be ready for me to take you to soccer practice at 3:15.”*

**2. Make sure children have the competency and skills to do what you are asking.** Take the time to walk them through the process, even if you think it is something they should know. Spell out the different parts of a job: *“Please wash the pots and pans that are in the sink, dry them and put them away on the bottom shelf of the brown cupboard.”*

**3. If you are asking them to figure out how to do something new or different, provide instruction and praise their attempt, even if the final product is not what you wanted.**

**4. Give children choices wherever possible.** *“Jeremy, for your chore today, would you rather vacuum the living room or sweep the kitchen? I will do whichever one you don't want to do.”*

**5. Don't give children a choice when there really is no choice.** When they have just ten minutes to get dressed for school, asking: *“Do you want the red shirt today or the blue one?”* makes life more complicated for all concerned.

**6. Family expectations help limit resistance.** When everyone does chores, it's harder to refuse to do your share.

**7. Build habits when children are young.** Brushing teeth, putting clothes in the hamper, picking up your dishes after a meal, when done daily, become a habit rather than a job.

**8. Don't address the attitude, just the action.** Fighting with a child because of a tone in their voice or the lack of a smile gets nowhere. Focus instead on what needs to be done.

**9. Put a value on cooperation.** Build rewards into a job. Some parents are afraid this is bribery, but there is a difference. *“If we work together to get the job done, we can have pizza tonight,”* is different than *“I will give you two dollars to pick up your room.”*

**10. Recognize that tasks and responsibilities are not always fun.** Praise children for their efforts. Thank them for their contribution to the family.

**11. Maintain a sense of humor, and try not to take things personally.**

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# Tantrums



**When children feel angry, frustrated or helpless, the result is often a tantrum. Little kids kick, scream and flop on the ground. Big kids yell and lose control. Tantrums are normal, natural and inevitable. But they aren't any fun!**

How do parents usually deal with tantrums?

- a. they give in,
- b. they yell or threaten,
- c. they spank, or often,
- d. they throw a tantrum of their own!

Having a plan in advance is the best way to deal with tantrums. Like many aspects of parenting, the more prepared you are, the better you can handle the situation, and the easier it is to keep your own anger under control.

## The Plan of Action

**Step 1: Pick a tantrum place.** Decide where all future tantrums will take place. Pick a private, small, safe room like a bedroom, bathroom or laundry room.

### **Step 2: Explain the new rule to your child at a calm and quiet time.**

*"Nathan, a 'tantrum' is when you are very angry and scream and cry and stamp your feet. From now on, when you have a tantrum we want you to do it in the bedroom with the door closed. No one will bother you while you have your tantrum. You can have as long a tantrum as you like, or may choose to read a book or play quietly. You can come out of the room when you are done."*

**Step 3: Follow Through.** When your child has a tantrum lead him or guide him to the Tantrum Place. If an older child won't go, offer a choice: "You can go or lose a privilege." Then calmly say, "You may come out when you're done." Return him to the room if he comes out early saying, "Oh, you're not done yet." You may have to do this often at first, but the tantrums will die off quickly because of the lack of attention they get.

*When it's over – it's over. Don't feel the need to lecture, teach, or moralize afterwards!*

## What about tantrums away from home?

Many children have learned to throw tantrums away from home because Mom and Dad don't enforce the rules out in public. You must bite the bullet a few times in order to put a quick end to this behavior. Take a deep breath, ignore the onlookers and follow this plan:

**Step 1: Give a choice.** "You can stop this behavior, or we can leave the store." Wait, just a moment, and then:

**Step 2: Change the location.** "I see you've decided to leave the store." At this point you have several choices, depending on the child's behavior, your schedule and your mood. You can either have a time out in the car [while you stand outside the car and ignore him] or you can go home.

*One father of a three-year-old said that with his busy schedule this would be just impossible! I pointed out that he could take the time now or live through public tantrums until his daughter was sixteen!*

*[Tantrums need an audience to be effective.]*

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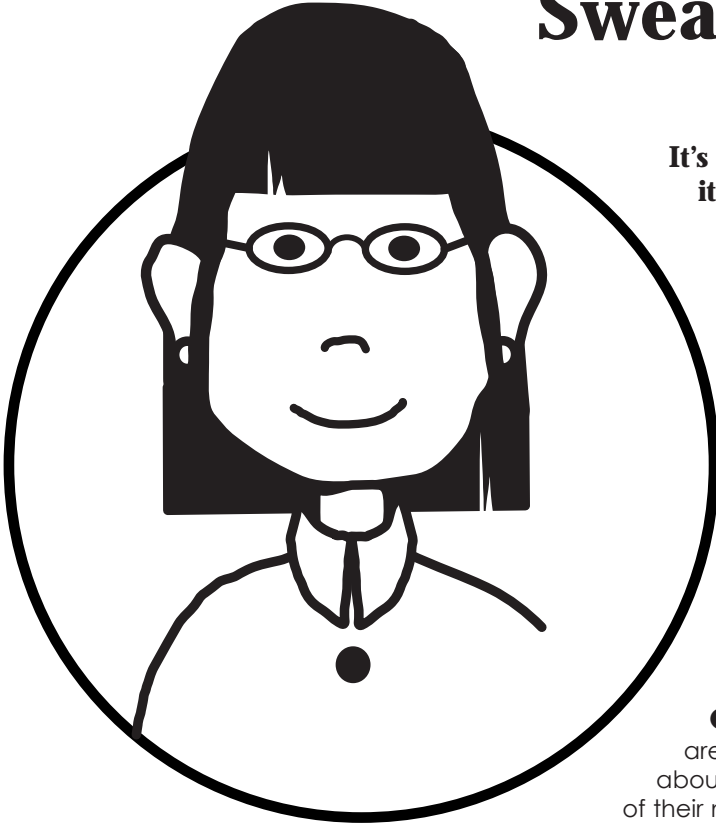
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# Swearing



## It's shocking to hear your child swear, even worse when it's directed at you. How do you stop this behavior?

It helps to know where the swearing comes from. There are several possible reasons why kids swear:

- **To feel like a grown-up.** When kids hear adults swear it's always in an attention getting tone of voice. People react. Emotions are on high. The air crackles with static. Kids try out cuss words to see if they can create the same atmosphere and get the same kind of imagined respect. Younger kids are just playing mynah bird.

- **To get attention.** Once a child uses a bad word and gets a startled and immediate response from the adults around him, he realizes what a powerful tool it can be.

- **To prove independence.** Kids are trying to prove they are separate from you, and that you don't control everything about them. Since you can't possibly control what comes out of their mouths this is an area where they may rebel.

- **To gain peer acceptance.** Kids want to be accepted by their peers. Often, swearing is seen as "cool," so cursing is just a way for a kid to try to fit in with the crowd.

- **To mimic what they see on TV or in the movies.** Kids are easily affected by their environment. If they have a "role model" who curses, they will sure enough try it themselves.

## What's the solution?

The first step is to review the reasons kids swear and determine which one is the fuel for your child's fire. Once you understand where this is coming from you can use one or more of the following tools:

- **Set calm limits.** Often, a parent's shocked response will actually encourage a child to repeat foul language. A simple, calm approach works better. "Tom, that is not a word children use. You may say, 'oh drat' instead." If the child persists, choose a quiet time to express your feelings, and set specific limits. Discuss why people swear, define what swear words are, and explain why they aren't acceptable in your family. Outline the future consequences for bad language – and follow through next time it happens.

- **Teach acceptable alternatives.** Some kids have a hard time understanding and expressing their angry feelings. Their lack of wisdom leads them to believe they are the only ones that ever feel this way and that their feelings are bad or wrong. It helps kids when we allow them their angry feelings, even as we set limits on their behavior. As an example, when a kid is crying over a punishment, how many parents offer to "Give you something to cry for"? But the kid already has a good reason to be unhappy! A better response might be, "You're welcome to be angry with me – upstairs in your bedroom with the door closed." If the child then stomps off to his room, don't yell at him for doing so. It's a healthy way for him to express his feelings. When an angry child curses at you, immediately offer an alternative, "That language is unacceptable. You may say, 'I'm so mad at you' or 'I disagree with you.'"

- **Praise good behavior.** When your child responds to anger in an appropriate way make sure you acknowledge it.

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# Schoolwork



## Help your child establish good study habits

You can do this by making a regular study time when your child is expected to do homework – say from 4 to 6 pm every day, or maybe from after dinnertime until an hour before bedtime. Make sure everyone in the household respects that time and leaves the child free to study.

Some children need the soft background noise of a radio or tapes to study, while others need quiet. The TV distracts both eyes and ears, and does not mix well with studying.

Provide the necessary supplies, and make sure they are kept all together just for homework. Nothing is more distracting than hunting for a pen or having your sisters use your notebook paper.

Take an active role in supervising homework and asking about assignments. Remember, there is a big difference between “supervising” and “doing.” If your child is having trouble, do not hesitate to offer guidance, but make sure she or he has learned the subject material.

## Set an example of respect for learning

- Ask your children questions about school and what he or she is learning. Tie it into current events or family/household activities.
- Attend school functions and activities at your child’s school. Become familiar with teachers and other parents. Use school resources.
- Make sure to attend parent/teacher conferences.
- Let your child see you that you read – newspaper, books, magazines – and not just watch TV.
- Use your local library for more than books – for story hours, getting videos, attending special activities – to help your child see that learning is a lifelong process.

## Praise your child for efforts, as well as accomplishments

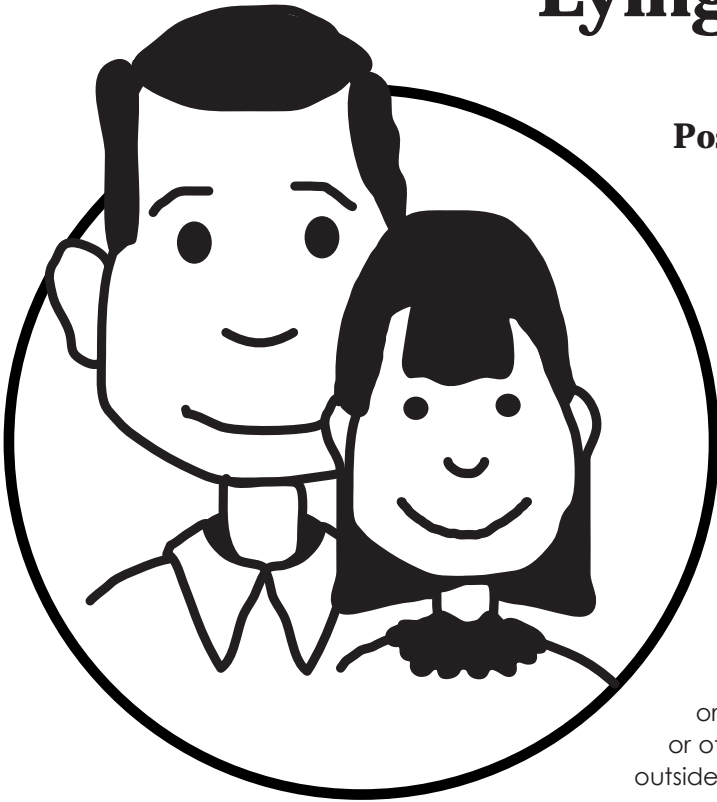
- Celebrate milestones – reading a first book, learning a times table, passing a biology exam.
- Compliment a child for spending time working hard on a project – even if it didn’t win a prize in the science fair – but always be sincere. Don’t say something is good if it is not. Just recognize the child’s efforts and hard work.

## If you feel your child is not doing his or her best

- Don’t compare one child with another, or with yourself at that age.
- Keep a positive attitude for all by encouraging and supporting your child. Threats and punishment don’t improve a child’s outlook about school.
- Work with your child’s teacher to set standards and expectations that are fair.



# Lying



## Possible reasons for this behavior

- Testing limits
- Control/power issues
- Peer pressure
- Attempting to avoid consequences
- Stress or trouble in their lives
- Seen it modeled
- Seeking attention

Most children go through incidences of lying, almost as an experimental phase. Obedience and truthfulness are values and behaviors that must be taught to children over time, so do not expect them to learn it the first time; be patient and consistent in your messages and modeling. If the behavior continues or reaches a stage that could be harmful to your child or others, it's time to take more drastic measures and seek outside help. Until then, try the strategies below.

## Responses by parent:

- **Focus on the behavior, not your child.**
- **Set non-physical consequences that “fit” the behavior [lose a privilege, require making amends].**
- **Help your child “fix” or make restitution when possible.**
- **Talk with your child about the importance of being truthful and taking responsibility [and model it yourself].**
- **Acknowledge that it is natural to want to lie to get out of trouble, but let your child know it won't help in the long run.**
- **Consider additional consequences if the lying continues.**

# Parent Magic!



**We want our children to behave. We want to keep our cool. We want a peaceful, loving family life. How do we achieve these goals? Through trial and error? Hit and miss? Luck? Unlikely. Through knowledge and skill? YES! Parents who use good skills have a magic power to create more peace in their homes. Let's examine some of the most potent magic skills:**

## **Ask helpful questions.**

The most important discipline goal we have as a parent is not to make our kids behave. Rather, it is to help our kids develop into confident, self-disciplined people. We can help children learn to listen to their "inner voice" and help them develop self-discipline by asking helpful questions. What makes this work is not just the type of questions, but the delivery: thoughtful and free from anger and criticism. When we yell, blame, and accuse, our kids focus on our anger and do not learn from the experience. When we guide our children by using helpful questions we point them in the right direction.

## **What's not helpful?**

- Why did you do that?
- What's the matter with you?
- How many times do I . . .
- Why can't you ever. . .

## **What are helpful questions?**

- How do you feel about that?
- What will you do now?
- How do you think she feels?
- How can we solve this?

After you ask the question, sit back quietly and listen. You may be delighted to see your child solving his or her own problem. Parents become frustrated with their children for not listening to them. Often listening is not the problem – understanding is the problem! Instead of saying, "Be good!" Be very specific: "Please sit still and use a quiet voice." Instead of, "This bedroom is a disaster area." It's more effective to be clear and specific, "Before lunch today, please put your clothes in the closet, books on the shelf and dishes in the kitchen."

## **Just the facts, please.**

Parents clutter their communication with unnecessary and hurtful phrases. "You always... You never... You make me... You are such a..." Make an effort to state only the facts, so instead of bellowing, "How many times do I have to tell you to turn that music down. It's too loud. Why do you always ignore me?" Try this, "John, please turn the music down, or shut it off."

## **Follow through. Pick your battles. And when you pick one – win it!**

Parents often make a request and then back off when the child becomes difficult. In the example above, if John doesn't turn down the music, how many parents would mumble, complain, yell, or nag about it? It is important in the parent-child relationship for you to win your battles. You can calmly walk into John's room, turn off his radio yourself, look him in the eye and say, "I expect you to listen to me." If John is a real stinker, you can take the radio with you and tell him he can have it back, along with another chance, tomorrow.

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# Rules: What's Fair?



**For families to function harmoniously, they need rules. Rules and limits let everyone know what is expected of them. A set of rules that works in one family may not work in another. Setting rules about safety and family unity is important.**

It is NORMAL for parents to be upset when kids break rules. It is NORMAL for children to say, "rules aren't fair because the parents always get to be the boss." Children want choices. They want some control over their lives. And parents want and need to feel in control at home. So, what's fair when it comes to rules?

- **Rules about safety are needed.** Examples are: "No playing in the street;" or "No biting your sister;" or "No playing with matches." The major goal of safety rules is to keep kids from harm.

- **Rules about bedtime and mealtime are important.**

Kids need a regular routine. Children need adequate sleep to feel and be their best. Parents need time alone in the evening.

Kids need proper nutrition to thrive and grow. Parents and kids feel better when mealtimes are regular and pleasant. While it is vital to have limits and rules about bedtime and meal times, it's also important to give children some choices about bedtime and meals.

- **Rules having to do with respect and appreciation are important and fair.** Examples are, "If you're going to be more than 15 minutes late, call home;" "Before you can spend the money Grandma sent you, you need to write her a thank you note."

**The goal of setting limits when kids are young is for them to grow up learning self-discipline. As children grow older they are able to take more control over and responsibility for their lives.**

**Too many rules can lead to conflict between parents and children.** Parents have to "pick" the things which are important enough to have rules about. Examples of things that parents might want to "let go of" and let kids choose, include what to wear, whether to eat meat or veggies first, and how to style their hair.

**Children are more likely to follow rules if they help create the family rules.** Let them share in making decisions about things like bedtime, menus, television time and chores. Let them also help decide what will happen [consequences] if rules are broken.

**Discuss rules with your children. Hug and praise your children for helping you set and follow family rules.**

# Hugging



## **Notice:**

*The Surgeon General has determined that hugging is good for your health.*

## **Hugging is practically perfect**

no moveable parts,  
no batteries to wear out,  
no periodic check ups,  
low energy consumption,  
high-energy yield,  
inflation proof,  
non-fattening,  
no monthly payments,  
no insurance requirements,  
theft proof,  
non-taxable,  
non-polluting,  
and of course,  
fully returnable.

## **Hugging is all natural**

organic,  
naturally sweet,  
no pesticides,  
no preservatives,  
no artificial ingredients,  
100% wholesome.

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*Sharing Ideas. Sharing Support.*

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