

Helpful Tips to Help Children Make Wise Choices

By Naomi Brower & Kyle Barth (WSU Intern)



Parenting can be very difficult at times, especially when children make decisions that parents disagree with. If a child makes an unwise choice, it doesn't mean the parent is a failure or the child will continue making unhealthy choices. The following are tips for parents on how to successfully help their children make smart decisions.

- The center of effective parenting is love. Fathers and mothers both have what it takes to be effective parents.
- Make the time you spend with your children count. For example, read books with them. This can also provide a way to talk about difficult topics.
- Allow your children to learn from their mistakes when the “prices” are affordable. Provide opportunities for them to make choices. Avoid protecting your children from natural consequences; allow them to learn from their choices.
- Teach your children how to set goals and solve problems instead of doing it for them. Set limits on behavior while helping them find solutions.
- Be honest and specific when praising and encouraging your child.
- Be aware of your children’s emotions, and help them label their emotions. Avoid telling your child how he or she should feel.
- Keep calm if your child comes to you with a serious problem. Be supportive, empathetic and let them learn from their choices.
- Be aware of your own emotions and recognize when you need to take a time out. Remember, it is okay to take time for yourself.
- Model the actions and behaviors you expect from your child.
- Responsibility cannot be taught; it must be “caught” by providing opportunities for children to be responsible.
- Use thinking words instead of fighting words. Fighting words: “Don’t talk to me like that.” Thinking words: “You sound upset. I will happily listen to you when your voice is calm.”
- Avoid “siding with the enemy” and communicate understanding.
- Offer your child choices. For example: “Bob would

you rather sit in your chair, or would you like me to help you sit in your chair?" Don't offer a choice to your child you are not willing to follow through on.

- Mean what you say and say what you mean.
- Discipline does not always need to occur in the moment. It's okay to tell your child why the choice they made was wrong and let him or her know you need time to think about the best consequence.
- It takes a village along with parents to raise a child. Remember to utilize trusted resources such as community organizations or members, religious organizations or members, as well as family and friends.
- Remember, no parent is perfect, even those who appear to be perfect.

References:

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Naomi Brower is an Extension associate professor for Utah State University. She has a master's degree in family and human development from Utah State University. Often called the relationship guru by friends, Naomi is passionate about helping others improve the quality of their lives through creating and strengthening their relationships with others.