

Seven Tips for Raising Responsible Children



As a parent, what would you say is your top goal for your children?

A common response is that parents want to help their children grow into responsible adults. This may include smaller goals such as helping them have the skills necessary to be productive members of society and helping them be healthy, happy and able to take care of themselves. To encourage and help direct parents toward achieving this goal, Cornell University Extension, Jefferson County, has created a parent guide that identifies and breaks down seven parenting tips that are worth considering.

1. Don't do things for your children that they can do for themselves.

Even young children can help with chores and get themselves dressed in the morning. Resist the urge to take over and solve all your child's problems. Instead, help children learn to help themselves.

2. Be clear and consistent about your expectations.

Make sure your children understand the rules of the household. Be consistent with your messages. If the rule is that children must finish homework before watching TV, then stick with it. Give children advance notice if you expect certain behavior. This is helpful when taking them to the grocery store or on a family vacation, for example.

3. Teach skills and give positive feedback.

Don't just tell your child what to do – include how to do it. For example, a young child may be told to clean up his or her toys, but showing what you mean usually works best. Older children may benefit from written step-by-step instructions. For example, to clean the bathroom they may need to know: spray down the shower walls and floor with "X" cleaner, leave for 5 minutes and then rinse with warm water and use a squeegee to dry. Give positive and specific feedback for a task or assignment done well. For example: "I love the way you folded your clothes so neatly before putting them in the drawer."

4. Create a home that helps children act responsibly.

Work with children to organize their space and belongings. This might mean providing bins and shelves they can reach. Make sure children know where to find cleaning supplies to do their chores and clean up spills. Set up an area for homework that is comfortable, well-lit and that minimizes distractions.

5. Teach children that mistakes are an opportunity to learn.

Everybody makes mistakes. Try not to over-react. Instead, view mistakes as a time to make new plans and take better actions in the future.

6. Let children experience the natural consequences

of their behavior. When children don't act responsibly, don't be a "helicopter" parent who always rushes in to fix the mistake – unless it is dangerous to their personal safety. Instead, let children experience the results of their actions.

7. Be a positive role model.

Speak positively about your work and chores. Don't complain about all you have to do. Instead, take pride in the things you do well.

When you make a mistake, admit it, then show how you will correct it.

These tips come from the publication found at: <http://ccejefferson.org/parenting> under Resources for You, Raising Responsible Children.

A few final take-aways for parents include:

- *Children do best when they know what to expect.

- *Letting children know when they do well encourages responsible behavior.

- *Remember that you are in charge of your home.

- *Keep in mind that when children "choose" their behavior, they must also choose the consequences.

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