



Ways to Help Children Become Responsible

- **Be a responsible person:** Set an example. Be on time. Speak respectfully to others. Accept the blame when you make mistakes. Talk about decisions you make.
- **Encourage children to make choices and solve problems:** “Do you want to wear the blue sweater or red shirt?” “You both want to play with the blocks, how can you work this out?”
- **State your expectations and rules clearly and positively:** Tell children what you want them to do. Be specific, “Put the truck on the shelf”, rather than “clean up this mess.”
- **Let children experience consequences:** Help children recognize that actions bring results, both positive and negative. Don’t jump to bail them out when consequences are safe.
- **Let children know you believe in them and think they can do it:** Children are more likely to live up to our expectations.

Reference: Deborah McClellan, MS University of Illinois Extension

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March

Family Fun--Families Growing Together



Building Family Strength of Communication

Strong families communicate. They talk. They share themselves. They share their feelings, hopes, dreams, fears, joys, sorrows, experiences, growth, and needs. They take the time to listen and respond to what others have to say. There are a number of things that can improve family communication.



Make time to talk. It is especially important to talk about feelings. You may decide to turn off the TV so the family can talk. Talk about feelings and experiences while driving in the car, while sharing household chores, or before bedtime.

You might try playing a talking game. Write down on small pieces of paper questions about topics important to your family. Questions might range from “What age would you like to be and why?” and “What animal would you like to be?” to more serious questions like “Do you think it is ever all right to tell a lie?”

Make the questions appropriate for the ages of the family members. Place the questions in a box and have each person draw out a sheet of paper and respond to the question. This game can be played at dinnertime or during special times set aside for talking.

When your family has a problem, make suggestions that are kind and helpful. Try to suggest actions that you or others could take to improve the situation or solve the problem. If you criticize another person’s actions without helping that person come up with an alternative, he or she may feel frustrated and helpless.

Be a good listener. Listening to what others say and feel is one of the most powerful ways of showing love. To be good listeners we often must set aside our lectures and really try to understand from the point of view of the other person. The goal is simply to hear, understand, and accept the other person’s feelings and views.

Reference: Alabama Cooperative Extension Service

Critical Parenting Practices

You can strengthen your parenting skills through learning and experience. Consider first, what influences you as a parent. Your temperament, your child's temperament, your childhood experiences, your relationship with your mate and your own parents, your family and work situation, your community and your support networks all can affect your parenting.

To become the best parent possible, you need to learn about:

- **Caring** for yourself
- **Understanding** yourself and your child(ren) at various stages
- **Nurturing** your child and your relationships
- **Guiding** your child through each life stage
- **Motivating** your child to do his or her best
- **Advocating** for your child's best interests

Note: This month I have included two more critical parenting practices. Next month's newsletter will include the last two practices.



Nurturance

Nurturing is very important to children. Nurtured children usually grow up to be competent and healthy adults. Children have different needs and ways they need to be nurtured. When you meet your child's needs by building a positive relationship and by sending consistent messages of love and support, then you are an effective nurturer.

To develop your nurturing skills, learn comfortable ways to express love, build your child's hope and self-respect, learn to listen and hear your child's hope and self-respect, learn to listen and hear your child's feelings and ideas, teach kindness, provide for your child's nutrition, shelter, clothing, health, and safety needs, celebrate life, and help your child feel connected to his or her family history and cultural heritage.

Guidance

Guidance means helping your child develop his or her personal strengths. You do this by expressing steady but warm authority. You face a difficult balancing act with authority, using your power to identify, introduce, and enforce reasonable limits while gradually giving freedom to your child by encouraging him or her to be more responsible. Use good judgments to set limits that protect your child and show concern for the welfare of others.

Children need guidance and structure. They must be taught to engage in meaningful activities and use their time in a positive way. Their growth as individuals depends on practice making choices and facing the consequences of their own decisions.

To develop your skills in providing guidance, you must model how you want your child to act. Set reasonable limits and give him or her opportunities to learn responsibilities. Choose appropriate opportunities, teach problem-solving skills, and monitor your child's activities with other children and adults.

Reference: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service