

# Parenting Positively October 2019

## Five “Dos” for Effective parenting

- Consider who your child is...their temperament, age, developmental level.
- Be a Role Model. Remember you're always on stage. Behave how you want your child to behave. You are modeling for your child how to deal with conflict.
- Ask for help, from fellow parents, teachers and counselors, family members and sometimes even from your child.
- Think about how you speak (your tone, using “when” not “if” statements, commands not requests, humor and compassion).
- Pick your spot: **Know what you are going to say. If you are going to say yes, say "yes" the first time they ask. If you're going to say no, say “no” and stick to it. Don't let your child learn that you can be worn down into permitting a forbidden behavior.**

## 4 Key Parenting Skills

### Active Listening

It's easy to miss out on the important things when you are busy getting your family's dinner on the table, helping with homework or making sure your child has what they need for their extra-curricular activity. At times, children are telling us things and we just go through the motions of hearing, but we're not really listening. When this occurs, we can miss little cues that tell us how they are doing and how they are feeling.

*Try using these tips to help you get the best out of a conversation with your family and will build bridges to better communication:*

1. *Set up some one on one time with each of your children, whether they are helping you make dinner, set the table etc.*
2. *Focus on them, ask them how their day was, ask open ended questions, make sure they know you are interested on what they have to say.*
3. *Try not to interrupt if they are telling you a story about some behavior you don't really agree with, try to ask questions that are not judgmental, for example; “why do you think you reacted that way?” “how did you feel after you had that reaction?” help them sort through the emotions and come up with their own conclusions.*
4. *Put yourself in their position, try to listen and not over analyze what they are saying, remember they are talking to you, they want to trust you with their stories and feelings.*
5. *Maybe you can share an experience where something similar has happened to you, and you can offer some comfort.*
6. *Restate parts of the story, so your child knows you are listening and this also helps you better understand the context of the story.*
7. *Repeat with each child, sometimes having these conversations as a group may have some family members feel left out and not heard.*

### Giving Effective Instructions or Commands

Effective instructions or commands are specific and direct. They are given face-to-face, and after giving them, the parent remains in charge. Ineffective commands are broad, vague, yelled from another room, and cede control to the child. Rather than asking your child to tidy up the kitchen, tell them to put their dishes in the dishwasher. It is important to make sure that you have your child's attention when you give the command. Ineffective commands are phrased as a question: “Do you want to take out the garbage?” What do you do when your child says no? You are then stuck, having ceded power to your child.

- Be direct
- Be in the same place where you can see each other
- Use clear and specific commands
- Give age-appropriate instructions
- Give instructions one at a time
- Keep explanations simple
- Give kids time to process

### Pick Your Spot

It is important to know your limits and stick to them. Typically, your child will push those limits in predictable ways in routine situations. Ahead of time - before you get into one of those situations - know what your limit is going to be.

The first step is to identify what is important to you – what are your values? Is it more important to you that your child has lots of after school activities, or is it more important that homework is done? Should homework be done as soon as school is over, or is time outside with friends more important? Is it more important to you that your house be clean or that you

## COPE Center Parenting Workshop Pocket Reference

have more family time? Is it more important that your child plays sports or that you have a home cooked meal every night? Once you have thought about what is more important to you in a particular situation, you'll be clear on what your next steps are.

Then, ask yourself what are your boundaries or limits? What behavior matters most to you and what expectations are age appropriate. It is important to remain firm and consistent in maintaining an established limit. If you are going to set a limit for the amount of screen time your child can have after school, you need to be ready to consistently enforce that limit. For your child to learn that there are limits, you, your partner, spouse (or another caregiver) all have to deliver the same message.

### Giving Meaningful Consequences

When giving consequences it's important to be fair, firm and consistent. Try to give the consequence in a friendly manner; you are enforcing consequences for a behavior or action. Ideally, we want to reinforce desired behaviors in order to prevent undesired ones. You want to support the child being good much more than you want to punish an undesired behavior. If you see your child playing nicely with a younger sibling, praise them for doing so and reinforce the good behavior. Don't wait for them to lash out when their younger sibling disrupts their play and then give a consequence such as a time out.

Communicate clear rules and expectations so your child know what to expect in advance. In all cases, you want to name the behavior to help make things clear, both in the moment and later, when you're talking about what happened. It's also helpful to have a menu of reasonable consequences ready in advance so that you're not scrambling at the last moment to come up with something and then possibly overreacting. Also remember to keep your expectations and consequences age-appropriate.

### **Self-Care**

Where are your stress points? If you identify these ahead of time it will be easier for you to be pro-active rather than reactive. Know when to put yourself into your own "time out". You will also be modelling healthy self-care for your child. You can let your family know that you need to take a break. Try saying: "I need a break right now" and by example show them how to self-calm., and then take a few minutes for yourself (if you have a younger child, first make sure that your child is in a safe place), whether you need to take a few deep breaths, step outside, step into another room, or call a friend. Know what you need to do for yourself to hit the reset button. If the situation allows, take another minute to do your calming exercise together with your child.

Another helpful self-care tool is that of mindfulness. The essence of mindfulness is to shift gears away from action and to shift to non-judgmental observation. The meditations, techniques and exercises are all designed to get you to hit the mental pause button and turn off trying to solve a problem, figuring out how to accomplish something, or thinking critically about something that has happened or you have done. Instead, you focus on becoming aware of simply being, without judging yourself. By focusing on the physical sensation of what you are doing in the moment, you are training your brain and body to awaken to a place where you can remember that you are not your thoughts. While there are many resources available to integrate mindful practices into your daily routine, mindfulness can be worked in any moment, by paying attention to your breath or focusing on some other physical sensation.

### **Additional Resources**

A road map for clarifying your own family's values: Values Matter: Using Your Values to Raise Caring, Responsible, Resilient Children <http://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/indulgence-values/values-matter-using-your-values-to-raise-caring-responsible-resilient-children-what-are-values/>

Making Rules and Setting Limits: <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/mental-health-matters/social-and-emotional-learning/managing-behaviour-making-rules>

How to Give Kids Effective Instruction: <https://childmind.org/article/how-to-give-kids-effective-instructions/>

Giving Consequences <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/behaviour/rules-consequences/consequences>

Simple chart for giving good directions: <https://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/TF-%20CBT/pages/7%20Positive%20Parenting/Client%20Handouts/Parenting%20Skills/Giving%20Good%20Directions.pdf>

Be Direct: Improving Compliance, Giving Effective Commands [https://pcit.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/48\\_BEDIRECTrevised.pdf](https://pcit.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/48_BEDIRECTrevised.pdf)

Family meetings: <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/healthy-communication/holding-family-meetings/>

**Find the slides from today's workshop, today's handout as well as links to additional parenting resources at <http://www.supportingparentsessexnj.org/>.**