



## TIPS FOR PARENTS

### Basic Parenting Tips

- Say "no" when it's necessary.
- Don't expect your child to be your friend and to love you, and don't try to "buy" either of those precious commodities.
- Earn their friendship and love like one would with any other person.
- Stop demanding perfection.
- Forgive more often.
- Show respect for who you are speaking to (both sides).
- Understand that most family members love one another and fights are mostly misunderstandings.
- Understand that your family can hurt you more than anyone else, grieve, chill, and then talk it through...fully engaging grace and your brain. Peace.
- Treat kids as you would like to be treated.
- Never lie to your child. They will always figure it out and then how can they trust you?
- Teach your kids basic awareness of using technology and the internet. Advise them on the do's and don'ts of communicating with strangers on the internet.
- Don't expect little children to be adults. Let them be children.
- Allow your child to decline hugging or touching other people if they don't want to. This will teach your child that she has control over her body, that she can say, "no" when she feels uncomfortable.
- Teach your child to respect other children's and adult's physical boundaries.
- Praising your child for hard work will teach them the value of hard work.
- Nurture your children's interest.
- Teach your children how to handle rejection. Emphasize that rejection is not a reflection of their self-worth.
- Be aware of how much time your child is spending on the internet. Set clear boundaries and standards for what they do on the internet and for how long they can spend online.

### How to Improve Communication with Your Children

- A relationship is always more important than an issue.
- Communication is key. Parents need to keep in mind that listening is a skill so it is important to hear your children out before rendering judgment or an opinion.
- Tell your daughter that she's great because of what she does and not because of how she looks.
- Tell your daughter that it's okay to feel proud of her accomplishments.
- Tell your daughter that it isn't bad to play in the mud, hold a snake, or get sweaty.
- Tell your children that it's okay to get angry and to express it in a healthy way; without aggression.
- Tell your children that you'll assist their efforts in leadership by offering to help raise funds, driving them to and from meetings, and pitching in on letter-writing campaigns.

- Tell your children they should gather as much information as they can from as many reliable sources before they make important decisions.
- Tell your daughter that it is never her responsibility to make other people feel happy, loved, or secure, and that saying no is always an option.
- Tell your children to think in terms of nutrition, health, and strength and to banish the word can't from their vocabularies; and tell them you will do the same!
- Tell your children that you will listen to them and talk with them no matter what the topic, worry, or concern and that nothing they do will make you stop loving them.
- Tell your children they are beautiful, even if they don't look like the models in advertisements or celebrities in movies.
- Bring up tough subjects in a way that is not an accusation. Want to talk about safe sex? Watch a movie that raises the theme and discuss the characters in the movie or TV show instead of your child's behavior. You will get your message across without making him/her defensive and – most importantly – show your kids – through not being embarrassed or prudish -- that you are someone they can talk to about these issues.
- Eat a meal together every day if you are able. It is a great way to connect with your children.
- Look for teachable moments instead of sitting down and having serious, awkward conversations with your kids. They are everywhere: TV, the news, celebrities, the behavior of other people you know. Talk about right and wrong, relationship choices, sex, alcohol, what mistakes characters in movies made and how they can be avoided, what you think the right response to a bad situation is, and everything else this way. Kids are much more willing to talk about these matters when you couch them in terms that don't embarrass them by making it about their own behavior. Sometimes, of course, you need to talk about things they have done. But you can convey a lot of lessons through the bad behavior of other fictional or real people.
- Tell your kids you love them and give them a hug every day. It is especially important to spend one-on-one time with each of your children to let them know that they are important as individuals.

### **Do's and Don'ts for Parenting Teens**

- Don't say you'll be glad when your child is 18 and can get out of your house or that they have to be out when they turn 18 because when teens hear that, they feel they can leave prior to 18 since they are only tolerated until then.
- Pick your battles. Not everything matters. Let them have freedom with some things (like dying hair - it can be changed!), but not with the important stuff - dating, internet use, drugs, alcohol, drinking and driving, etc.
- Don't use SHAME. Avoid all comments or gestures that invoke shame...like looks of disapproval or comments like "how can you say that or think that?" You can disagree with a teen or any child but do not turn your disagreement into a message that says "you are shameful for having that thought or that opinion" which also translates into you are a bad person for thinking that way.
- Dealing with the "knows everything" teen...Don't get hooked...They are not a finished product and their brain hasn't finished developing. Their "know everything" behavior is an effort to gain control of a churning inner world as they transition to adulthood.
- When it's time to talk with teens about a tough or sensitive topic, it is important to share some of your personal experiences, but not to overshare.
- If any family member seeks counseling, the entire family should participate.
- Tell your child about the mistakes you've made and what you wish you had done differently.
- It is your job to teach your child how to live life as a responsible and self-sufficient adult. They should and will grow up and start living their life. You should support them in this transition.
- Stop nagging. When you continually harp on every little misdeed, teens tune you out. Better to pick two or three important issues, and ask them, "How can we solve this together?"
- Don't do chores or clean-up for them. It's tempting to break down and do it yourself, but the only thing you're teaching your teen is that you really don't think he's responsible or capable.

- Stick to consequences. If you don't, kids know that your words are meaningless.
- Skip the lectures. Actions, not words, mean more to teenagers. If you say you're going to take away video games (or the car keys) for a week, just do it – don't keep talking about it.
- Don't dole out consequences in the heat of an argument. Wait till you've both cooled down instead.
- Validate your teen's point of view. Sometimes kids just want to know that you hear what they say, even if you don't agree.
- Collaborate on rules. Your teen is more likely to comply with rules she helped set up.
- Make eye contact. Your teen is more likely to feel like he's being spoken to – rather than spoken at – if you are directly facing him.
- Make the consequences something you can live with. For example, it's more effective to take away her iPad or hair products than to not allow her to go to the Homecoming dance, as you may not want to follow through on taking that opportunity away from your teen.
- Let your teen know you are disappointed in his behavior, but you will never stop loving him.
- Teens are going to make mistakes. It's a part of the process of growing up. Let them know you will still be there when they stumble and fall.
- If you have set an expectation or a consequence for misbehavior, follow through so that your child understands that her behavior makes a real difference.

## **How to Handle Bullying**

- If your child tells you or shows signs of being bullied, don't ignore it and hope it goes away.
- Give your child self-esteem boosts and make sure you contact the school.
- Counseling is a must.
- Have the "cyber bullying" conversation.
- As you open the subject for discussion, let your child know that it's fine to use phones and computers and to be online with friends, but that you also want him to be safe from cyber bullying.
- Explain that if something hurtful is communicated online, it counts as bullying, and that it is important that you know about it.
- If your child does not use social networking sites or other technology, but you are worried that she may be a target of cyber bullying, consider seeking help from your child's peers.
- Ask a neighbor or someone you trust to watch out for any hurtful messages posted about your child so that you will be aware if cyber bullying is occurring.
- Set cyber safety rules. You set safety rules for your child in the physical world. Do the same in your child's cyber world.
- Remind your children that they never really know who is on the other end of cyber communication. It could be the person they think it is, but because they cannot see that person, they should always proceed with caution in their exchanges.
- Know what your children are doing online. Privacy is important, but safety is more important. As a parent, you have a responsibility to know what your children are doing online.
- Establish rules about your access to your children's cell phones, text history, social networking sites, and other computer accounts that they may use for posting information.
- Make decisions about passwords, how often you will check the accounts, and how inappropriate information will be handled.
- Keep your child's computer in an open spot, such as the family room, where you can supervise your child's online activity.
- Decide if there will be limits on access to using technology to communicate with peers, such as no computer or texting after 9 p.m., during mealtimes, or until homework is done.
- If you do discover that your child is being cyber bullied, document it by printing the e-mails or webpages, saving electronic copies, and contacting your child's school.

- Save the URLs of the location where the bullying occurred.
- Document it by printing the e-mails or webpages. This is helpful as sometimes the information is deleted
- Determine your point of contact at the school for reporting cyber bullying.
- Provide copies of the URLs or printouts to your child's school.
- Document your correspondence with the school and record the response.
- If your child is being bullied at school, thank your child for telling you and tell your child that the bullying is not her fault.
- Talk with your child about the specifics of the situation and ask:
  - Who is doing the bullying?
  - What happened? Was it
  - Verbal bullying?
  - Physical bullying?
  - Cyber bullying? (Meet directly with the principal if this is the case.)
  - What days and times were you bullied?
  - Where did the bullying take place?
  - Also find out how your child responded to the bullying and if other children or adults might have observed the bullying. Does your child know the names of these people? Keep a written record of this information.
- Practice possible ways for your child to respond to bullying.
  - Tell a school staff (teacher, principal, and other staff).
- Support your child when they come to you with issues. You are his ally.
- Don't assume that because your kids know more about cyberspace than you do that they don't need your help with it. There is an enormous amount of life – with all its dangers and temptations – happening online and kids are young and need an adult they trust to help them navigate it all. The technical part is not the important part. Get them to teach you in order to open a dialogue. And then stay connected to them in every outlet that you can.
- Talk to kids about understanding the difference between a stranger and a friend. This has gotten very complicated in cyberspace and kids cannot be expected to handle this perfectly. Don't assume they are 'bad' if they make a few mistakes. Mistakes can be good teachers. But they need someone watching their backs and pointing out suspicious behavior.
- There are some very serious red flags when it comes to strangers online that kids should be aware of in case they find a social connection that they aren't sharing with you. If, for example, an online friend – even one they may have met in person – starts asking them to run away and leave a runaway note. This is a common practice among predators and anyone suggesting it is trying to avoid an Amber alert. The law reacts very differently when a kid leaves a runaway note and predators know this. Tell your kids about this suspect behavior – dark though it is – and arm them to get suspicious when some sweet talker may not be what he seems.