



Positive Parenting...

An educational library offered by Allen County Children Services.

Why is the baby crying again?

Why is my two-year-old always saying no?

Why does my nine-year-old stomp up the stairs when she gets mad?

Why can't my son just do his chores without a hassle?

Why does my 15-year-old have to argue about everything?

Do any of these questions sound familiar? If you've been asking yourself these questions, you're not alone! The parenting challenge isn't necessarily just having children, it's how to live with children everyday in a positive way.

The truth is most of the behaviors that parents find troubling are normal for the child's age and their stages of development. Children are just trying new experiences and behaviors along the pathway to adulthood. The secret to positive parenting is understanding these stages and the behaviors associated with them.

The next step is learning how to deal with misbehavior effectively and maintaining a healthy, happy family life. Positive Parenting is a service provided by Allen County Children Services to assist parents in their efforts to help their children develop high self-esteem, self-control and responsibility. Positive Parenting consists of ten information pages dealing with child development, discipline, stress management and parenting skills.

- **What to Expect: Birth to Two**
- **What to Expect: Three to Five**
- **What to Expect: Six to Nine**
- **What to Expect: Ten to Eighteen**
- **Redirecting Bad Behavior**
- **Praise and Encouragement**
- **Choices and Consequences**
- **Time-Out**
- **Building Responsibility in Children**
- **Stress and Anger**
- **Help! My Child is a Teenager**

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CHILDREN AGE BIRTH TO TWO

Birth to two months

- Infants are aware of light and sound,
- Respond to human voice; by two months they smile and coo,
- Track objects with their eyes and by turning their head,
- Sleep from 18-20 hours a day; are awake more each day,
- Eat every 2-4 hours.

Helpful hints

- Pick babies up when they cry. You will not spoil them.
- Sleep when babies sleep to ensure your self enough rest.
- Keep babies awake more during the day if they get days and nights mixed up.
- Play with babies as you feed, change and bathe them to encourage development.
- Never prop bottles. Holding babies and talking to them as they are fed helps babies and parents to bond and encourages language development.

3-6 months

- Babies begin to roll over and get bored in one spot,
- Begin to reach for objects and scoot around,
- Recognize caregivers and love to play peek-a-boo,
- Awake more during the day,
- Can become "colicky."

Helpful hints

- Supervise babies closely to prevent accidents.
- Move babies with you from room to room; talk to them to relieve boredom and build language skills,
- Provide bright colorful, safe toys to help babies develop new skills, Comfort babies when they cry and spend a short time away from babies to relieve stress,
- Discuss colic with babies' doctor,
- Baby proof all rooms and the garage.

6-12 months

- Babies crawl, pull up on furniture, travel and walk,
- Become "stranger shy,"
- Love to put objects in containers and take them out,
- Begin to get teeth,
- Love to explore.

Helpful hints

- Baby proof your home,
- Give babies safe "chew" toys to help with teething,
- Begin to let babies fuss a little at bedtime, in their cribs, to help them learn some coping skills,
- Develop bedtime, mealtime and bath time routines to help babies feel safe and cooperative,
- Supervise babies closely.

1-2 years

- Babies love to explore everything,

- Temper tantrums begin around 18 months,
- No becomes a favorite word,
- Become fussy eaters.

Helpful hints

- Provide lots of safe places to explore,
- Provide a variety of safe objects to play with and many opportunities to learn,
- Ignore temper tantrums as long as toddler is safe,
- Allow some no's; children need to be allowed an opinion and some independence; use redirection to gain cooperation,
- Provide nutritious food and snacks; several small meals a day work better than three large ones,
- Do not force eating, and limit sweets.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CHILDREN AGE THREE TO FIVE

Three Year Olds

- Want to do everything themselves! **Don't help me!**,
- Fantasize and love to play "pretend",
- Whine in order to get their way,
- Can develop fears of ghosts, animals and monsters,
- Can begin having nightmares.
- Always want to know "Why?"

Helpful Hints

- Provide play objects that encourage pretend play.
- Allow extra time to get ready to go places so three year olds can do as much self dressing as possible. Let them try before helping out.
- Ignore whining for as long as it lasts. Immediately praise "regular" voice.
- Respect fears and reassure preschoolers.
- Tell bedtime stories with three year olds as brave heroes to combat nightmares. Always comfort, reassure children after a nightmare.
- Answer "why" questions as completely and patiently as possible.
- When three year olds have asked too many "why" questions ask them to tell you what they think the answers are.

Four to Six Year Olds

- Can be very bossy,
- Can refuse to cooperate and become angry if challenged,
- Repeat shocking words or stories,
- Exhibit out of bounds behavior such as hitting, kicking, throwing toys,
- Can refuse to share or take turns.

Helpful Hints

- Use **Time Out** for aggressive, uncooperative behaviors.

- Use choices and consequences to help gain cooperation.
- Ignore the use of shocking language when possible, or use **Time Out**.
- Encourage sharing and taking turns. Praise all positive behaviors quickly and often.
- Use redirection to focus energies and attention on positive activities.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CHILDREN AGE 6 TO 9

Six Year Olds

- Can be bossy, energetic and mouthy,
- Parents may hear, "**You can't tell me what to do!**",
- Can be moody; angry one minute, happy the next,
- Can bend the rules of games in order to win.

Seven Year Olds

- Can complain of having no friends and feeling unloved,
- May whine frequently,
- Show increased interest in helping around the house.

Eight Year Olds

- Can be hardworking and energetic,
- Accomplishments are very important,
- Can be pleasant, out going and considerate.

Nine Year Olds

- Hormones begin to change for girls and can cause moodiness and irritability,
- Can have sudden temper flare ups, including stomping and slamming doors,
- Sibling rivalry becomes a problem, Boys may become physically aggressive,
- Can be very demanding of parental attention,
- Boys may resist bathing and hygiene.

Helpful Hints

- Keep your sense of humor!
- Ignore irritating, attention getting behavior.
- Notice and praise all positive efforts and behaviors.
- Use choices and consequences to deal with back talk and lack of cooperation.
- Help school age children focus on their strengths and find a positive activity in which to succeed.
- Spend a little time every week alone with each child to focus positive attention on the child and to help prevent sibling rivalry.
- Provide time and space for homework.
- Provide plenty of supervision, encouragement and love.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CHILDREN AGE 10 TO 18

Ten to Eleven Year Olds

- Take pride in family and cultural identity,
- Bodies beginning to develop rapidly,
- Can be very moody, mouthy and uncooperative,
- May become "allergic" to household chores,
- Can really test rules, especially about homework.

Helpful Hints

- Set rules and limits on behavior and apply them firmly and consistently.
- Provide a quiet place and set a time for homework every day. Provide supervision and encouragement.
- Use choices and consequences to gain cooperation.
- Notice and praise all positive behaviors.

Twelve to Fourteen Year Olds

- Can be happier, more self confident,
- Can be moody, Boys and girls bodies begin to mature,
- Tremendous growth spurts are accompanied by large appetites,
- Beginning to form identity as young women and men; appearance becomes very important; grooming may take hours!

Helpful Hints

- Listen respectfully when teenagers talk about the changes they are experiencing.
- Respect teenagers dignity and privacy.
- Be available to talk with teenagers about the facts; do not lecture or preach.
- Provide supervision and healthy activities for teens to assist them in forming a positive self image.
- Use choices and consequences to help teens learn responsibility and deal with teens misbehavior.

Fifteen to Eighteen Year Olds

- Teenagers begin to demand all of the privileges of adults,
- Some teens argue about everything,
- The privilege of driving can lead to some high-risk behaviors,
- Hormones are flowing at an all time high,
- Fifteen and sixteen year olds may have temper tantrums; they talk loud and fast!

Helpful Hints

- Set rules and limits. Enforce rules firmly and fairly.
- Use choices and consequences to deal with misbehavior.
- Ignore temper tantrums as long as the child and others are safe.
- Provide supervision. Encourage teens to talk and then listen, without interrupting, judging or giving unsolicited advice.

- Praise good decisions and good behavior. Tell teens often that you love them.

REDIRECTING BAD BEHAVIOR

Living with children is always a challenge. In the course of a day, children do a lot of exploring and testing. This is how children learn. Sometimes children break rules while testing out the world. During these times, many parents find it helpful to redirect children's behavior.

Redirection is a method of distracting a child's attention from negative or dangerous behaviors and refocusing their attention on a positive activity. Redirection means giving children something positive or good to do, instead of something bad.

Examples:

Infants

- Place a baby in a playpen with infant toys when he/she is interfering with an older child's play.
- Move an infant to a new location or position when he/she become fussy.
- Give your baby a new toy or teething biscuit when he/she has played "drop it" one too many times.

Toddlers

- Give him/her a new toy to replace the one taken from a brother or sister.
- Take him/her to a different room and a new activity when he/she tries to play with the light cord.
- Have him/her color or play with Play-Dough when he/she argues with the other children.

School Age Children

- Encourage children to play puzzles, games, etc., when they are bored and bickering.
- Ask your child to get simple items for you at the grocery store.
- Allow children to choose an activity of choice.
- Sports, school activities and artistic activities keep children and adolescents busy and out of trouble. When children are doing positive things, there is little time for them to get into trouble.

Redirection can sound like bribery; it's not. Bribery is rewarding children with treats when they are bad. Redirecting is giving children **positive, good** things to do instead of misbehaving. Redirecting helps children learn what **to do**, instead of what **not to do**.

Redirecting negative behavior takes time, imagination and energy. Your children are worth this investment in their future. A little extra work now can make things easier later.

PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Praise is one of the most powerful tools a parent can use to guide children's behavior and build self esteem. When parents call attention to positive behaviors, they teach children what is right and encourage more positive behavior.

How to Praise

- Give your child your full attention.
- Move close to the child.
- Get down on the child's level and make eye contact.
- Give a hug or a gentle touch to make the message more powerful.
- Use a pleasant voice, and have a pleasant look on your face.
- Tell the child specifically what behavior you are praising and why.
- **You put all your dirty dishes in the sink. What a helpful thing to do! or You put away all your toys. Good job!**
- Share your pleasure!

Notice and praise positive behavior as often as possible! The more good things you notice, the better you will feel about your children, and the better they will feel about themselves.

Encouragement

Encouragement is a skill parents use to motivate a child to keep trying, even when the going gets rough. Encouragement is noticing how hard a child is working at something, even though the results are not perfect. Be honest when giving encouragement. Praise the **effort**, not just the result.

You practice your trumpet every day and each day you sound a little better. I am so proud of your diligence!

Parents discourage children when they:

- Only focus on mistakes.
- Fail to notice positive behaviors.
- Overly protect children and do not allow them to take risks.
- Expect perfection.

Parents encourage children when they:

- Focus on positive behaviors and children's strengths.
- Use mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Allow children to take some risks and praise their efforts.

Noticing and praising good decision making, while allowing room for mistakes, helps children become responsible, courageous and have high self-esteem! Praise and encouragement are two important tools in building healthy, loving family relationships.

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

Choices and consequences help children learn self control by allowing them to make decisions about behavior and dealing with the consequences.

Using Choices and Consequences

- Step 1** Decide which behavior you want to deal with and explain the desired behavior to the child in simple words.
Jeffrey, stop running in the house.
- Step 2** Give the child a reasonable choice. You may walk in the house, or you may run outside.
- Step 3** Tell the child the consequence of misbehaving. If you run in the house again you will have a time out.
- Step 4** Follow through with a consequence or praise.
Jeffrey, I see you have chosen time out! or Good decision Jeffrey! Have fun outside.

Things to Remember

- Do not expect perfection from children or yourself.
- Encourage children to try new things, but do not push or belittle them. Do not over protect children, this can discourage them.
- Allow children to make simple choices, and allow them to experience the consequences of those decisions. The amount of choices should increase with a child's age.
- Allow children to fail and learn from unpleasant experiences; this is how children develop decision making skills. Do not lecture them, nag them or always rescue them.
- Praise your children for every good choice they make. Give children the credit for the decision to reinforce good decision making.

Tell your child everyday that you love him/her and why. This helps you to focus on the positive things about your child and will remind you that he/she is worth the effort you make to help him/her take responsibility for his/her actions.

TIME OUT

What is Time out?

Time out is a positive form of discipline that encourages self-control and interrupts bad behaviors. Time out consists of having a child sit in a quiet, safe place for a short time to help the child gain self-control. Time out should never be used for children under two years of age. Time out is most effective with children between the ages of three and twelve.

Time out is used as a penalty when a child is deliberately destructive or deliberately breaks the rules. Time out can also be used when a child deliberately disobeys a parent or other adult.

Before Using Time Out

- Notice the efforts children make every day.
- Develop an encouraging atmosphere in the home.
- Do not focus on the mistakes children make; focus on the things done correctly.

Give children jobs to do that are within their abilities.

Using Time Out

- When first using time Out, give the child one warning: "David, remember we don't throw toys! Next time you go to Time Out!"
- Tell the child, "You have broken the rule. Go to time out". Use your own words, but do not use abusive language or yell. Use a calm, patient, firm voice.
- Escort the child to the Time Out location. If the child argues, promises, begs, pleads or tells you he/she loves you - do not listen or argue! Simply take the child to the Time Out place by holding him/her gently but firmly under the armpit or elbow. Do not drag the child or hit him or her. Time Out is not meant to be abusive!
- Remind the child that time out starts when he/she is quiet. The adult may have to hold the child gently but firmly in the time out place until the child decides to sit quietly. It helps to stand nearby to encourage the child to cooperate. Ask the child to tell you when he or she is ready to sit quietly. Do not let go of the child until he/she tells you to do so. It may take 20 minutes at first to get a four year old to take a 4 minute Time Out.
- Establish three or four family rules for when to use **Time Out** such as:
 - No hitting, biting or kicking
 - No throwing things
 - No swearing
- Obtain a kitchen or egg timer to help keep accurate time and avoid arguments between a parent and child over when **Time Out** is over. **Time Out** should only last about one minute for each year of the child's age.
- Pick a **Time Out** place. This can be a chair in a corner, the bottom step of the staircase, or a cushion on the couch. There are two important factors in picking a **Time Out** location.
 - The place needs to be **boring**.
 - The Time out place needs to be **safe**.

- Explain **Time Out** to each child in the family. Review the rules. Explain that when the child breaks the rules, he or she will be placed in **Time Out**. **Follow through** with **Time Out** every time the child breaks the rules.
- Consistency is the key to success.
- Give only choices and consequences you can live with and with which you can follow through.
- Make sure the penalty or reward fits the situation: finish your dinner to get dessert. Don't say **If you don't finish all your food, you can't watch TV**.
- Never use physical punishment as a consequence. Hitting or spanking does not teach what you want, and can cause children to have feelings of revenge.
- Do not "rescue" children from negative consequences.
- Always **praise** the good decisions children make. **Never** lecture about their mistakes. Consequences are more powerful than any lecture.

Always follow through on consequences. Remember, consistency is the key to success.

When the timer goes off

- Praise the child for getting control of himself/herself and taking the Time Out.
- Review the misbehavior and point out an alternative behavior in a similar situation.

Welcome the child back into family activities. Remember that Time Out was the penalty for misbehavior, which interrupted the bad behavior and gave the child time to think things over.

Rewarding self-control and welcoming the child back encourages good behavior and high self-esteem and builds responsibility; big rewards for small investments of time and love.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY IN CHILDREN

We want our children to:

- Feel good about themselves,
- Make wise decisions,
- Say no to drugs, alcohol and high risk behaviors,
- Take good care of themselves when we are not around.

STRESS AND ANGER

Causes of stress

- Marital and/or relationship problems
- Financial difficulties
- Work and school pressures Illness
- Safety issues
- Birth, death, marriage

Symptoms of Stress

Upset stomach, rapid heart beat, headache, sleeplessness and/or too much sleep

- Depression and/or anxiety
- Hair loss
- Weight gain/loss
- Irritability and anger

Ways to reduce stress

- Talk with someone you trust; someone who will listen without being judgmental.
- Do something physical (walk, run, swim, mow the lawn, garden, clean the house) this releases natural calming hormones in the body.
- Do something nice for yourself; something you enjoy. Brief times away from children are healthy for parents and children.
- Do not take your children's behaviors personally. All children misbehave and embarrass their parents at times. Learn what to expect from children of different ages so you can be prepared for what is to come.
- Do not expect perfection of yourself or your children. Everyone makes mistakes; think of them as learning opportunities.
- Remember, no matter how hard you try, you cannot please everyone all of the time. Practice saying, **I am doing the best I can right now.**
- Start building a support system today. Talk to other parents about the stress of parenting.
- Keep your sense of humor. Laughter is great medicine for parenting stress.

HELP! MY CHILD IS A TEENAGER

Building a positive relationship.

- Respect your teenager's right to have his/her own opinions. Listen to him/her in a respectful manner, and honor his/her right to express themselves.
- Allow a teenager to choose his/her own style of hair or clothing, within reason. Trends change. A teen needs to "fit in" with peers. Encourage good hygiene, but give him/her some room for personal expression.
- Be available to listen, and offer teenagers good advice. Do not lecture or preach. Try not to be judgmental. Focus energy on important issues, such as drugs, alcohol and sex.
- Respect a teen's right to some privacy. Extend trust, even after some mistakes.
- Use choices and consequences to deal with a teenager's arguing and lack of cooperation. Set limits, and provide supervision when assigning chores.
- Set standards for reasonable cleanliness in a teenager's rooms. Do not clean the room for him/her. Teenagers rooms should be clean before he/she is allowed to attend special events or invite friends over.
- Allow a teen's independence and privileges to the extent that they prove themselves trustworthy and reliable.

Tell a teenager you love him/her often and that you appreciate them.

Building better communication.

- Listen! Just listen when your teenager talks to you. Do not judge. Stay calm!
- Repeat back to your teenager what you think he/she is saying to you. Do not return anger with anger!

- Do not criticize or lecture. Do not give advice unless your teenager asks for it.
- Help teenagers problem solve by brainstorming alternatives with them. Help teenagers weigh the pros and cons of their choices.
- Reinforce good decision making by praising good judgement.

Maintain your dignity even when your teenager does not maintain his/her dignity.



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