

10 Things Great Parents Do

1. Do what you say you are going to do

This goes two ways: 1) Don't make rules you can't, or won't, enforce consistently; and 2) Keep your commitments. It's important for kids to know that you mean what you say; this builds trust and respect.

2. “Catch” kids being good, and tell them specifically what you liked

Kids really do want to please their parents and they thrive on constructive, positive feedback.

3. Harness the power of natural consequences

Let kids experience the natural consequences of their actions or choices (unless health or safety is at risk). This is essential to learning.

4. Practice positive touch

Positive touch (e.g. hugs, loving pats, cuddles) is absolutely critical to kids' development.

5. Make a clear distinction between kids and their behavior

Always communicate with your words and actions that you love them no matter what (even if you don't like their behavior).

6. Show them the way

Punishment only suppresses behavior. Be sure also to tell kids the behavior you want to see instead, and then praise it specifically.

7. Beware over-functioning for your kids

Making mistakes and experiencing “failure” and disappointment are essential life experiences that provide the opportunity for kids to learn and practice good coping skills.

8. Avoid disciplining kids when they are hungry or tired

They won't be focused on what you are trying to teach them. Address their behavior after they are rested / fed.

9. Teach kids the “3 P's”

Instead of telling kids—“You can do anything”—teach them the 3Ps: practice, patience, and perseverance.

10. Help kids learn to feel their feelings, and choose their actions

Coach kids in how to respond (versus react). It's OK to feel whatever they're feeling, but it may not be OK to follow their feelings into action (e.g. hitting, yelling).