

Raising Responsible Kids in an Irresponsible Culture

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One of the most joyful parts of parenting is seeing your children develop healthy relationships while they learn to take responsibility for their own life. Trust, self confidence, the ability to discern right from wrong, as well as your child's personality, all play a part in this ongoing process.

As we strive to develop heart-centered relationships at home, our children naturally begin to relate to others according to the pattern we have modeled for them. But when they get to middle and high school, it can seem like all your hard work comes undone. Teens and pre-teens go through

stages of “trying on” different identities before they figure out who they really are. That’s a scary thing when you consider the many choices that are out there.

Show the Responsible Way

However, your teens will eventually return to their root values if you teach them well early on. Children watch everything you do, and they often take on your habits, mannerisms, traits and emotions, without even knowing it. Simple things like a smile, or “please”, “thank you” and other manners, can go a long way in creating goodwill both inside and outside the home.



Early childhood, when your children are with you on shopping trips or errands, is the perfect time to show your child how to be kind, generous, caring, thoughtful of others, and respectful of the property and rights of others. Especially important is learning to be responsible for their own actions.

Below are some general tips, but for more information please read the other references listed at the bottom.

tips, how to speak respectfully, etc.

2. Help others in need
3. Obey laws and regulations
4. Create friendships in the community

1. Teach as you go: How to shop, how to pay, how to wait patiently, how to drive courteously, how to ask nicely, how to order food, how to leave

5. Be involved with your child's school
6. Volunteer or participate in service projects with your kids
7. Model a healthy lifestyle through food and exercise habits
8. Help your child develop an awareness of, and compassion for, the differences in people: customs, lifestyles, attitudes, personality types, economic disparity, disabilities, etc.

Who am I?

This is the unspoken question in the back of your child's mind as he or she grows up. Children gain their sense of identity through their closest relationships, and the community they interact with on a daily basis. Although children are born with individual personality traits in the form of potential, it is through relationships that their unique potential can develop and mature.

Essentials for a Positive Self-Image

- Affirm the child's growing abilities
- Encourage the child's curiosity
- Model healthy relationships with others
- Be mindful of how your own emotions affect the child
- Use positive reinforcement and natural consequences as discipline
- Cultivate positive grandparent and sibling relationships



Give the child opportunities to contribute (first in family, later in school & community)

- Emphasize that everyone is growing and learning (including parents/adults)
- Let them know that mistakes are one of the many ways that we learn

To learn more:

[Character Matters – Thomas Lickona](#)

[Character Matters!: Raising Kids with Values That Last](#)

[The Happiest Toddler on the Block](#), by Harvey Karp, Md

[The Whole Brain Child](#), by Daniel J. Siegel & Tina Payne Bryson