

Simple Steps For Raising GREAT Kids

Great kids are confident, competent young people who function well in varying environments and situations. They are enjoyable to be with and grow to be assets to their communities and families. While many factors contribute to successful parenting, there are steps parents can take to ensure the likelihood of producing a happy, creative, secure individual -- in short a GREAT KID!

- **Be respectful at all times** Discipline is communicated and enforced without humiliation, and differences are resolved with no use of put-downs, insults, or name-calling. When correcting inappropriate behaviors comment on the unacceptable action not the child. For instance, a child hits their friend, instead of "No hitting--you're a bad girl!" say "You many not hit--hitting hurts!" The message is: hitting is not acceptable -- I care for you, but not what you did.
- **Spend time with your children** Children require constant education and support to grow into capable young people. Kids do not develop in a vacuum. Dads and moms who are available to play with their infant, read books with their toddler, help siblings to problem solve a rivalry issue, monitor homework, or answer preteen and teen's questions about important social issues, not only provide support and information but convey the message, "You are my top priority."
- **Set and enforce clear behavioral limits and guidelines** Great kids need guidance and structure. They want parents who will teach them right from wrong, then reiterate those limits over and over. Often children will test limits just to see if the parent will stand firm, when parents are consistent they give their child(ren) a sense of security in knowing what to expect. Children with no clear limits feel out of control and insecure, they will push and push until someone says STOP.
- **Provide opportunities for your children to be responsible** Great kids are encouraged to be responsible for their actions, possessions and to be an active participant in the family. They have age-appropriate jobs and household chores. For example, cleaning their rooms (a 3 year old will do a different job of this than what is expected of a 5 or 7 year old), a 4 year old can set the table, a 6 year old might be responsible for feeding the pets, a 10 year old can mow the lawn or wash the car, and of course all can help prepare meals and keep the house picked up. Be sure to fully teach the child how to perform their jobs, then be available to supervise and offer help when needed. Lastly, applaud and praise a genuine effort or a job well done.
- **Create a secure and loving home environment** Children flourish in homes that are stable, calm and secure. They know they are safe, that adults will be there when they need help. They feel secure knowing that gentle voices and hands will assist them during life's many ups and downs. Also, they know that laughter and love will be plentiful.
- **Talk openly with your children** Great kids thrive when families communicate regularly. Discuss family issues and limits calmly and respectfully, ask for your child's point of view. Avoid yelling, nagging and lecturing. Do not try to solve problems during an argument. Instead, wait until you have calmed down, then discuss the issues in a constructive way. Be open to listening to the child's thoughts and concerns, often they will come up with an appropriate solution. The mini-crisis of your child's day when shared with you may seem minor, however, a parent's willingness to listen to the day to day issues encourages them to come to you for advice or counsel when their problems get tougher.
- **Tell them they're GREAT** Great kids feel loved by their parents. They feel independent, secure and appreciated for their individual differences and personal strengths. Encourage and support your children to grow and experience new challenges based upon their interests and talents. Continual hugs, kisses and smiles help develop a strong sense of self and let children know they are on the right track.
- **Enjoy your children** They can be a constant source of energy and renewed spirit. They will only be young for a short period of time, use it wisely -- for them and yourself!

From the book **The Practical Parenting** by Alix Hall