

10 PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PARENTING

- 1. What you do matters.** Whether it's your own health behaviors or the way you treat other people, your children are learning from what you do. "This is one of the most important principles," Steinberg explains. "What you do makes a difference...Don't just react on the spur of the moment. Ask yourself, What do I want to accomplish, and is this likely to produce that result?"
- 2. You cannot be too loving.** "It is simply not possible to spoil a child with love," Steinberg writes. "What we often think of as the product of spoiling a child is never the result of showing a child too much love. It is usually the consequence of giving a child things in place of love -- things like leniency, lowered expectations, or material possessions."
- 3. Be involved in your child's life.** "Being an involved parent takes time and is hard work, and it often means rethinking and rearranging your priorities. It frequently means sacrificing what you want to do for what your child needs to do. Be there mentally as well as physically."
Being involved does not mean doing a child's homework -- or correcting it. "Homework is a tool for teachers to know whether the child is learning or not," Steinberg says. "If you do the homework, you're not letting the teacher know what the child is learning."
- 4. Adapt your parenting to fit your child.** Keep pace with your child's development. Your child is growing up. Consider how age is affecting the child's behavior.
"The same drive for independence that is making your 3-year-old say 'no' all the time is what's motivating him to be toilet trained," writes Steinberg. "The same intellectual growth spurt that is making your 13-year-old curious and inquisitive in the classroom also is making her argumentative at the dinner table."
- 5. Establish and set rules.** "If you don't manage your child's behavior when he is young, he will have a hard time learning how to manage himself when he is older and you aren't around. Any time of the day or night, you should always be able to answer these three questions: Where is my child? Who is with my child? What is my child doing? The rules your child has learned from you are going to shape the rules he applies to himself.
"But you can't micromanage your child," Steinberg notes. "Once they're in middle school, you need to let the child do their own homework, make their own choices and not intervene."
- 6. Foster your child's independence.** "Setting limits helps your child develop a sense of self-control. Encouraging independence helps her develop a sense of self-direction. To be successful in life, she's going to need both."
It's normal for children to push for autonomy, says Steinberg. "Many parents mistakenly equate their child's independence with rebelliousness or disobedience. Children push for

independence because it is part of human nature to want to feel in control rather than to feel controlled by someone else."

7. **Be consistent.** "If your rules vary from day to day in an unpredictable fashion or if you enforce them only intermittently, your child's misbehavior is your fault, not his. Your most important disciplinary tool is consistency. Identify your non-negotiables. The more your authority is based on wisdom and not on power, the less your child will challenge it."
8. **Avoid harsh discipline.** Parents should never hit a child, under any circumstances, Steinberg says. "Children who are spanked, hit, or slapped are more prone to fighting with other children," he writes. "They are more likely to be bullies and more likely to use aggression to solve disputes with others."
"There are many other ways to discipline a child -- including 'timeout' -- which work better and do not involve aggression."
9. **Explain your rules and decisions.** "Good parents have expectations they want their child to live up to," he writes. "Generally, parents over explain to young children and under explain to adolescents. What is obvious to you may not be evident to a 12-year-old. He doesn't have the priorities, judgment, or experience that you have."
10. **Treat your child with respect.** "The best way to get respectful treatment from your child is to treat him respectfully," Steinberg writes. "You should give your child the same courtesies you would give to anyone else. Speak to him politely. Respect his opinion. Pay attention when he is speaking to you. Treat him kindly. Try to please him when you can. Children treat others the way their parents treat them. Your relationship with your child is the foundation for her relationships with others."
For example, if your child is a picky eater: "I personally don't think parents should make a big deal about eating," Steinberg says. "Children develop food preferences. They often go through them in stages. You don't want to turn mealtimes into unpleasant occasions. Just don't make the mistake of substituting unhealthy foods. If you don't keep junk food in the house, they won't eat it."

The truth is, change is hard, and it's going to take time. The sooner you begin to hold your child accountable for their behavior by helping them learn - and practice - better problem-solving skills, the better off your family will be. This will give your family a fantastic foundation for all the years to come.