

8 Ways to Teach Your Child Values

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"92 percent of us want our children to have better manners and values," says Gary Bauer former White House Advisor and President of the Family Research Council.

What are values and how do we teach them to our children?

Webster defines values as 1) the social principles, goals or standard held or accepted by an individual 2) that which is desirable or worth of esteem. Your values determine how you and your family live. A value you may hold is honesty, importance of family, or having fun. There are numerous values that you have that you may or may not be aware of. Your values may change from day to day.

Pay attention to how much you are investing in your family.

Whether or not you are aware of it, you have priorities within your values. For example, you may value work more than you value time spent with your family. If this is the case, you may find that your children and your spouse are doing some negative things to get your attention. Being at home may feel draining or tense. However if you change your priority to value your family more than you do work, you will find that your family will become more supportive of you and your work. As a result, you will feel nourished by your family.

The way you can determine what values you have are by the results you are getting. In the case above, if you are not feeling nurtured by your family, you may want to pay attention to how much you are investing in your family. Pay close attention to what you spend your time and your money on. This will also help you determine what you value.

Eight Ways To Teach Values

1. Determine What Values You Want

Make a list of you top ten priorities for your family. This will help you keep your intention on creating what you want your children to learn

2. Set Rules Around Your Values

Don't be afraid to set rules around your values. For example, if having family time is important to you at dinner, don't allow interruptions such as phone calls, TV, or absenteeism for either you or your children.

3. Be Unrelenting About Your Values

Sometimes in an attempt to make life easy for ourselves, we let things slide. In the long run, it usually takes us much longer. The longer we put things off the more frustrating the situation gets for everyone.

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4. Emphasize Your Actions With Your Words

Talk to your child about your actions. Tell them the good feeling that you get from following through on a value. For example, "I greeted people at church today. It really fills my heart when I can make people feel good."

5. Look for Teaching Opportunities

Keep alert for stories from real life, TV, books and newspapers that illustrate a value that you think is important. For example, my son loves football and thinks that Emmitt Smith is the greatest. My husband got him the book "The Emmitt Zone," which is full of important values for my son. Point out actions of neighbors and friends that demonstrate values. For example, I told my children about a friend who called me to apologize for lying to me the previous day.

6. Teach Your Child To Prioritize

For example, if your family is in a stressful situation and your nine-year-old is being inappropriately demanding, you may want to ask, "What's more important right now, you getting your way or that we all calm down and create some peace in this family?" It is important that you ask this question without instilling guilt or being demanding.

7. If Your Child Isn't Honoring a Value

You may want to check the following if your child isn't honoring a value you hold dear.

Am I sending a clear message?

For example, you may really want the TV off three days a week but you only occasionally ask your family to turn off or turn down the TV.

Are my actions congruent with my talk?

A friend of mine was walking out of a store with his daughter. He noticed that the clerk had given him too much change and started going back to the store. The daughter asked, "Why are you going back when she only gave you a dollar too much?" He replied, "My integrity is worth more than a dollar."

**Are my actions
congruent with
my talk?**

Am I too controlling about my desire for my child to share my value?

Note: If your teenager is rebelling against your values, this is not only normal but, important for him to determine his own values. This is a stage and he will grow out of it.

8. Discuss Your Own Struggles with Your Values

Share with your child how you struggle with your own values. For example, "My boss wanted me to do something that would save the company money. I don't want to do it because it will hurt the environment. I am really struggling with this because I am not sure what he will do if I stick up for what I believe in." Hearing you struggle helps your child clarify his own values. It also helps him to not feel alone in his struggles. Be insistent, subtle, creative, and inviting about teaching values. Don't give boring lectures, orders or use "band wagon" approaches. Without values, our children are left to their own devices or pick up the values of peers or media. When you care enough to stick up for your values, your children develop a deep respect for you and themselves.

Recommendation

As a family pick out a value a week and practice that value. Put the word on the refrigerator. Share stories that week about how they or someone else demonstrated that value. Then reap the rewards.

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