



Parenting positively is good for you and your child

YOU HAVE MANY DECISIONS TO MAKE AS A PARENT.

One of the most important is the decision to parent in a positive way. Positive discipline is teaching with kindness and firmness. It means showing your love for your child by setting limits that nurture your child's accountability and self-esteem. Children who experience positive parenting grow up to be people who have respect for themselves and for others.

To get started, learn about the characteristics of each developmental stage. When you know what to expect, you can guide your child's behavior in positive ways.

Birth to 12 months

Respect your baby by understanding that most of what he does is prompted by his needs. Small babies can't misbehave, because they don't have the memory or understanding. Meet your baby's needs quickly and he will learn to trust you. He will cry less and be more satisfied.

Get to know your baby. Spend time just hanging out and observing her. Appreciate her unique temperament and personality. She will help you learn about her very early in life.

Provide safe ways for your baby to explore his world. Stop and take your baby's perspective if you think he is misbehaving. Is he really pushing a limit or just trying to satisfy his curiosity? If the situation is safe, let him explore as much as possible.

12 to 36 months

Expect some resistance as you teach your toddler new behaviors. Autonomy is a strong drive for her right now. She may say, "No!" to many things you suggest. Stay calm and firm. Her "no" doesn't always mean she won't do something. It may mean she just wants to be heard.

Think about what will make it easier for your toddler to meet your expectations. Give him something to do to help him focus on the behavior you desire. For example, if he resists going out to the car, let him carry his diaper bag and put it on the seat beside him.

Follow through with your plans or expectations with dignity and respect for your child. It may be quicker to force your child to do something, but it does not teach her

to control her behavior if you can't control yours. Instead, take your toddler gently by the hand to lead her away from undesired behavior. Don't do a lot of talking, just act in a way that is respectful but purposeful.

Preschoolers

Say what you see when you talk to your child. Honest reflection builds self-esteem; excess praise and pep talks can be discouraging if your child senses you're not being honest.

Children are natural imitators. They learn by watching their parents. Involve your child in daily tasks and explain what you are doing in ways she can understand. Take time to teach your child skills, and be sure to appreciate her efforts and not just the result.

Your child is learning how to show his emotions in acceptable ways, so think carefully before you punish your child for misbehavior. Teach him positive ways to show emotions. Give your child your full attention when he shares his feelings, either verbally or behaviorally.

Time out for parents

Taking care of a baby or young child is very stressful, and you may feel overwhelmed. Get as much rest as you can and eat healthy meals. Talk to a friend or take your child for a walk to relieve stress. Get help if you feel like you are losing control. Most of all, remember to have fun with your child and take pleasure in your child's development. ❖

This information is based on the book, Positive Discipline: The First Three Years by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin, and Roslyn Duffy.