

10 principles of Practicing Good Behavior

By Sal Severe, PhD

1. **Pay off correct behavior, not misbehavior.** Reinforce polite requests, not whining, teasing and tantrums. Reinforce calm discussions, not arguments and power struggles.
2. **Think before you talk.** Say what you mean. Mean what you say. Reward yourself for being consistent.
3. **Expect good behavior from your children.** Children must know what you expect from them and what they can expect from you. When children can predict how you will behave in reaction to them, they will make better behavioral choices themselves.
4. **Children believe what you tell them.** Coach your children on ways to behave appropriately. Teach your children that effort is essential. Use plenty of encouragement. When you encourage your children, they will see that you have faith and confidence in them, and will have it in themselves.
5. **Once you recognize a misbehavior pattern, establish a plan.** Tell them the rules in advance and be specific and reasonable. Using charts or contracts, spotlight success and provide support and encouragement.
6. **Use punishments that teach decision-making and accountability.** Children survive reasonable punishments, such as restriction and time-outs. Do not punish when you are angry.
7. **Begin teaching responsibility and decision-making when your children are young.** This will prepare them for the real world. Remember, children need limits, structure, ground rules and consistency. Children will see these qualities as an expression of your love and concern.
8. **Focus on your children's positive qualities but love them regardless of their behavior.**
9. **Teach your children to seek self-reward – to feel good about doing the right thing.**
10. **Provide a healthy and pleasant family climate.** Emphasize each other's strengths and accept one another's weaknesses.