



# Kinship Link

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## Pro Kinship for Kids

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## Encouraging Respectful Behavior

To learn respect, children must first be respected. Parents and caregivers can do many things to show respect for a child. Here are some reminders of how we can do a better job of respecting our children.

Apologize to children when you are wrong. Parents are human and have bad days too. Forgive yourself when you mishandle a situation or hurt your child's feelings. It is just as important to tell the child you are sorry. Apologies that are specific and simple show children that you respect their feelings and feel sorry for your behavior. It's a good way to show that it's okay to make mistakes and admit it. It can bring you closer with love, understanding, and trust.

Be courteous and respectful in ordinary daily requests. The example parents and others set is the most powerful influence on children. Showing real interest in the feelings of others and sharing your time and energy with others are clear examples of compassion and non-selfishness. Talk with your child about your thoughts and motives for respecting others.

Manners, like "please", "thank you", and "excuse me", show you are aware of the needs and feelings of others. Your example teaches children to care about others. So use your manners and encourage your children to use theirs.

Avoid disciplining in public, especially in front of their friends. Before you are in public with your child establish rules and set limits. Determine what the consequences will be if the rules are not followed. If your child knows the rules and breaks them, a simple comment on your part will suffice. There need not be a big public scene. Use gentle physical contact and a normal tone of voice to guide the child rather than grabbing, yelling, or threatening. The goal is to enforce the rules in a non-threatening way that does not embarrass the child. You want to encourage self-control and maintain everyone's self-respect. If friends are around, pull your child aside and handle the situation privately with him or her. Watch your tone of voice. Avoid a gruff demanding voice - replace it with a more direct, firm, but always respectful voice.

Allow your children privacy. Privacy is a two-way street for parents and children. As children grow, they develop a need for privacy. They learn to set boundaries around body, ideas, and possessions. When parents respect their children's need for privacy they will get some for themselves.

Teach and enforce the "Please Stop" rule. The "Please Stop" rule is one that is effective in teaching respect for one another. If someone says, "please stop", the behavior has to be stopped immediately. This is a family rule that must be clearly understood by everyone. When used, there is no negotiating. Everyone must respect the request. This technique works best when taught to young children. It applies to all family members - adults too. Using this rule teaches children that they have control over what is done to them, that they can get the behavior to stop. It builds confidence and demonstrates that children need to be assertive about what is being done to their bodies. When these children are asked by others to "please stop", they learn that other people deserve the same respect.



## Encouraging Respectful Behavior continued

Respect can be taught. Not only must children be treated respectfully, but parents and caregivers must also consciously work to teach respect to children by using these strategies.

- Help children feel good about themselves. Be a positive person. Compliment your child when he or she does something well. Children need to see themselves as givers as well as receivers. This happens when the child has opportunities to be responsible at home and in the community.
- Show approval when children show empathy and caring. When your child does something considerate for someone else, tell him or her that makes you feel proud. Let him or her hear you telling someone else how proud you are.
- Provide acceptance and love. Consider your child's needs and the ways he or she likes to receive messages. It can be by showing (doing things for him or her), telling ("I love it when ..."), or touching (a big hug). Send no mixed messages. Be accepting of your own mistakes and the mistakes of your child. View your child's mistakes as part of the learning process.
- Help children focus on the feelings of others. Although we are all born with the capacity for empathy (the ability to understand how others feel), it doesn't develop to the same extent in everyone. Its development can be nurtured by the environment - most significantly by a child's parents. You encourage empathy in your children by making them aware of others' feelings and the reasons they feel they way they do. It is especially important to let your children know when they make you feel good or bad. Let your children know that you expect them to care about your feelings and show their sensitivity.
- Talk about the negative effects of

selfishness. Unfortunately, selfishness is common in today's society. Selfishness leads to less than desirable relationships at school, work, and home. Selfishness is prevented by accepting and loving children. Avoid criticism, tension, anger, abusive, or violent interactions, irritability, intense competition, and other negative family interactions.

- Help children develop a sense of morality. It is important that you help your children develop a sense of morality. Television, and newspapers are full of stories about cheating, aggressive behavior, stealing, and selfishness. Discuss making moral decisions with your children to encourage them to monitor themselves and strengthen their feelings of empathy.
- Bring up caring, fairness, and cooperation in everyday situations. Whether you're at school events, sports activities, or community events find ways to demonstrate caring, fairness, and cooperation.
- Model self-respect. This point is extremely important. If you want your children to show respect, it is important that you respect yourself. Here are some ways for you to build and maintain self-respect:
  - ◇ Develop your own interests, goals, and strengths.
  - ◇ Recognize your efforts, rather than focusing only on results.
  - ◇ Be positive about yourself and others.
  - ◇ Use your sense of humor to keep things in perspective.
  - ◇ Realize that you'll make mistakes, but that your children will survive anyway.
  - ◇ Take time for yourself to renew your strength and patience.

- ◇ Remember that you are worthwhile as a person, not because you are a successful parent.

- Encourage your children to find ways to help others. Volunteer as a family. For example, invite an elderly person for a meal, or volunteer to care for a cat or dog when your neighbor is away.

Respect is learned. Respect has different meanings for different people. To learn respect children must first be respected. For example, treat others as you would want to be treated. Qualities such as empathy, compassion, kindness, and caring must be taught. If a parent fears a compassionate child will be teased or bullied, respectful assertiveness is needed. Remember to have a daily goal to show and encourage respectful behavior. Being respectful one time isn't enough - encouraging respect is a 24-hour-a-day responsibility. Consistently showing respectful behavior toward yourself and others is an important part of encouraging respectful behavior in children.

The need for people to live in harmony with one another is increasing. As our society becomes more violent it is important to encourage respectful behavior in children, families, communities, and our world. Encouraging children to respect themselves and others will help to eliminate injustice, hate, and violence. This respect needs to start at home.

