

7 tips to raising good kids



We're pleased to announce a new feature on our blog! In addition to our regular posts, you can now look forward to posts from experts in parenting, character education, ethics, and more! Please join us in welcoming our first expert, Michele Borba. You can learn more about Michele on her website.

Here are seven tips you can use to help your kids stand up for their beliefs, buck negative peer pressure, and live their lives guided by integrity. Just remember: it's never too late – or early – to start.

1. Know what you stand for so your kid know

Parents with clearly identified moral convictions are more likely to raise good kids. Because their kids know what their parents stand for and why they do, their kids are more likely to adopt their parents' beliefs. So begin by asking yourself what virtues and moral beliefs matter most to you. Make a list, and then narrow your values down to your top three. These will become your personal moral code and guide you in how you will raise your child. Doing so is also the best way to help your child develop his own moral beliefs.

Here are five quick questions to gauge how well you're parenting solid moral beliefs in your child:

- You can quickly name the 3-5 virtues you want most for your child to acquire.
- Your child could name the virtues you believe in most without prompting.
- You reinforce your child whenever he shows your selected virtues in his behavior.
- Your child can clearly see your chosen virtues in your daily behavior.

- You use those virtues as your day to day code of ethical behavior and family living.

2. Walk your talk

One great question to ask yourself each day is: “If I were the only example my child had to learn moral habits, what did she learn today from watching me?” The answer can be quite revealing.

By watching your choices and hearing your casual comments, kids learn our moral standards.

Aristotle taught us hundreds of years that the best way to teach character is through example. *Make sure the moral behaviors your kids are picking up on are ones that you want your kids to copy.* And then make sure your child is surrounded by examples that boost character and integrity.

How many of these messages apply to you?

How Well Do You Walk You Talk To Your Kids?

Do you...

- Eat a “sample” from a store’s candy bin in front of your child without paying?
- Buy a ticket for a “child under twelve” even though your child is older?
- Drive faster than the speed limit with your child as a passenger?
- Tell your child to say you’re not there when your boss calls?
- Do the majority of your child’s work on a school project, but then have him sign his name?

3. Share your moral beliefs and take clear stands

Speaking frequently to your child about values is called “Direct Moral Teaching.” Parents who raise ethical kids use it often.

So look for moral issues and talk about them as they come up: from TV shows and news events to situations at home, school, and friends. Tell your kids how you feel about the issue and why.

Share examples of morally courageous heroes such as Rosa Parks, Pee Wee Reese, Harriet Tubman, Abe Lincoln. There are wonderful books and videos in your local library that you can also share with your child.

Cut out fabulous articles in the newspaper and use them as "Hero Reports" at the dinner hour with your kids each day.

Stand up for your beliefs whenever you feel a major value is jeopardized. Your kid needs to see and hear about moral courage so he has an example to copy.

4. Ask moral questions to stretch moral development

Questioning is an important parenting tool for enhancing children's consciences and strengthening moral beliefs. The right kind of questions can help kids expand their ability to take another perspective and ask themselves: "Is this the right thing to do?" Both are critical precursors to taking any moral stand.

Moral Stretching Questions

"How would you feel if someone treated you that way?"

"If you don't follow through on your word, what do you think would happen?"

"If everybody acted that way (i.e. cheated, shoplifted) what would happen?"

5. Boost empathy

Kids who stick up for others are kids who feel for others. Empathy is what motivates that feeling, halts cruel behavior and urges kids to take a stand. New research also shows empathy is what activates conscience.

For more ideas go to my blog, Nurturing Children's Empathy as well as dozens of articles on instilling kindness and tolerance.

Here are two powerful ways to nurture empathy:

- **Ask: How would you feel?** Ask kids to ponder how another person feels using situations in books, TV, and movies as well as real life. It forces them to think about other peoples' concerns.
- **Use role playing.** It helps kids imagine others' feelings so ask your child to think how the other person would feel if roles were reversed. "Switch sides: what would the other person say and do?" Young kids can use puppets or toy figures to act out the problem from both sides.

6. Reinforce assertiveness not compliance

If you want to raise a child who can stand up for his beliefs, then reinforce assertiveness—not compliance. Encourage him to share his opinions and stand up for what is right. And do so from early age so he can weather the storm of negative peer influence.

Parents who raise morally courageous kids expect their kids to act morally—even demand that they do.

7. Teach assertive skills

The truth is that it takes real moral strength to go against peer pressure and to stick up for your beliefs. So teach your child assertive skills so he can take the right kind of stand whenever he's confronted with a moral dilemma. Here are three ways to boost moral courage but you must practice repeatedly with your child until he or she feels comfortable and confident using these techniques in the real world:

- **Teach assertive posture.** Teach your kid to stand up for his beliefs by using confident, assertive posture: stand tall with feet slightly apart, head held high, and look the person straight in the eye.

- **Say no firmly.** Stress that he must say his beliefs using a friendly, but determined voice. Then don't give in. His job is not to try changing the other person's mind, but to follow his beliefs.
- **Tell reasons why.** Ask your child to give the person the reason for his stand. It helps strengthen his conviction: "Stop bullying him; it's cruel." Or "No, it's illegal and wrong." Repeating the belief several times boosts assertiveness and helps your child not back down from his stand. Remember, in order to say no, a child needs to understand what to say no to.

Without a solid inner belief as to what is wrong or right, it's tough to have conviction. So go back to Tip #1 and start all over again.

[View Michele's complete posting](#)