

Positive Parenting Strategies



3-5 YEARS OLD

During these pre-school years, children grow more and more independent and capable. Their natural curiosity is likely to be stimulated because their world is expanding: new friends, new experiences, new environments like daycare or kindergarten. Below are recommendations to support your child to adjust to changes and new environments.



- Be clear and consistent with your expectations, explaining what behaviors you want from your child.
- Speak to your child in age-appropriate language and provide simple, clear directions. Allow time for your child to process before repeating yourself.
- Help your child problem solve when emotions are running high.
- Be patient with your child. They may need your help in calming down from their many activities.
- Be firm and consistent in setting limits for your child. Too many rules may cause your child to be rebellious, and too few limits may leave your child feeling insecure. By setting firm and consistent limits for your child, you will begin to teach them the difference between right and wrong. They may still seem to "lie" on occasion, but they will believe this lie really is the truth.
- Use praise or a favorite activity to reward your child for following rules.
- Help your child with transitions from one activity to the next. Transitions will become easier with practice. For example, tell them plans ahead of time like an upcoming visit to the doctor, or a stay with a babysitter.
- During this period, your child may develop new fears especially about unfamiliar sights and sounds. Your child will like having a daily routine. Help them adjust to new experiences or persons by introducing them to the new person or situation slowly. Allow your child to have choices about how to interact with family members and strangers.
- Be aware that a normal part of your child's development during this period is sexual exploration of one's own body. Children will learn about what is appropriate from your messages to them.

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6-8 YEARS OLD

During the school years, children gain independence and competence quickly. Friends become more important and influential. A child's self-confidence will be affected by academic and social challenges presented in their environment. As kids mature, the parenting challenge is to find a balance between keeping them safe, enforcing rules, maintaining family connections, allowing them to make some decisions, and encouraging them to accept increasing responsibility. Despite their rapid growth and development, they still need parents and caregivers to set limits and encourage healthy habits.



- Create quiet, positive spaces at home for alone time, reading, and/or studying.
- Limit screen time and monitor online activities carefully.
- Build and maintain positive family traditions.
- Gradually increase separation from parents to build your child's independence. Consider healthy and positive spaces, for example, going to grandma's or a friend's house.
- Be open and honest with your child. Your child will become very interested in the difference between truth and lies. Praise your child appropriately and try to not overdo it. Children can see through false praise.
- Respect your child and their individuality. Take time to listen and what they tell you seriously.
- Start conversations about sexuality. You may notice your child developing an interest in genitals and begin fondling them. This is a good time to calmly discuss sexual differences and acknowledge masturbating. You can try establishing family rules about touching (where and when appropriate), discuss consent and setting boundaries with their bodies.
- Give your child responsibilities at home within their ability.
- Help your child learn patience by letting others go first or by finishing a task before going out to play. Encourage them to think about possible consequences before acting.
- Set appropriate limits by making clear rules and follow through with them. Be clear about what behavior is okay and what is not okay.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, rather than punishment. Follow up any discussion about what not to do with a discussion of what to do instead.
- Support your child in taking on new challenges. Encourage them to solve problems, such as a disagreement with another child, on their own.

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9-10 YEARS OLD

Your child's growing independence from the family and interest in friends might be obvious by now. Healthy friendships are very important to your child's development, but peer pressure can become strong during this time. Children who feel good about themselves are more able to resist negative peer pressure and make better choices for themselves. This is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility along with their growing independence. Also, physical changes of puberty might be showing by now.



- Spend time with your child. Talk to them about their friends, their accomplishments, and what challenges they will face.
- Help your child develop their own sense of right and wrong. Talk to them about risky things friends might pressure them to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks like cleaning and cooking. Talk with your child about saving and spending money wisely.
- Talk to your child about respecting others. Encourage them to help people in need. Talk with them about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.
- Help your child set their own goals. Encourage them to think about skills and abilities they would like to have and about how to develop them. Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk with your child about what you expect from them (behavior) when no adults are present. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help them know what to do in most situations.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make them feel badly about themselves.
- When using praise, help your child think about their own accomplishments. Saying “you must be proud of yourself” rather than simply “I’m proud of you” can encourage your child to make good choices when nobody is around to praise them.
- Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty. Be affectionate and honest with your child, and continue to do things together as a family.