

Good -ginnings

Early Child Development · Parenting Education · Learning and School Readiness Tips

the Buzz...

Most parents believe that one of their most important jobs is to teach their children how to behave. Especially in the early years, this job takes patience and skill. It will take a long time before your child understands what good behavior is the same way you do.

You can set your children on the path to good behavior by doing several things. First, find ways to make it easier for young children to do the right thing. Second, set reasonable limits for children's behavior. Third, react calmly and sensibly when children make mistakes. When children succeed, tell them you noticed!

Your use of these parenting skills when your children are young will help them gradually develop the ability to control their own behavior later when adults are not always around. Self-control is a very important part of doing well in school. Most of the articles in this issue of *Good Beginnings* describe ways to teach young children how to develop self-control.

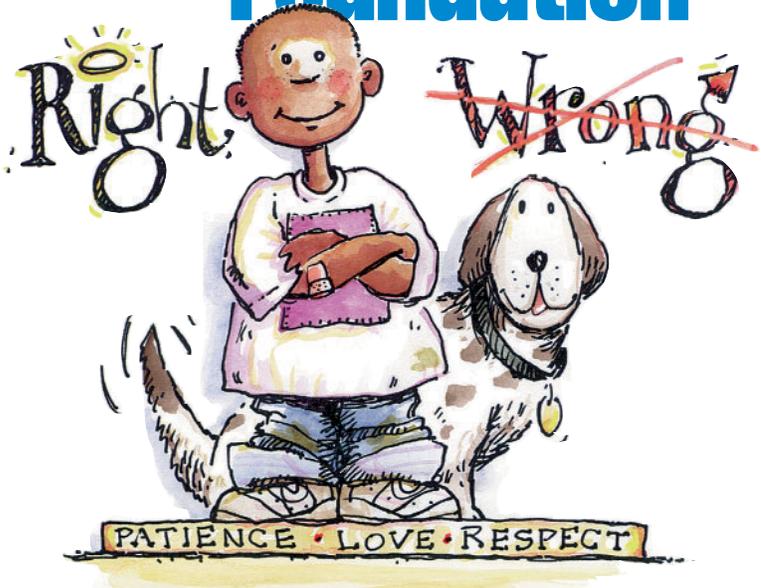
If you would like more information about what you read here, please contact your county Extension office.

Ellen Abell

Ellen Abell, Editor

Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities

Building a Good Foundation



Developing a healthy sense of right and wrong in your child is like building a house. You must build a solid foundation in the very first years. It is this foundation on which your child's actions and decisions about right and wrong will be built. The tools you will need to build a strong foundation are **sensitivity to your child's needs**, patience, love, and respect. With such a foundation—and with your caring attention and steady guidance—your young child will grow into a youngster able to make responsible decisions about what is right and wrong. ●

Use Reasons To Teach Right from Wrong

One skill parents need in teaching children right from wrong is being able to give a short, clear reason why certain behaviors are good and others are not. For example, if your child is cheating in a game, explain the reason NOT to cheat (cheating is not fair to the other player). Then explain the reason to do the right thing (playing by the rules gives everyone a fair chance to win and enjoy the game).

Good reasons help children notice how their behavior affects other people. Good reasons also encourage children to understand the feelings of others. **For example, if your child hits a playmate in a fight over a toy, explain that hitting hurts and is a poor way to solve a problem. Then you might ask, "How would you feel if she hit you?" or "Would you want to play with someone who hits you?"** These questions point out to your child how she and others feel and want to be treated.

Children will be better prepared to do the right thing when parents help them understand the reasons for good behavior. ●

Setting Limits

Setting limits for children helps them learn how to control their own behavior. Parents let children know what the limits are when they make simple, clear rules that are reasonable for the child's age.

The best rules are those that are firm and specific. Specific rules tell your child exactly what you expect. "Before you eat, you must wash your hands." "Bedtime is at 8 o'clock." "Use your quiet voice in the house." "Hurting others is not allowed."

The best rules are those that are firm and specific.

Rules are more effective when there are just a few important ones. Lots of rules are hard for young children to remember and hard for parents to enforce. Rules lose their power when parents do not stand firmly behind the ones they set.

When setting limits, words that tell children what to do work better than those that tell them what not to do. When the words "no" and "don't" are used, your child often does not get a clear idea of what she is supposed to do. Instead of yelling, "Don't jump on the couch!" explain, "You must sit if you want to stay on the couch." A calm but firm tone of voice and direct eye contact will tell the child that you mean what you are saying.

When parents set reasonable limits on children's behavior in the early years, they are helping children develop self-control skills that will be needed when they enter school. ●

TIME-OUT!



Everyone needs a time-out now and then—especially parents of young children! A time-out gives you a chance to stand back and clear your mind when things get out of control. It is a time for calming down and reminding yourself of what is most important.

Children sometimes need a time-out. They need help to calm down when they get so frustrated that they are in danger of harming themselves or others. When you need to help children regain control, remember these things about using time-out:

- Time-out should not be used as a punishment. It is a time to calm down.
- When your child calms down, time-out should be over.
- Afterward, clearly explain to your child why you called a time-out.

If time-out is not used too much, it can be an effective way of teaching your child self-control. ●

Prompting Good Behavior

Prompting means reminding your child what behavior you expect from him. Reminders are often needed when a child is first learning a new behavior. Preschoolers need reminders because their memories are not as good as ours are. When you prompt your child, you increase the chance that the behavior you desire from your child will occur.

For example, when you want your child to say "Thank you," prompt him with a simple question like "What do you say?" Another kind of prompt is when you remind your child about a rule before he forgets to follow it. **"Remember, Michael, we agreed there would be no TV until after you put your toys away."**

When your child responds to your prompts with the desired behavior, be sure to recognize his success in following the rule. **"You put away all your toys. Good for you! Now you may turn on the TV."** ●

He Or She? We take turns referring to children as he or she. When we use he or she, we mean to include all children.



3 Newsletter editor: **Ellen Abell**, *Extension Family and Child Development Specialist*, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, Auburn University. Special thanks to the artist, **Bruce Dupree**, *Extension Communications Specialist*. Contributor: **S. Jermaine Duffie**, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Auburn University. www.aces.edu

References: "Time out for 'time-out,'" National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1996 (<http://www.naeyc.org/naeyc>). *How To Influence Children: A Handbook of Practical Child Guidance Skills*, by Charles E. Schaefer. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1994.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability. UPS:10M11, Revised March 2002. HE-803



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
STATE HEADQUARTERS
AUBURN UNIVERSITY, ALABAMA 36849-5662

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE

