

Holiday family Tips



Benefits of teaching your child to Follow Directions

Kids who struggle to follow directions are likely to experience a variety of consequences. From having to redo their homework assignments to getting in trouble for misbehavior, not following directions can be a big problem.

Whether you instruct your children to clean their rooms or you're telling them how to improve their soccer skills, it's important for kids to be able to take direction—and follow instructions.

Before you can expect your child to get good at following directions, however, it's essential that you become well-versed in giving directions. To give good directions and avoid common mistakes, follow these strategies.

Give a young child one direction at a time. Instead of saying, "Pick up your shoes, put your books away, and wash your hands," wait until the shoes are picked up before giving the next command.

Avoid phrasing your directions as a question. Asking, "Would you please pick up your toys now?" implies that your kids have the option to say no. Once you've given your children directions, ask them to repeat back what you said. Ask, "What are you supposed to do now?" and wait for them to explain what they heard you say.

Remember that mistakes are normal. It's normal for young kids to get distracted, behave impulsively, or forget what they're supposed to do. View each mistake as an opportunity to help them sharpen their skills.



Calming Strategies for Parents

What do you do when you are angry? Ever slam the door, say really mean things, or just flat handle your anger in the wrong way? Whether you realize it or not, your little ones are watching and storing your not-so-healthy coping skills in their toolbox for later use when they are feeling angry.

"Do as I say, not as I do!"

Do you ever use this phrase with your kids? I may have been guilty of it a time or two.

This is a really mixed message that leaves a child feeling confused and possibly angry. Children are like sponges, soaking in the verbal and nonverbal messages of the adults around them.

As the role model adult in your child's life, this is a very important time for you to show them how to handle challenging situations.

I remember my mom counting backwards from ten and taking deep breaths when we were challenging her patience, but I also remember her raising her voice a few times when she was at the end of her rope.

We are all guilty of losing our patience at times and your children will forgive you, but it helps to talk with them afterwards.

Here are some ways for you to manage your own anger and what to do when you lose your cool when your little ones are watching:

- ◆ Remove yourself from the situation
- ◆ Take deep breaths
- ◆ Do something silly
- ◆ Count to 10 or 20 (or however long it takes) slowly or backwards

While doing this, try to focus on the numbers and your breathing. Bring your thoughts back to the present by focusing on something stationary in front of you. This will also help to ease your thoughts and help you think more logically.