

Fun ways to pray with your children

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Calming back-to-school jitters

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Feeding your picky eater

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Pointers:

### **Be a Good Role Model**

- Be the role model your children deserve. Kids learn by watching their parents. Modeling appropriate, respectful, good behavior works much better than telling them what to do.
- Fess up when you blow it. This is the best way to show your child how and when she should apologize.
- Live a little greener. Show your kids how easy it is to care for the environment. Waste less, recycle, reuse, and conserve each day. Spend an afternoon picking up trash around the neighborhood.
- Always tell the truth. It's how you want your child to behave, right?
- Kiss and hug your spouse in front of the kids. Your marriage is the only example your child has of what an intimate relationship looks, feels, and sounds like. So it's your job to set a great standard.
- Respect parenting differences. Support your spouse's basic approach to raising kids -- unless it's way out of line. Criticizing or arguing with your partner will do more harm to your marriage and your child's sense of security than if you accept standards that are different from your own.

### **Know the Best Ways to Praise**

- Give appropriate praise. Instead of simply saying, "You're great," try to be specific about what your child did to deserve the positive feedback. You might say, "Waiting until I was off the phone to ask for cookies was hard, and I really liked your patience."
- Cheer the good stuff. When you notice your child doing something helpful or nice, let him know how you feel. It's a great way to reinforce good behavior so he's more likely to keep doing it.
- Gossip about your kids. Fact: What we overhear is far more potent than what we are told directly. Make praise more effective by letting your child "catch" you whispering a compliment about him to Grandma, Dad, or even his teddy.

### **Trust Yourself**

- Give yourself a break. Hitting the drive-through when you're too tired to cook doesn't make you a bad parent.

- Trust your mommy gut. No one knows your child better than you. Follow your instincts when it comes to his health and well-being. If you think something's wrong, chances are you're right.
- Just say "No." Resist the urge to take on extra obligations at the office or become the Volunteer Queen at your child's school. You will never, ever regret spending more time with your children.
- Don't accept disrespect from your child. Never allow her to be rude or say hurtful things to you or anyone else. If she does, tell her firmly that you will not tolerate any form of disrespect.
- Pass along your plan. Mobilize the other caregivers in your child's life -- your spouse, grandparents, daycare worker, babysitter -- to help reinforce the values and the behavior you want to instill. This includes everything from saying thank you and being kind to not whining.

### **Don't Forget to Teach Social Skills**

- Ask your children three "you" questions every day. The art of conversation is an important social skill, but parents often neglect to teach it. Get a kid going with questions like, "Did you have fun at school?"; "What did you do at the party you went to?"; or "Where do you want to go tomorrow afternoon?"
- Teach kids this bravery trick. Tell them to always notice the color of a person's eyes. Making eye contact will help a hesitant child appear more confident and will help any kid to be more assertive and less likely to be picked on.
- Acknowledge your kid's strong emotions. When your child's meltdown is over, ask him, "How did that feel?" and "What do you think would make it better?" Then listen to him. He'll recover from a tantrum more easily if you let him talk it out.

### **Raise Grateful Kids**

- Show your child how to become a responsible citizen. Find ways to help others all year. Kids gain a sense of self-worth by volunteering in the community.
- Don't raise a spoiled kid. Keep this thought in mind: Every child is a treasure, but no child is the center of the universe. Teach him accordingly.
- Talk about what it means to be a good person. Start early: When you read bedtime stories, for example, ask your toddler whether characters are being mean or nice and explore why.
- Explain to your kids why values are important. The simple answer: When you're kind, generous, honest, and respectful, you make the people around you feel good. More important, you feel good about yourself.
- Set up a "gratitude circle" every night at dinner. Go around the table and take turns talking about the various people who were generous and kind to each of you that day. It may sound corny, but it makes everyone feel good.

### **Don't Stress About Dinner**

- Serve a food again and again. If your child rejects a new dish, don't give up hope. You may have to offer it another six, eight, or even 10 times before he eats it and decides he likes it.
- Avoid food fights. A healthy child instinctively knows how much to eat. If he refuses to finish whatever food is on his plate, just let it go. He won't starve.

- Eat at least one meal as a family each day. Sitting down at the table together is a relaxed way for everyone to connect -- a time to share happy news, talk about the day, or tell a silly joke. It also helps your kids develop healthy eating habits.
- Let your kids place an order. Once a week, allow your children to choose what's for dinner and cook it for them.

### **Always Say "I Love You"**

- Love your children equally, but treat them uniquely. They're individuals.
- Say "I love you" whenever you feel it, even if it's 743 times a day. You simply can not spoil a child with too many mushy words of affection and too many smooches. Not possible.
- Keep in mind what grandmoms always say. Children are not yours, they are only lent to you for a time. In those fleeting years, do your best to help them grow up to be good people.
- Savor the moments. Yes, parenthood is the most exhausting job on the planet. Yes, your house is a mess, the laundry's piled up, and the dog needs to be walked. But your kid just laughed. Enjoy it now -- it will be over far too fast.

### **Boost Brainpower & Physical Activity**

- Teach your baby to sign. Just because a child can't talk doesn't mean there isn't lots that she'd like to say. Simple signs can help you know what she needs and even how she feels well before she has the words to tell you -- a great way to reduce frustration.
- Keep the tube in the family room. Research has repeatedly shown that children with a TV in their bedroom weigh more, sleep less, and have lower grades and poorer social skills. P.S. Parents with a television in their bedroom have sex less often.
- Get kids moving. The latest research shows that brain development in young children may be linked to their activity level. Place your baby on her tummy several times during the day, let your toddler walk instead of ride in her stroller, and create opportunities for your older child to get plenty of exercise.

### **Health Advice All Parents Should Follow**

- Get your kids vaccinated. Outbreaks of measles and other diseases still occur in our country and throughout the world.
- Protect that smile. Encouraging your kid to brush twice a day with a dab of fluoride toothpaste will guard against cavities.
- Be vigilant about safety. Babyproof your home thoroughly, and never leave a child under 5 in the tub alone. Make sure car seats are installed correctly, and insist that your child wear a helmet when riding his bike or scooter.
- Listen to the doc. If your pediatrician thinks your kid's fever is caused by a virus, don't push for antibiotics. The best medicine may be rest, lots of fluids, and a little TLC. Overprescribing antibiotics can cause medical problems for your child and increase the chances of creating superbugs that resist treatment.

- Keep sunblock next to your kid's toothpaste. Apply it every day as part of the morning routine. It'll become as natural as brushing her teeth.
- Put your baby to bed drowsy but still awake. This helps your child learn to soothe himself to sleep and prevents bedtime problems down the line.
- Know when to toilet train. Look for these two signs that your child is ready to use the potty: He senses the urge to pee and poop (this is different from knowing that he's already gone), and he asks for a diaper change.