

The 50 Best Parenting Tips Ever!

1. Grant a wish. Take an hour or two each week to do exactly what your child desires without interruptions or distractions -- even if she wants to play a game you hate or build block towers and then knock them all down.

2. Start and end each day with "I love you." We often think we show our love for our children through our actions, but kids want and need to be told that they're loved.

3. Think ahead about safety. Anticipate what your child's next step is likely to be, then baby-proof accordingly. If your 9-month-old is about to stand, now's the time to put up the gate, cover the sharp corners of tables, and keep pot handles turned away from the edge of the stove.

4. Praise your partner. Never finish a day without acknowledging -- at least once -- your spouse's role in the life of your children.

5. Choose child care carefully. Spend as much time researching your options as you did the last time you bought a new car. Call others who use the facility, talk with the director and the staff, and spend lots of time observing the children there at play.

6. Leave the scene. If your child is having a meltdown, pick her up from behind to carry her away. Too much face-to-face interaction will escalate the situation.

7. Don't rush to punish. Every child has a cup that needs to be filled -- and refilled -- with love, attention, affection, and respect. A rough day, a big frustration, or a harsh word empties the cup. If your child is acting up, give him a hug, listen to him, and spend time together. He'll be more cooperative, and you'll both feel closer.

8. Never take a bath break. When you bathe your baby, don't answer the phone unless there's a portable one right next to you. An infant can drown in seconds if left unattended.

9. Look the other way. Once a week, ignore one of your child's small transgressions -- bad table manners, forgetting to clean up right away -- and remind yourself that you're not perfect either.

10. Sleep when your baby sleeps. If you keep to your old sleep schedule, you'll be sleep -- deprived, which makes you more likely to be cranky and can contribute to postpartum depression.

11. Don't panic about picky eaters. They won't starve, so just continue to offer a variety of foods and small, frequent meals. Let your kids see how much you like vegetables.

12. Act now, talk later. Respond to your child's misbehavior in the heat of the moment, but talk about the incident later in a "planned discussion," in which you lay down the rules and your expectations.

13. Be your baby's favorite toy. Instead of always offering a plaything, amuse him yourself. After all, you move, you make sounds, you can take turns with him and respond to what he does, and you are warm, soft, and safe.

14. Double-check your carseat. Improperly installed child-safety seats are a major cause of injury. Whenever you put your child in his carseat, make sure it still fits correctly.

15. Be romantic. Go out on dates, kiss in front of your kids, and say, "I love you" to your partner (with your kids in earshot).

16. Keep syrup of ipecac in your glove compartment. You probably have it at home, but you may also need it on the road (if your doctor advises you to use it).

17. Make photo albums. Take two hours a month to create lasting, organized family memories. As you gather photos or souvenirs, you'll have time to reflect on the preciousness of your life.

18. Soothe your baby's dry skin. Keep a jar of thick emollient at the changing table, and massage her legs and thighs at each change.

19. Coin a nickname. Call your child by a special moniker that reflects your unique connection to him. A child with many names is a child loved many times.

20. Read all food labels. Always know what your child is eating, especially if she has food allergies. For instance, whey and casein, common ingredients in packaged goods, are really just milk.

21. Present a united front. When you and your spouse disagree about how to handle misbehavior, keep talking and reading about it until you reach a consensus or a compromise.

22. Make family rituals sacred. Once a week, do an activity together, such as reading a book out loud, taking a walk, driving to the woods, or having Sunday breakfast at the same diner or coffee shop. These are the types of memories your kids will treasure most.

23. Nip aggression in the bud. Don't ever let your toddler hit or kick you, even if you know she's angry or frustrated. Block the hits immediately, and firmly say, "No, you do not hit me."

24. Teach your child simple songs and nursery rhymes. Rhyming and playing with sounds is fun and tunes your child in to the specific skills that are needed for reading.

25. Put your baby down when she's awake. Letting her self-soothe is the key to her sleeping through the night. If you nurse or bottle-feed her before bed and she falls asleep, change her diaper one last time to wake her up.

26. Make amends. One of the most important things you can say to your child is "I'm sorry, I messed up." Admitting you're wrong also gives your child the right to make mistakes.

27. Never make your love conditional. You should love your child just because he was born, not because he plays the piano or aces math tests. Tell him often that you'd love him no matter what grades he got and that your love for him grows bigger every day.

28. Monitor yourself. You are your child's first and most powerful moral teacher, so make sure you set an example that you want her to copy. Ask yourself nightly, What did my child learn from my behavior today?

29. Trust your instincts with child care. If you have reservations about a caregiver or feel that your child isn't doing as well as he could, you're probably right. Don't worry about hurt feelings or awkward conversations. Your child's needs come first.

30. Don't be overprotective. You shouldn't try to shield your child from all disappointments, failures, or stressful situations. Kids need to learn to handle difficulty in order to cope with life's challenges.

31. Avoid vicious cycles. If your child is misbehaving in a particular way and you've told him 100 times before not to do it, don't issue warning No. 101. Instead, make it easier for your child to behave. If he always leaves his coat on the floor, for example, install low hooks in the closet.

32. Let your toddler explore. Parents often don't want their children to bang big pots or do other things that are annoying or messy, but that's the way kids learn.

33. Wake a sleeping baby. There are times when doing this is a good idea -- during a morning nap so he'll be sleepy enough for an afternoon nap, or during an afternoon nap so he'll be sleepy enough at bedtime.

34. Ban bad-mouthing. Kids aren't born to hate -- they learn it. Refuse to allow discriminatory remarks of any kind. Help your child discover the positive traits of people, and teach her to focus on the similarities rather than the difficulties.

35. Bait and switch. When your child is misbehaving, distract him with something that's incompatible with the misbehavior. For example, if your child is grabbing food from someone else's plate, hand him a glass of milk.

36. Encourage friendship over popularity. You can't guarantee that your child will be liked by everyone, and it's not your job to make her popular. Support her friendships, but don't try to micromanage her social life.

37. Wear rose-colored glasses. Your upbeat attitude is critical to your child's self-image. Change your language so everyone views him more positively. For example, instead of saying, "My child is overactive," say, "My child is so energetic."

38. Listen before you give advice. The most crucial moments in parenting are when your child is experiencing an emotion such as sadness, fear, anger, disappointment, or embarrassment. First, help your child label the emotion, and validate how she feels. Then, and only then, suggest ways to solve the problem. That way, your child will be more likely come to you for help.

39. Demonstrate differences to your toddler. For example, your child might like one kind of food (say, sweets) while you prefer another (salad). This is of endless interest to young children, who are learning that people can have different perspectives and tastes -- an important life lesson.

40. Don't be a slave to developmental milestones. Children develop at different rates. Try not to push your child -- he will let you know when he's ready to start crawling, walking, or reading.

41. Limit rewards. Help your child develop his own internal reward system so he congratulates himself for a job well done. Change your pronouns: Instead of "I'm really proud of you," say, "You should really be proud."

42. Don't help too much with homework. It's your child's obligation, not yours. If you pitch in, she'll feel she's not capable of doing it herself.

43. Make honesty a priority. Never lie in front of your kids -- for example, don't tell a telemarketer that your husband isn't home when he's really sitting on the couch.

44. Share your loves. Whether it's a favorite hobby, a wonderful song or poem, a great recipe, one of your favorite childhood memories, or a fun game, it will be remembered and cherished.

45. Set your child's sleep routine. By 3 months, your baby should begin sleeping where you want her to be sleeping at 1 year. After that, it will be much more difficult for her to make a change. If she's in a bassinet, move her to the crib; if you won't be co-sleeping, move her out of your bed now.

46. Take your child's side. If you don't know what happened in a particular situation, don't play devil's advocate. For example, if he says, "I hate the teacher! Today she made fun of me in front of my friends," don't immediately say, "I'm sure you were giving her a good reason."

47. Don't worship expert advice. Believe solely in your children, not in Mozart CDs, baby academies, or flash cards. No one will ever know what your children need or who they really are better than.

48. Be very silly. Dance, burp, laugh until you cry, and spit watermelon seeds at your kids.

49. Plan meals together. Let your kids help choose dishes to make and take part in the preparation - they'll be more likely to eat what's served.

50. Break the rules sometimes. Have ice cream for dinner, or wear pajamas all day on a snowy weekend

We hope you have enjoyed this summary. If one of our counselors can help you with your relationship problems please call us at 386-423-9161 to schedule an appointment.