

# Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Neil Cummins Elementary School

Guiding Students for School Success

## Teach kindness by experience —and example!

True kindness involves more than being nice. It requires *empathy*—understanding how others feel. It takes time for your child to build this skill—and you can help right from the start. Think back to when your child was a baby. When you smiled at her, sometimes she smiled back. She noticed your emotions. Now that your child is older:



- **Keep setting an example.** Seeing your kindness raises *her* chances of being kind. Do family activities that involve compassion, such as volunteering.
- **Be understanding.** Research shows that parenting with empathy is good for kids' emotional development.
- **Listen well.** Ask questions about your child's day. "How did that make you feel?" Then show that you listened. "It sounds like you were really relieved."
- **Explain feelings.** Describe them in words your child will understand. For example, "When you told Joey he couldn't come over, he felt left out."
- **Reward empathy.** Say things like, "You read a book to your little sister to help her feel better. Thank you! Your kindness really helped."
- **Imagine together.** Read and talk about people's emotions. "How would that make you feel?" "What would you do in that situation?"
- **Learn from mistakes.** No one is perfect. Practicing empathy is a lifelong process. Promoting this trait makes a big difference.

Source: Linda Morgan, "Teaching kindness and empathy to children," Parent Map, [www.parentmap.com/content/view/73](http://www.parentmap.com/content/view/73).

## Approach discipline in a stepfamily as a team

Discipline is just one of the tricky issues new stepfamilies may face. To handle discipline issues smoothly:



- **Let the biological parent** do the correcting when possible.
- **Explain the house rules** as a couple. Show your child that you're a team.
- **Don't expect peace right away.** Becoming a family is a process. It takes time to build love and respect between kids and their stepparents.

Source: Virginia Molgaard, "Parenting in Stepfamilies," Iowa State University Extension, [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1547C.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1547C.pdf).

## Get the facts on TV violence



Do you know how much violence your child sees on television? According to research:

- **Nearly two out of three** TV shows portray violence.
- **Two hours of daily cartoons** show roughly 10,000 violent acts in a year.
- **Kids' programs contain** twice as many violent acts as other programs.

What should you do? Set limits on TV time and know what your child is watching. Talk about the consequences of violence with your child.

Source: "Violence & Aggression," CommonSenseMedia.org, [www.commonsensemedia.org/parent\\_tips/health\\_survivalguide/violenceaggression.php](http://www.commonsensemedia.org/parent_tips/health_survivalguide/violenceaggression.php).

You know you should compliment your child.



But use your glowing words carefully. For example, if you tell your child he's "perfect" or "a genius" too often, he may expect impossible things of himself.

Instead, use words that match your expectations, like "hardworking" and "kind."

Source: Dr. Sylvia Rimm, *How to Parent So Children Will Learn: Strategies For Raising Happy, Achieving Children*, ISBN: 978-0-910707-86-2 (Great Potential Press, Inc., 1-877-954-4200, [www.giftedbooks.com](http://www.giftedbooks.com)).

## Hold your child accountable



Try not to think of discipline as punishment. Think of it as being about *accountability*. That is, focus on holding your child accountable for her actions when she misbehaves—not merely on punishing her. "I asked you not to put your dirty hands on the wall, but you did anyway. Now you need to clean it up. Would you prefer a sponge or paper towels?"

Source: "Solutions to Parents' Top Discipline Problems," FamilyEducation.com, <http://life.familyeducation.com/discipline/parenting/29452.html>.

## Homework builds discipline skills

Homework can seem like drudgery, but it teaches lessons that go far beyond reading and math. Homework builds responsibility, self-discipline, pride and organization. To make the most of study time:

- **Stick to an after-school routine.** For example, your child might play outside for 30 minutes, have a snack and then do homework.
- **Find a comfortable spot.** Choose a place where your child can concentrate and relax. Make sure he has needed supplies.
- **Set reasonable expectations.** Not sure how long homework should take or how much to help? Ask the teacher for advice.
- **Provide supervision.** Stay nearby in case your child has questions. Do some work of your own. Pay bills or read the paper.



Source: Judy Molland, *Straight Talk About Schools Today: 101 Q&As for Parents*, ISBN: 978-1-57542-219-0 (Free Spirit Publishing, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** My fourth grader is a good kid, but he sometimes acts up at school. How can I let him know that I expect proper behavior at home and in class?

**A:** You can do it by staying connected to his school and partnering with his teacher. The more he sees you and his teacher “on the same page” as far as his behavior goes, the less tempted he may be to push the boundaries at school.

To demonstrate that you and his teacher are a team:

- **Take school-related misbehavior seriously.** If your child gets in trouble at school, there should be consequences at home, too. And make sure they’re logical consequences. For instance, if he kept talking during the film in science class, maybe he should lose some “screen time” at home.
- **Don’t get defensive.** If your child’s teacher tells you about something he’s done wrong, don’t leap to defend him. Instead, get all the facts and listen carefully to what she’s saying. Once you’ve heard her out, ask questions to clarify the issue. It will show your child that you respect the teacher—and that he should, too.
- **Follow up.** A few days after a behavior issue crops up, check in with your child’s teacher to make sure it’s been resolved. Don’t just forget about it and hope the problem went away.
- **Be available.** Let your child’s teacher know that you’re always willing to discuss discipline issues. Give her your phone number and email address. Encourage her to contact you when necessary.



## Banish the bad words!

If your child occasionally curses, it’s time to stop the swearing habit. Here’s how:

- **Break your own habit.** Be sure your child isn’t learning “bad words” at home.
- **Enforce a penalty.** Consider imposing a small fine each time your child swears. If you slip up, fine yourself, too.
- **Remind your child** that words matter. Names—and words—can hurt people, and your child needs to understand that.



Source: Jessica Pegis, “How to Get Kids to Stop Swearing,” *EzineArticles.com*, <http://ezinearticles.com/?How-To-Get-Kids-To-Stop-Swearing&cid=1194921>.

## Tame your tattletale

Not sure how to handle your little tattletale? Try these ideas:

- **Ignore her.** Some kids tattletale to get attention or to get another child in trouble. Ignoring your tattler keeps her from getting the payoff she wants.
- **Boost her problem-solving skills.** Teach your child to handle small issues on her own. It may make her feel empowered.
- **Get involved if necessary.** Is your child tattling about another youngster’s dangerous behavior? Then you must step in.

Source: June Portnoy, “Tattling Versus Telling,” *MetroKids*, [www.metrokids.com/august06/tattling0806.html](http://www.metrokids.com/august06/tattling0806.html).

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