

Lead, Teach, Encourage

Family meetings provide perfect opportunities to teach life skills

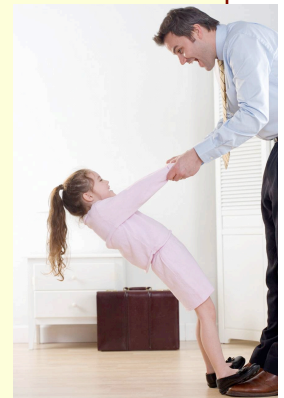


Family meetings are the perfect opportunity to teach children basic skills that will help them get along in the world. These can include personal responsibility, loving others, respect for authority, work ethic, and positive attitude. Identify a new focus every few months and

work to develop that skill over time. Use family time to discuss how each child developed that skill during the prior week. Use humorous role plays to depict *DIS*respectful behavior, negative attitudes, or personal *IR*responsibility.

Dads are Special!

A father-child relationship can be compared to a bank account. Every negative act - a frown, a slap, a "no" or "I'm busy" - is like a withdrawal from the account. In contrast, affectionate, caring actions are like deposits in the relationship account. If the withdrawals exceed the deposits, the relationship breaks down into mutual distrust and isolation - it becomes bankrupt. Fathers who have to make a large number of withdrawals can do so if their deposits of warmth, support and nurturance are high enough. Fathers can be both tough when necessary and tender when needed.



FIRST THINGS FIRST--OBEDIENCE

There was a time in history when children obeyed adults the first time they were spoken to. This is no longer the norm. Media reinforces the image of the weak adult and the disrespectful, disobedient child. Before working on any other area of your child's behavior, you must focus on obedience or "fast-listening." Introduce the skill by defining fast-listening and slow-listening. Role play

common occurrences where your child might usually slow listen. Practice fast-listening. When a real situation occurs, do not repeat your request. Either make them follow through with the request or impose the designated consequence to help them remember next time. Believe in them. Tell them, "I know you'll figure this out soon. It just might take more practice."

Encourage them as they struggle

The emperor moth is the most majestic species among all the moths. It has wide wings spanning out majestically when it flies. Before it can become a full grown moth, it has to be a pupa in a cocoon. Now, the interesting fact about the moth's cocoon is that the neck of the cocoon is very narrow.

In order that it become a moth, the pupa of the moth must squeeze its way out of the narrow neck.

One day a man found a cocoon of an emperor moth. He took it home so that he could watch the moth come out of the cocoon. He sat and watched the moth struggling to force the body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther. It just seemed to be stuck.

Then the man being kind decided to help the moth. So he took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The moth then

emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. He expected that the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the little moth spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly. A few days later, it died.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the moth to get through the tiny opening was the way of forcing fluid from the body of the moth into its wings so that it would be ready for flight. Once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon. Freedom and flight would only come after the struggle. By depriving the moth of a struggle, he deprived the emperor moth of health.

You see, the struggles of life, heartaches and pains are necessary if you want to be great. Instead of cursing them, understand them while you are experiencing them. They are part of the making of a man.



Eliminate unwanted behavior and free children from roles

Rather than daily nagging, reminding, and correcting routines, create a focused plan to eliminate unwanted behaviors in your house. Let's face it, kids fall into roles or labels for a reason. The *bully, teaser, victim, or selfish child* worked to earn that label. It will take a targeted effort to undo this.

1. Look for opportunities to show the child a new picture of himself.
2. Put children in situations where they can see themselves differently.
3. Let children overhear you say something positive about them.
4. Model the behavior you would like to see.
5. Be a store house for your child's special moments.
6. When your child behaves according to the old label, state your feelings and expectations

Here's what that looks like for Michael, the self-centered child:

- 1) "Look at you sharing your Halloween candy with your brother! That's what I call a sharing boy. I bet that makes you feel good to see him so happy." (Lay it on pretty thick in the beginning.)
- 2) "You sure made Stanley feel good at the nursing home. I know you would have rather been home finishing your Monopoly game, but it was good to see you so focused on him."
- 3) "Mom, you wouldn't believe how nicely Michael shared some of his Halloween candy. For a boy who likes treats as much as he does, he sure was generous!"
- 4) "Wow, I needed to get to Target today, but your dad really needs to have our help in the yard. Oh well, I guess we'll just go tomorrow since dad really needs us today!"
- 5) "Now Michael, I remember a boy who felt so much joy when he included his little brother in his game even though it made playing a little more difficult. I'm sure you can figure out a way to include Matthew in tag today!"
- 6) "Michael, I know you want to wear jeans to Aunt Megan's wedding, but that is not thinking of her feelings and how special this day is for her. Go up stairs and change into your dress pants."



TEACH FLEXIBLE THINKING



“Mad thoughts” aren’t helpful

“That’s not fair!” “He cheated!” “You’re so mean!” “I lose at everything.” “I never get to do anything fun.” Have you ever heard these before? Of course, it’s natural for any of us to feel some negative emotions when things don’t go your way. But emotions are the result of a thought process, much of which happens so quickly we may not even be aware of it.

When we cultivate the habit of responding to situations with mad thoughts, those thoughts create angry feeling, which can lead to disrespectful behavior.

The most effective tool we parents have is our own example. Social science studies have repeatedly shown that kids imitate what they see and hear whether watching TV or observing the way their parents speak to each other or handle disappointments.

“Don’t worry that your kids don’t always listen to what you say. Worry that they watch everything you do!” Dave Ramsey

Think out loud when you are interacting with your kids. “Oh rats, I didn’t get the color I wanted. That’s OK, I like to be green too.”

“Matthew went and it wasn’t his turn. He must have gotten excited and forgot it was my turn.”

Discuss with your kids the relationship with the thoughts in their heads and the way they feel. Teach them that they have control over their thoughts. Introduce a few common flexible thoughts that they can use to replace mad thoughts.

Once your child has memorized a few flexible thoughts, help him practice using them in common household scenarios. In fact you can practice combining flexible thoughts with fast listening.

You can practice:

- Coming in from outside
- Being asked to do a household chore
- Disagreeing with a sibling
- Making a mistake
- Coping with disappointment
- Turning off the TV or computer
- Losing at a sport or game

Have fun with the practice. Give them a chance to role play mad thoughts so they can see their harm.

Flexible Thoughts

1. I should just do it.
2. It won’t take long.
3. If I’m respectful, things work out better.
4. Even though I lost, I still had fun.
5. Everyone makes mistakes.
6. That’s OK. I can do it later.
7. How can I think of the other person first?
8. I can handle this.
9. It’s no big deal.
10. The sooner I start, the sooner I’ll be done.

Lead your children into adulthood by teaching:

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Life is 10% what happens and 90% how you react to it.



STRONG WORK ETHIC

Teach children to do more than they have to do. Teach them dedication, hard work, and commitment.



CARING ABOUT PEOPLE



True happiness comes from being in relationships with other

people. A life of abundance is found in deep, committed relationships with those around us.