



positive parenting tips FOR HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Children learn and grow throughout their lives, from walking as babies to making their own decisions as young adults. They develop special skills along the way to help them become more independent. These skills are called developmental milestones.

As babies and toddlers, developmental milestones include things like smiling, taking a first step, and kicking a ball. When kids get older these milestones include building friendships and developing confidence in areas of life like school and sports. As kids turn to teens their independence grows and they develop their own personalities and opinions.

No matter what age your kiddo is right now, there's a lot you can do to help them develop and grow the right way. Here are a few tips to help get you started.

BABIES (0-1):

- Talk to your baby often and repeat their sounds. They find your voice calming.
- Read to them daily to help develop language skills.
- Give lots of attention and cuddle them to show you care.
- Encourage them to explore and try new things.

TODDLERS (1-3):

- Let them help when they're getting dressed, eating, etc. to encourage independence.
- Praise wanted behaviors more than you punish unwanted behaviors. When there is unwanted behavior, show or tell them what they should do instead. Try to teach them acceptable ways to show they are upset.
- Encourage pretend play to spark imagination.

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COUNSELOR CORNER

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Q: How can I best help my child adjust to the new school year?

A: As we prepare for school to start this fall, the first word that comes to my mind is **grace**. According to Webster's Dictionary, grace is defined as, "the quality or state of being considerate or thoughtful." It's OK to ask our children, teachers and ourselves for grace. As we know, the past 16 months have been like no other. I am a parent as well, and even though I have hope that this fall will feel more like "normal," I have my own worries and concerns, too.

As far as advice, let's start with the basics. I hope you find these nuggets useful to help your child adjust to the new school year.

- 1. Sleep.** Getting enough Zzzs tends to be underrated but is so important. I truly believe if kids (and adults!) can get adequate sleep, the whole day will go better. A sleep schedule and decent sleep hygiene is vital to start the school year off right.

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2. Embrace and accept the uncertainties that the school year may bring. Communicating with your child about their emotions is key to bringing about normalcy. Validate what they are feeling, whether it is excitement, anxiety, stress, or anger. Children do not always come out and tell you how they feel; sometimes they may act out or display behavioral changes due to experiencing uneasiness in their environment. Don't worry if they don't open up right away. Continue to talk to your child about how they are feeling regarding the new school year and address any concerns or worries they may have. Eventually they will talk to you.

3. Practice empathy and gratitude with your children. Studies show that a positive attitude and displaying gratitude helps to reduce stress. While it may take practice, you are able to strengthen your mind towards optimism. Cultivating a sense of gratitude can help one be more positive toward others as well as maintain healthy relationships. One recommendation is to start a gratitude journal for your child or family. Expressing gratitude possesses endless benefits to a more positive and joyful mindset.

I wish you all a great start to the school year, and remember to **give yourself grace!**

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YOUNG CHILDREN (3-8):

- Let your child help by giving them simple chores around the house.
- Encourage play with other children to show the importance of sharing and friendship.
- Be clear when disciplining your child with examples of behaviors you expect. When they do something wrong, tell them what they should do instead.
- Help with problem-solving by going through steps with them when they're upset.
- Give a short list of choices when making decisions, like three foods to have for a snack.
- Show affection and recognize their accomplishments.
- Have conversations about friends and school.
- Set clear rules and stick to them. Tell them what's OK and what's not.
- Spend time together as a family doing fun things like playing games or reading.
- Praise them for good behavior.

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD (8-12):

- Talk with your child about things like respecting others and helping people.
- Use discipline to protect your child rather than punishment to make them feel bad. Follow up with a discussion about the situation.
- Help them develop their own sense of right and wrong. Talk about risky situations they might experience with friends or at school.
- Help them set goals by focusing on

skills they have/would like to have.

- Make clear rules and don't bend them. Talk about what is expected when there aren't adults around.
- When praising your child for their accomplishments, help them think about it from their perspective. Say "you must be proud of yourself" to help them make good choices even when there is no one around to show praise.
- Talk about physical and emotional changes your child will go through.
- Show affection and be honest with them.
- Do fun activities together.

YOUNG TEENS (12-15):

- Be direct and honest about sensitive subjects.
- Get to know their friends and show an interest in their school life.
- Help your teen make healthy choices and encourage them to make their own decisions.
- Allow their input when there is conflict, but be clear about expectations.
- Compliment your teen and celebrate their accomplishments.
- Show them affection and spend time together.

TEENAGERS (15-17):

- Pay attention to changes in behavior and ask about your teenager's feelings.



- Respect their opinions and listen to them without playing down their concerns.
- Encourage them to find solutions to their problems. Be available to give advice and support.
- Help them make good decisions about what to post online and the amount of time they spend on social media.
- Plan ahead for difficult situations. Discuss solutions to conflicts they might encounter.
- Respect your teenager's privacy.
- Encourage your teen to eat healthy and get enough sleep and exercise. Promote healthy habits by having meals together. A teen who eats meals with their family is more likely to have good grades and less likely to use drugs or get into fights.

Information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Visit www.cdc.gov/childdevelopment to learn more.