



Loving Reminders for Parents

- ♥ When you feel guilty about your parenting, you are likely to expect too much of yourself and be inconsistent with you children, often expecting too little of them. Give yourself a break; expect to be human and make mistakes. You may find that this helps you feel more kind and friendly and firm toward your children. You can be both firm and friendly while setting guidelines for your children.
- ♥ Use peaceful time to discuss and set up routines for daily living—how to get up and off to school, mealtimes, bedtime, homework and chores, etc. Use your children’s ideas and allow time to practice the routines, while giving lots of appreciation and encouragement.
- ♥ Compliment your children often for all the little ways they are cooperative and well-behaved—“I really appreciate the way you_____.” (waited patiently, got up without a fuss, washed your hands, held my hand across the street, cleared that dish from the table, put that toy away, looked at me when I called you, remembered to bring your homework home, helped your brother, said please...etc.).
- ♥ Give clear, simple, and positive directions...and be sure parents follow them, too!—“food is for eating, not throwing; we draw on paper, not walls (provide plenty of large paper); sand stays low/in the sandbox; screaming is for outside; shoes/clothes go in the closet; etc.”
- ♥ Acknowledge feelings and give alternatives—“You sound angry/sad/etc.”; “You’re having a hard time following directions/getting to sleep/etc.”; “Can you tell me about it?”; “If you don’t want to eat, put it on this plate.”; “You may hit the pillow, but not me/your sister/the wall/the furniture, etc.”; “If you want to throw/tear/bite something, use this...”
- ♥ Role model for your children the behaviors you want from them—as much as possible—and correct yourself aloud to them when you need to. “I forgot to say please.”; “Look where I left my coat, it goes in the closet.”; etc...
- ♥ When children know the rules and forget them, question them as a reminder—“Sam, what’s the rule about videos/homework/eating/biting/hitting/etc?” ... “Right!” ... “So what do you need to do now?”

- ♥ Give your children as many choices as possible; let them choose between several options that are acceptable to you—2 or 3 kinds of breakfast cereal; 2 or 3 options for lunch; clothing options; options for the order of things (would you like to get your pajamas on first or brush your teeth first?); etc.
- ♥ When you find yourself saying “No, no” too often to keep children away from things they shouldn’t touch, it’s time to reorganize so that the things within their reach are things that they may touch.
- ♥ You may encourage children’s curiosity while teaching them concepts like fragile, gentle, etc.—“This is fragile. You may hold it on my lap if you touch it very gently.”
- ♥ When a child has a temper tantrum, take charge of the surrounding environment and let the child cook off on her own. Move the child firmly to a safe quiet stop and let her be. Stay near, watch, and intervene only to keep the child from hurting herself or others. When she calms down, focus on the child’s feelings even if the tantrum was a reaction to a limit you set—“Wow, you were really mad, do you feel better now?” Offer a hug.
- ♥ Use consequences that are related to the misbehavior—“If you don’t pick up your toys, I’ll need to pick them up and I’ll put them in a bag in the garage for a few days”. Give children an opportunity to comply with your limits—“You’ll need to pick them up in 5 minutes so that I can vacuum, otherwise I will have to take them to the garage.”
- ♥ Don’t back down on your limits because your children react to them with whining, complaining, crying, etc. Simply acknowledge their feelings and encourage them that they can avoid the consequences in the future—“You’re really upset that you don’t have your toys today. I’m sorry you had to lose out on them because you didn’t clean them up. I bet you’ll be able to clean them up next time and not lose out.”
- ♥ Be sure to make your own needs for a break, peace, adult time, etc. known to your children. Plan with them ways to get your needs met to the extent possible—“I need time for _____. When I’m finished, I can spend _____ time with you. What would you like to do when I’m finished? What can you do while I’m _____?”
- ♥ Often the idea of one-minute parenting can be helpful. A minute spent hugging and listening to a child who wants attention can avoid their need to start bugging you in order to get it. Children often want just a quick simple acknowledgment of their presence and experience. An interested,

enthusiastic “Yes”, or other acknowledgment of their words or feelings can go farther than you might expect.

- ♥ When you are over-tired, over-taxed, over-stressed, feel bombarded by your children, feel impatient, angry, and unable to respond to them in a firm, friendly way, take time-out and try to collect yourself. Be sure the child is physically safe and remove yourself from them as far as is reasonable. Then breath for five minutes, wash your face, call a friend or a hotline. Try to calm and collect yourself and create a plan for before returning to your child. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.