

# Raising Good Children: 11 Things Parents Can Do

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[www.cortland.edu/character](http://www.cortland.edu/character)





For a copy of this PPT, go to:

■ [www.cortland.edu/character](http://www.cortland.edu/character)

■ Click on “Smart & Good Schools Initiative” and scroll down to “Parenting Resources”

# No-Brainers

1. What's the hardest job there is?
2. What's the job for which we get the least training?
3. What's the job that gets harder all the time because of the stresses on families and the negative influences of the wider culture?
4. Who has the greatest impact on kids' character development?

# Character Matters, Ch. 3

- **20 ways** to strengthen the school-parent partnership, for example:
- Affirm parents as the primary character educators
- Seek parents' commitment to promoting shared character expectations (hard work, honesty, etc.)
- Get the program to the parents (e.g., Monthly Principal's Letter, Tips for Parents, Suggested Media Guidelines, and Family Homework)



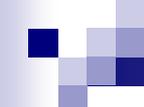
# Principle 1

Know what good character is and make character development a high priority.



*What is the content of  
good character?*

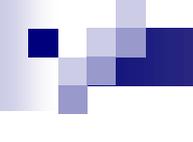
10 Essential Virtues

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1. Wisdom (Good Judgment)
  2. Justice
  3. Fortitude (Inner Toughness)
  4. Self-control
  5. Love (Sacrifice for Others)
  6. Positive attitude
  7. Hard work
  8. Integrity (Honesty w/Yourself)
  9. Gratitude
  10. Humility (Desire to Be Better)



*Make character development  
a high priority:*

View children as  
"adults-in-the-making."



Recent studies find that adults who were overindulged as children have difficulty coping with life's disappointments.

They have a distorted sense of entitlement that gets in the way of success both in the workplace and in relationships.

*-Newsweek, September 13, 2004*



Make character  
development a deliberate  
goal—central to family life:

THE FAMILY  
TOUCHSTONE



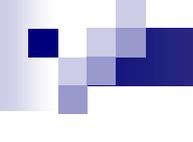
# The Davidson Way

- We don't whine, complain, or make excuses.
- We don't lie, cheat, steal, or intentionally hurt others.
- When we make a mistake, we make up for it.
- We work to keep our minds, bodies, and souls healthy, strong, and pure.
- We commit to learning and growing in our faith.
- We live with an attitude of gratitude and joy.



# Principle 2

Be an  
authoritative  
parent.



Parents must have a  
strong sense of  
*moral authority*  
—their right to be  
respected and obeyed.



# 3 styles of parenting (research of Diana Baumrind):

- Authoritarian
- Permissive
- Authoritative.



At all developmental levels, the most confident and responsible children have *authoritative* parents.



One survey of elementary school children found that when they crave something, most expect to ask 9 times before their parents give in.

*-Newsweek, September 13, 2004*

## *Ways to Say No*

1. No.
2. No, and that's final.
3. No, and don't ask me again.
4. I have thought about it, and the answer is no.
5. I know you know how to nag. It won't work.
6. Nice try, the answer is still no.



Have a *zero tolerance*  
policy for  
disrespectful speech  
and behavior.



# Principle 3

Love children.



Love involves . . .

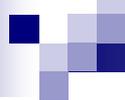
- Time

- Communication

- Sacrifice.



10 WAYS TO  
START  
A  
CONVERSATION  
WITH YOUR TEEN



# WAYS TO START A CONVERSATION

1. How has today been so far on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is terrible and 10 is terrific)?  
Why?
2. What is something you accomplished this week that you feel good about?
3. What's something you're looking forward to?
4. What's on your mind these days?
5. What's a goal you're working on?



# Principle 4

Teach by  
example.



The stands we  
take define  
our values.



# Principle 5

Manage the  
Moral  
Environment.

# The importance of supervision:

The most academically motivated and morally responsible teens—and the ones least likely to engage in risky behaviors—are those who:

1. Enjoy warm and involved relationships with their parents
2. Have parents who set clear expectations and monitor their adolescents' activities in age-appropriate ways.

*-Building a Better Teenager,*

Child Trends 2002 research report, [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)

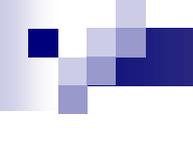
# Media Facts

- The average child sees about 100 commercials a day.
- The average young person consumes nearly 7 hours of electronic media a day.
- Three-quarters of 6<sup>th</sup>-graders have their own TV in their bedrooms.

—*Kids and Media at the New Millennium* ,  
[www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)

# What The Research Shows

1. By 16, the average child sees about 200,000 acts of TV violence.
2. There is a *causal connection* between kids' viewing TV violence and aggressive behavior.
3. Kids who watch the most violent TV are the *most violent*.
4. Kids are *desensitized* by what they watch.
5. Teens who more frequently watch TV with sexual content are more likely to be sexually active.



# Family Media Guidelines

1. We use media to promote family life and good values.
2. The use of *any* media (TV, VCR, Internet, etc.) in the home requires parents' **permission and presence**.
3. Have a family meeting to explain your reasons for these guidelines.

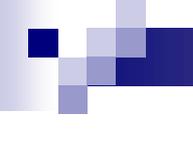


*RECOMMENDATION:*

Consider having

NO TV

while you have children  
in the home.



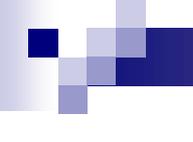
# How do I childproof the Internet?

- [www.besafehome.com](http://www.besafehome.com)
- [www.afo.net](http://www.afo.net)
- [www.NetNanny.com](http://www.NetNanny.com)



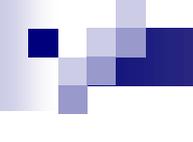
## Principle 6

Use direct  
teaching to form  
habits and  
conscience.



Our **conscience** is a big part of character. Conscience includes:

- *Making a judgment* that applies standards of right and wrong to our own conduct
- *Feeling obligated* to do the right thing.



One 10-year-old boy said:

"A conscience is the part of your mind that has the job of decision-maker. My conscience appears just before an incident occurs.

"Most of the time I listen to it, but sometimes my conscience sleeps through an incident."



With respect to conscience,  
we have *two* duties:

- First, to *form* our conscience correctly.
- Then to *follow* our conscience faithfully.

- 
- 
- Practice what you preach, but also preach what you practice.



*Judith Martin (columnist):*

- “Raising a civilized child takes 20 years of constant teaching and another 10 of review.”

# Dad's Two Sets Of Threes

## ■ *On honesty:*

- Never lie.
- Never cheat.
- Never steal.

## ■ *On adversity:*

- Don't whine.
- Don't complain.
- Don't make excuses.

-John Wooden, *Wooden*



## Principle 7

Teach kids how to  
make good  
decisions.

# Good decision-making includes:

- Understanding that something is right or wrong (moral judgment).
- Understanding why it is right or wrong (moral reasoning).

Moral reasoning develops in stages.

# 7 Ethical Tests

1. The Golden Rule.
2. The truth test.
3. The parents test.
4. The religion test.
5. The conscience test.
6. The consequences test.
7. The front-page test.

# Stage 0: Egocentric Reasoning (appears around age 4)\*

- “I should get my own way”
- Reason to be good: to get rewards and avoid punishment

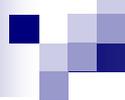
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\* Ages indicate reasonable developmental expectations for a child of normal intelligence growing up in a supportive moral environment.



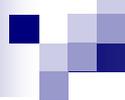
# Stage 1: Unquestioning Obedience (appears around kindergarten age)

- “I should do what I’m told.”
- Reason to be good: to stay out of trouble.



## Stage 2: What's-in-it-for-me Fairness (early elementary grades)

- “I should look out for myself but be fair to those who are fair to me.”
- Reason to be good: Self-interest: What's in it for me?

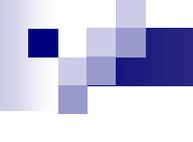


## Stage 3: Interpersonal Conformity (upper elementary grades and early to mid-teens)

- “I should be a nice person and live up to the expectations of people I know and care about”
- Reason to be good: So others will think well of me and I can think well of myself.

## Stage 4: Responsibility to the “System” (high school years or late teens)

- “I should fulfill my responsibilities to the social or value system I feel part of.”
- Reason to be good: To keep the system from falling apart and to maintain self-respect as someone who meets my obligations.



## Stage 5: Principled Conscience (young adulthood)

- “I should show the greatest possible respect for the rights and dignity of every individual and support a system that protects human rights.”
- Reason to be good: The obligation of conscience to act in accordance with the principle of respect for all human beings.

# How do we know what actions are right?

1. Right actions affirm human dignity.
2. They promote the happiness and well-being of the individual.
3. They serve the common good.
4. They meet the test of reversibility.  
(*Would I want this done to me?*)
5. They can be universalized. (*Would I want all people to act in this way?*)

# Ask-Don't-Tell

*Use questions to get kids to practice thinking.*

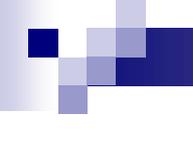
- What's the rule about playing ball inside?
- What am I thinking?
- Why am I upset with you?
- How can you solve this problem?
- What will happen if you keep arguing about the TV?
- W.I.T.S.? (What is the situation?)
- How can you make this a good morning (day) instead of a grumpy one?

# 5 STEPS IN MAKING A DIFFICULT DECISION

1. What are the facts?
2. What are the important values?
3. What are my choices?
4. What are the likely consequences of each choice?
5. What is the best choice—the one that takes into account the important values, maximizes good consequences, and minimizes bad ones?

## Guiding sexual decision-making:

We need to give young people a rational way of thinking about sex—one that appeals to their intelligence and that will ground them and make their decisions solid.

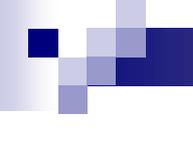


**Sex is most meaningful, most fulfilling, when it's part of something bigger—a continuing, loving relationship between two human beings. When you're married, your sexual intimacy expresses your total commitment to each other.**

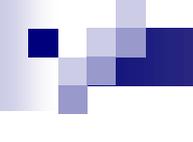
***You join your bodies when you join your lives. The ultimate intimacy belongs within the ultimate commitment.***

# 10 Emotional Dangers of Premature Sex

- Worry about pregnancy and STDs.
- Regret.
- Guilt.
- Loss of self-respect.
- Corruption of character.
- Difficulty trusting.
- Depression and suicide.
- Damaged or ruined relationships.
- Stunted personal development.
- Negative effects on marriage.

- 
- **I lost my virginity when I was 15. My boyfriend and I thought we loved each other. But once we began having sex, it completely destroyed any love we had. I felt he was no longer interested in spending time with me—he was interested in spending time with my body.**

**—Amanda, a college student**



***The attempted suicide rate for 12- to-  
16-year-old girls who have had  
sexual intercourse is six times  
higher than for peers  
who are virgins.***

**D. Orr, M. Beiter, & G. Ingersoll, “Premature sexual  
activity as an indicator of psychosocial risk,”  
*Pediatrics*, 87, 141-147.**



# Principle 8

Discipline  
wisely.



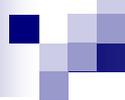
When kids do something wrong, require them to . . .

1. Say, "I'm sorry."
2. Say why they are sorry.
3. Ask, "What can I do to make up for it?" (restitution)



# Principle 9

Solve conflicts  
fairly.



# The Fairness Meeting

1. Achieve mutual understanding.
2. Find a solution everyone thinks is fair.
3. Have a follow-up meeting to discuss how it's working.



# Principle 10

Provide  
opportunities to  
practice the  
virtues.



*Character has 3 parts:*

The HEAD

(understanding the virtue)

The HEART

(caring about the virtue)

The HAND

(practicing the virtue).



Character development is  
not a spectator sport.

Virtues are habits that  
develop through  
practice.



Children develop  
character by what they  
see, what they hear, and  
what they are repeatedly  
led to do.

—James Stenson



# Principle 11

Foster spiritual  
development.



## *What is the meaning of life?*

“I see so many people just going through the motions: get into a good school, so you can get into a good college, so you can get a good job, so you can get a better job, so you can get rich and die.”

*—Recent high school graduate*

# Sense of Purpose

- “A sense of purpose is a motivator of good deeds and galvanizer of character growth.”

*-William Damon, Stanford University  
psychologist*

# Religion and Youth Character

Teens who practice their religious faith show:

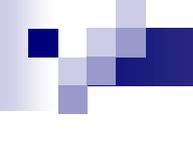
- Higher levels of altruism
- Lower levels of theft, vandalism, violence, and drug and alcohol use.
- Less likelihood of sexual activity.

-2002 Child Trends Research Brief, *Religious Involvement and Children's Well-Being*

[www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)



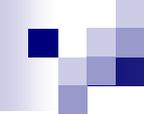
"Draw near to God, and  
God will draw near to  
you."



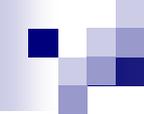
"I begin my prayer in  
silence.

God speaks to us in the  
silence of  
our hearts."

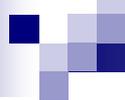
—Mother Teresa



HOW DOES GOD  
ANSWER PRAYER?



WHY DO GOOD PEOPLE  
SUFFER?



For more resources (including a copy of this PPT) on developing character in the family or school:

Center for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Rs

[www.cortland.edu/character](http://www.cortland.edu/character)

Click on “Smart & Good Schools Initiative”