

Parenting Tips:
21 of the 'Best!'

**Building character in
young hearts and growing minds.**
by Jean Tracy, MSS



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Parenting Tips: **21** of the Best!

Dear Parents,

Here are **21** of great parenting tips from, counselors, teachers, and parents just like you. Practice the ones you like and enjoy the rest.

All my best,

Jean Tracy, MSS

1

Be consistent.

My friend, Roberta, sent me this one. Roberta raised 5 kids. Besides having lots of parenting experience, Roberta has a special personality that kids love. She helped many teens who were out of control in our local school district. I respect her advice immensely. This is her number one tip:

Be consistent. “Being consistent in following through with rules and expectations should be the number one task with young parents. By being consistent, you eliminate the control that a child likes to have in “raising a parent.” I think that being consistent is the hardest task a parent faces. The positive consequences are worth the effort.” —*Roberta Lewis, Mother, Grandmother, and High School Staff Member*

I believe Roberta is right. Being consistent in following through with rules and expectations is the hardest task a parent faces. Yet, it far exceeds the effort.

Consider being inconsistent by not following through with discipline and promises:

- Can you see how a child would lose respect and trust for you?
- Can you see how a child might challenge your authority to guide?
- Can you see how a child might sass, ignore what you say, and manipulate you?

Being inconsistent may be easier at the time of the problem or promise. In the long run, being inconsistent becomes very painful.

2

Discipline wisely.

This parenting tip comes from my friend, Nick Wiltz. Nick is a child psychologist. Nick worked with the most difficult cases and helped many families. This is Nick’s tip:

Discipline wisely. “When disciplining, don’t talk, act!” —*Nick Wiltz, PhD, Father, Grandfather, Child Psychologist*

Nick’s tip reminds me of my own counseling cases. Imagine telling your child she has 5 minutes to brush her teeth and get to bed. 10 minutes later, you call out, “Are you in bed yet?” Your child answers from the bathroom, “Almost!” 10 minutes later, you call out again, “Are you in bed yet?” Again, your child answers, “Almost!” 10 minutes later you call out, “Are you in bed yet?” For the third time her answer is, “Almost!” You get so mad that you start yelling, “If you don’t get in bed right now, I’ll come in there and spank you.” Within 5 seconds your child is in bed.

What just happened? Like Nick said, “Don’t talk, act!” You talked 3 times. When you raised your voice after the third time, your child jumped in bed. Why? Your child knows you won’t act until you’ve nagged 3 times. Nick is suggesting you follow through immediately when you want your child to do something.

Following through might be as simple as standing by the bathroom sink with a serious look on your face and staring at your child until she's finished. Most kids will finish quickly and get to bed. If you act rather than talk, you won't end up threatening your child with a spanking.

3

Be involved in your child's schooling.

This tip is from my friend and neighbor, Beth. Beth is the office manager in one of our local elementary schools. Her school serves hundreds of kids from many different countries speaking many different languages.

This is what Beth recommends.

Be involved in your child's schooling. "Help in your child's classroom, with your child's homework, and work with your child's teacher if your child is having a school problem or is a school problem. If you form a partnership with your child's teacher, you will be helping your child." —*Beth Fahlstrom, Mother and School Office Manager*

Many parents don't get involved in their child's schooling because they don't know how important it is, they feel overwhelmed in their own lives, or are too busy.

Parents, most teachers love having your help.

Helping in your child's classroom offers you several golden opportunities. You'll find out how your child is doing. You'll be more effective helping with your child's homework. You'll be showing your child how much you care. Helping in your child's classroom is a great way to insure your child's success.

4

Share grief.

Today is the anniversary of 9/11. The news is filled with pictures and stories that bring tears to my eyes. Today I'm sharing a parenting suggestion from a wise friend and mother:

Share grief. "Include your child in difficult things, like the death of a loved one." —*Mary Watts, Mother and Accountant.*

It's helpful to let your child see you grieve. When your child sees you grieve, your child realizes that grief is normal. It adds another dimension and makes life more realistic. Of course, your child will have sad things to grieve throughout his or her life. To help your child, have him or her draw a picture of the difficulty and then tell you about it. When you take the time to listen, you'll lessen your child's pain.

5

Listen and validate feelings.

Steve Irwin, Australia's "Crocodile Hunter," is being remembered with love throughout the United States. Our news stations show fascinating videos of Steve and his work. They tell us that he was a great listener who paid respectful attention to everyone he met. Steve is the inspiration for this parenting tip.

Listen and validate feelings. "Rather than question your child's feelings, listen with understanding. Beware of saying things like, 'You don't mean that,' even

if it is something you don't want to hear. If you can listen with understanding and validate your child's feelings, your child will be comfortable in coming to you with problems." —*Ann Mortensen, Mother and Business Woman*

This tip was from my young cousin, Ann Mortensen, who is raising three awesome children. Ann is the kind of mother who stops what she's doing, looks her children in the eye, and asks caring questions. They, in turn, share their thoughts and feelings with her. Because of her listening skills and her acceptance of their feelings, she is able to be her children's confidant.



Follow through.

This tip comes from Jeni. Jeni is a wonderful wife, mother, and working mom. In fact, Jeni is married to my son Brian. They have a 2 1/2 year-old named Ethan. Ethan delights me completely. I get to care for him every Thursday. Thursday is my favorite day of the week. Here's Jeni's Tip:

Follow through. "Follow through on both rewards and punishments. Empty promises and threats don't achieve anything." —*Jeni Tracy, Wife, Mother, and Accountant*

Years ago when my sons, Brian and Scott, were little, I learned why following through was so important. We'd go grocery shopping and the first thing they'd ask as we entered the store was, "Can we have some gum from the gumball machine?" I'd smile and say, "Let's see how you behave." They knew if they behaved they'd get a gumball. If I forgot about the gumballs when leaving the store, they'd remind me. That told me that images of gumballs danced in their heads while we shopped. The gumballs were important to them.

Brian and Scott taught me that I needed to follow through. I learned that following through motivated them to behave because they knew they could trust me to do what I promised.



Avoid arguing and talking too much.

The following tip is from my friend, Marilyn Wiltz. In a nearby school district, Marilyn started an alternative high school for dropouts. The school district gave up on these kids. Thanks to Marilyn's hard work, many graduated from her school. Because Marilyn is an expert, I asked her for a parenting tip. Here it is:

Avoid arguing and talking too much. "Rather say, 'You may have a point.' Listen and consider what your child has to say but still remember you are the parent." —*Marilyn Wiltz, MA, Parent, Grandparent, Educator*

If this tip were followed from toddler to teens, I believe it would make a huge difference in mutual respect and communication.

Can you imagine how difficult it would be if your child argued with you from childhood onward? Can you imagine dealing with your arguing teenager? Can you imagine your fatigue, irritation, and feelings of helplessness from all that arguing?

Marilyn gives us three helpful solutions:

1. Listen and consider what your child has to say.
2. Say, "You may have a point."
3. Remember you are the parent.

I believe it is important to give your child respect by listening and then acknowledging his or her point. Yet, when it comes to decision-making, remember you are the parent. You have the authority, the power, and the responsibility to choose what's best for your child.

8

Be firm.

This parenting tip comes from my oldest son, Scott. He and Andrea have 2 daughters, Paola, age 10 and Daniela, age 7. The girls are coming to spend the weekend. I can hardly wait. Here is Scott's tip:

Be firm. "When it is time for your child to come out of Time Out, ask her why she was sent there. If she says, "I don't know," tell your child to go back until she does know. (This is providing you made it clear why she was sent there in the first place.) It may take three or four times before she admits her misbehavior and answers you. In the end your child will learn to take responsibility for her own behavior." —*Scott Tracy, Parent and Business Manager*

Guess what, Parents? Scott was sent to Time Out many times as a child. It gave him time to think about his misbehavior. It helped him take responsibility for his misbehavior. It taught him the self-discipline to delay immediate pleasure and strive for long term goals. I have to admit, though, he didn't like Time Out at the time.

It pleases me that Scott and Andrea use Time Out with their girls. They never hit their girls. Time Out is their way of being firm. I think their use of Time Out is what makes the girls so much fun to be with. I can take them anywhere and be proud of their behavior. One thing I've noticed, my granddaughters talk a lot more than my boys ever did.

9

Give attention.

This parenting tip comes from my friend, Claire. Claire is a mother and a marriage counselor. This is her advice:

Give your child your full attention. "Listen without an agenda. Give your child all the time s/he needs to develop his/her thoughts."

—*Claire Hatch, MSW, Mother and Counselor*

Parents, in today's fast world it's difficult to listen well when there are so many things on your mind. It's easy to think your child's thoughts are not that important when you're busy. Consider asking yourself the 10-10-10 rule:

1. Will not listening to my child be important 10 minutes from now?
2. Will not listening to my child be important 10 months from now?
3. Will not listening to my child be important 10 years from now?

Listen, if you develop the habit of not listening, why would your child ever seek

your advice? Imagine the teen years, who will your child will be listening to then? When you're tempted to attend to your many tasks and not your child, consider Claire's advice. You'll be glad you did.

10

Treat your kids with respect.

This parenting tip is from my brother-in-law, Ron. Ron knows something about kids. As you'll see, he's raised six. They've all turned into fine adults so I trust Ron's advice. Here it is:

Treat your kids with respect. "After raising six children I have learned how important it is to treat children with the respect I want from them. I believe it is good to allow children to have their say as long as they do it respectfully." —*Dr. Ron Tracy, DDS, Father, Grandfather, and Dentist*

Do you ever hear parents yell at their misbehaving kids in the grocery store? Do you ever wonder how they express their anger at home? I do. I feel sad that parents get so frustrated. Yet it is easy to do when respect is forgotten. Ron has a good point. If we want our children to respect us, we must show them respect too, even when we're upset.

11

Teach your child how to disagree.

This tip comes from my cousin, Bob. Bob's leadership skills prompt corporations to seek him out to head their companies. His abundant social skills and ability to tell the truth, as he sees it, make him a remarkable man. He's bright, upbeat, and speaks respectfully when projecting his viewpoint. This is Bob's tip:

Teach how to disagree. "Teach your child how to respectfully disagree with you. Don't accept anything less than respect." —*Bob Bury, Businessman*

You can teach your children to disagree at family meetings. Role play a disagreement like when to do homework. Let's say you want your child to do homework right after school. Your child doesn't want to. A role play might teach your child to repeat what you said, then give his or her point of view. Here's an example:

Parent: "Please do your homework right after school."

Child: "You want me to do my homework right after school and I'd like to relax and play after school. I promise to do it right after dinner. "

Parent: "Let's try having you do your homework right after dinner for one week. If I have to remind you to do it, then I expect you to do it right after school. Do you agree?"

Child: "OK."

Of course, there are many different responses that could be said during a role play. The point is, as the parent, you take the leadership role in teaching your child how to respectfully disagree.

12

Praise and respect your child.

This parenting tip comes from one of my favorite people, Aunt Bubs. Aunt Bubs raised 4 excellent children. Aunt Bubs and I spent many a dinner at our special restaurant. I picked her brains because of her success with her own children. Here is her tip:

Praise and respect. “Praise children to build their self-esteem. Respect their secrecy. If they tell you something and ask you to keep it a secret, do so.” —*Ethel Bury, Mother and Grandmother*

Aunt Bub’s tip reminds me of a parent I counseled who had a talking problem. Whenever her son shared a secret, she told it to her circle of friends. When he became a teenager, he stopped communicating with her. He knew he couldn’t trust her. She felt bad because he stopped sharing. She lost an opportunity to influence him too.

13

Teach your kids about money.

This tip comes from my friend, Betty. Betty raised four children. Her daughter, Mercy, and I have been friends since our kids were little. In fact, Mercy babysat my kids when they were young. The following is a tip from Mercy’s mother:

Teach about money. “When the kids wanted to borrow money, we set up a contract. The kids had to put in their money first. They borrowed the rest from us. We set up a payment chart until they paid us back by completing chores. Today, as adults, they handle money well.”—*Betty McMaster, Mother, Grandmother and Great Grandmother*

I appreciate Betty’s tip. She’s right. Her children do handle money well. So do her grandchildren. Betty’s method emphasized self-discipline, responsibility, and a respect for money.

14

Remember the goals.

This parenting tip comes from my friend, Rosalie. Rosalie and her husband, Beau, raised two excellent sons. Like most kids the boys played sports. Rosalie witnessed many parents losing their tempers at Little League games. This is her advice:

Remember the goals. “Rather than yell and criticize your kids at Little League games, remember the goals of team sports. Instead, use phrases like, “Good job! You played well! Way to go!” —*Rosalie Williams, Mother, Grandmother and Business Woman*

Rosalie’s parenting tip reminds me of a client I counseled who pressured his kids, yelled at them during their games, and criticized them afterward. One child dropped out of sports even though she had lots of natural talent. The other child seethed with anger even though he achieved great success. Both kids are now adults. Neither child comes home to visit. Their parents feel a great deal of regret.

15

Welcome friends.

This parenting tip comes from my friend, Kim. Kim is raising a teenage son and daughter all by herself. I admire both her strength and wisdom. Here is Kim's tip:

Welcome friends. "If your kids shut down and won't talk with you, make sure their friends are welcome at your home. You'll find out what they're into if you hear their conversations from the next room." —*Kim Street, Mother and Legal Secretary*

Kim is a non-intrusive gentle mother. She's no dummy either. I think her tip has great merit, especially with all the dangers for teens today. If you don't have an idea of what your kids are into, how can you help them? You learn a lot when your kids' friends are around.

16

Enjoy your child.

This Parenting Tip comes from my cousin, Carol. Carol raised 4 boys and 1 girl. She has the kind of experience I look up to. Here's Carol's tip:

Enjoy your child. "Take each child individually out to dinner. Listen more than talk. Use this as bonding time." —*Carol DeHarness, Mother and Grandmother*

Years ago when my son, Brian, was 15, I did exactly what Carol suggested. Every Tuesday I would take him to his guitar lesson. Then we went out to dinner. Brian is the quieter of my two sons so I knew I had to get him to talk. It took effort on my part to say very little and leave long pauses in our conversation. I didn't grill him on his friends. I didn't ask what happened at the latest teenage party. I listened instead. Sure enough, Brian began to talk. Much of the conversation centered on his current interest, his music. It wasn't exactly what I wanted to know but I kept listening.

After one dinner, Brian said something that shocked me. "Mom," he said, "You're my best friend." Now Brian's an adult and we remain very good friends. In fact, he created my website at www.KidsDiscuss.com

I'm glad I took Carol's advice. Going out to dinner with Brian is one of my most cherished memories.

17

No TV!

This parenting tip comes from my cousin, Michelle. I found out that Michelle feels deeply about the harmful effects of television, her sons, and the importance of parenting with firmness and kindness. Here is her parenting tip:

No TV! "Don't let them get addicted when they are little. They'll find more interesting things to do. They'll become more creative. They'll co-operate

because you won't be interrupting their programs. They'll have longer attention spans too. If you never start TV, you'll never have to take it away." —Michelle Jackson, *Mother, Computer Expert, and Accountant*

Yikes! I told you Michelle parents with firmness. She has great kids too. I know her advice is difficult to follow. Other parents who had also recommended, "No TV," told me their kids were creative and had more fun thinking up new games to play. They weren't bombarded with TV ads and programs that are poorly suited for kids either.

18

Tell them you love them.

This tip comes from my friend, Mercy. Mercy babysat my boys. Her strict discipline, loving manner, and sense of humor endear them to her to this day. Now, Mercy and I go for 2 mile stroller walks with our 2-year old grandsons on Thursdays. Like my sons, I love being with Mercy. This is Mercy's tip:

Tell them you love them. "When my boys were growing up I didn't wait until they did something good to tell them I loved them and felt proud of them. They heard it often. Now they keep in touch, and love to tease me. Because of letting them know how much I loved them when they were growing up, I feel loved right back today." —Mercy Wickersham, *Mother and Grandmother*.

Family life has always been a top priority with Mercy. Whether it was attending baseball games, parent-teacher conferences, or school events, Mercy was always there. Family dinners were a must with Mercy. You can be sure there was a lot of laughter around the table as each member tuned in to each other's activities.

Mercy gave and still gives her boys what every child wants—attention, appreciation and affection. No wonder they love being around her today. I'd have to say that Mercy and her husband, Chuck, have created one of the closest knit families I've ever seen.

19

Avoid showing disappointment in your child.

My friend, Nina Ramsey, is a PhD nurse. She has a dynamic counseling practice with a long waiting list. Nina's wisdom is nourished by her love for hiking and writing. It is always enriching for me to sit down with Nina and discuss ideas. Here is Nina's parenting tip:

Avoid showing disappointment in your child. "Let your child know when you are disapproving of his/her behavior though." —Nina Ramsey, *ARNP, PhD, Therapist*

Filling children with shame for misbehavior can cut deeply into their sense of self. This can lead to self-hatred especially when your approval means so much to them. On the other hand, it is important to tell them what you think about their negative behaviors. This is a delicate balance. It means you are mentally separating children from their misbehaviors before you correct them.

A tactic I like to use after the correction is to "catch them being good" when they behave well. Children want our approval. "Catching them being good" increases the likelihood that they'll increase their positive behaviors. It also creates a mutually good feeling.

20

Create a united front.

This parenting tip is from my friend, Beau. Beau is one of the kindest and most personable men I know. He and his wife, Rosalie, raised two sons. Beau and Rosalie have two granddaughters and are an example of doting grandparents. This is Beau's advice:

Create a united front. "If you disagree about how your partner is handling a discipline problem, talk with your partner later. Why? You need to have a united front with your child. Don't allow your child to manipulate you."

—Beau Williams, Real Estate owner, Father, Grandfather

Beau's parenting tip reminds me of numerous parents I've counseled. They'd be at odds with each other's stand on a parenting issue. Often one parent was too firm and the other was too kind. They'd argue in front of their children. Sometimes they'd use their differences to lash back at each other. Their kids were all ears and soon realized who to manipulate.

I agree with Beau. Even if you disagree with your partner's handling of a discipline problem, talk with your partner later. Present a united front. Give your children a secure feeling. Don't let them manipulate you.

21

Keep your kids quiet when you're on the phone.

This tip comes from my friend and graphic designer, Louise. Louise raised a girl and a boy by herself. When they were small, they wanted her constant attention. Louise had to find a way to keep her children quiet when she was on the phone with customers. This is Louise's tip:

Keep your kids quiet when you're on the phone. "Draw a picture of a phone with the word "important". Talk to the kids ahead of time about keeping quiet when they see the picture. Role play by asking the kids to fuss until you pretend to use the phone on an important call. Create simple refrigerator charts. After that, hold up the phone picture when you are talking to customers. Give each child a sticker for their charts when they've been quiet."

—Louise Holder, Mother and Graphic Designer.

I like this tip because it:

Is simple to do.

Encourages the parent to be creative.

Prompts the parent to think first instead of yelling.

Involves the children in being helpful.

Teaches them to be polite.

Helps them practice self-discipline.

Rewards the children for being respectful.

If you have children who fuss and fight when you're on the phone, try Louise's tip. You'll be glad you did.

Dear Parents,

There you have it –21 great parenting tips. Feel free to practice the ones you like. Let me know the results at

JeanTracy@KidsDiscuss.com

I'd love to hear about your thoughts and experiences. Here's to your parenting success!

All my best,

Jean Tracy, MSS

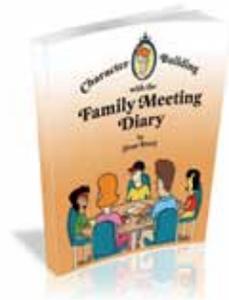
About the Author:



Jean Tracy, MSS, helps parents and teachers raise awesome kids with solid characters. Jean knows something about the issues facing families today. For years she worked as a teacher, a probation officer, and then as a counselor with parents and children as they struggled with their interwoven challenges.

During her career, Jean developed character building concepts that continue to benefit parents and children through her line of parent/child discussion books and practical parenting tools. Jean's Web site, www.kidsdiscuss.com, displays her books and details each parenting product.

Jean Tracy graduated from Seattle University with a degree in Education and taught elementary school in California, Washington, and Connecticut. She earned her Masters Degree in Social Work from Bryn Mawr College. She is a wife, mother and grandmother. An award-winning Distinguished Toastmaster, she authors parent/child discussion books, parenting products and is a sought-after speaker.



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