

Read.Talk.Play.Every Day tips for every day

#1 Do you feel like you're being watched? You are! The best way to help children learn how to act is to show them through your own words and actions. They are master imitators. When they hear you say please and thank you, they learn to be polite. When they see you help others, they learn to be helpful. When they hear you call someone a name- they will do it too. So don't just tell children what to do- **show them!**

#2 Thanks for the memories. Chances are your own happy memories revolve around things you did with those you love. Really enjoy your child by taking time to have fun together every day. Sing songs while making dinner or driving the car. Take a walk and look for ducks or interesting sticks. Play ball, play house, play cards, play ANYTHING- **just do it together!**

#3 Routines aren't boring-they're healthy. Children feel more secure when they know what to expect. Keep a basic structure to your day. An evening routine might include setting the table, eating dinner, playtime, bath time, snack, tooth brushing, three stories, ten kisses and lights out! When children know what's coming next, it's easier for them to cooperate and you avoid a lot of temper tantrums.

#4 The waiting game. Waiting is hard for all of us, but especially for children. But sometimes waiting can't be avoided, so be prepared with a "bag of tricks". Maybe a bag with a notebook, colored pencils, and a small hand held game or music player, books, simple snacks like raisins or crackers and a juice box or water bottle. Keep a few simple songs in your head like Itsy Bitsy Spider or ABC's, make up a story or just count the change in your pocket or purse. Time flies when you are BOTH having fun.

#5 Do you get tired of saying "no" and "don't do that" all the time? Try switching it up and give your child positive directions. Tell them what **to do** rather than what NOT to do: Say "use your quiet voice" instead of "don't yell!" or "keep the water in the bathtub" instead of "quit splashing". Being positive sets a more pleasant mood and children are more likely to follow directions happily.

#6 YOU are the best reward. When your child does a good job or learns a new skill, reward him or her with your time and attention. Avoid using treats or toys as rewards or bribes for good behavior. Sweets aren't healthy and toys cost money. Time with you is free and builds bonds that last a lifetime.

#7 Seven positives. Did you know on average it takes 7 positive comments to balance the effect of just 1 negative comment? Saying "good girl" or "good boy" isn't enough. Be specific and tell your child what was good about it. For example, "Wow. That tower is the tallest you've ever built. You worked really hard on it and I like the columns on the side."

#8 **Love you love me.** Taking care of yourself makes you a better parent. Find a little quiet time each day to do something for you. Find a hobby, read a book, soak in a bubble bath. Develop healthy habits for you and your family. Love yourself and your child by engaging in healthy, safe adult relationships.