

Raising Respectful Children

When your youngster hears the word “respect,” what does she think of? Explain that by being considerate of others’ feelings, letting people know she appreciates them, or taking care of belongings, she’s showing respect.

Point out that there are different types of respect—for ourselves, for others, for property, and for the environment. Then, try these ideas to help your child understand and practice all kinds of respect.



Respect for yourself

Your youngster may have heard the advice to treat others as she wants to be treated. If she respects herself, following this advice will be easier. Children who have self-respect are also more likely to resist peer pressure. Here are ways for your child to practice self-respect.

● **Know yourself.** Ask your youngster what she does well or is proud of (being a good friend, finishing a big project). Recognizing her traits and accomplishments will boost her self-respect.

● **Ignore put-downs.** Teach your child not to react to a student who makes fun of him or calls him names. It can be hard to say nothing and walk away, but your youngster will respect himself afterward. *Tip:* Role-play this at home so he'll feel more comfortable.

● **Stay healthy.** Encourage your child to take care of herself. Part of self-respect is keeping her body healthy and strong by exercising, eating nutritious foods, and avoiding harmful substances like drugs and cigarettes.

● **Do your best.** When your child works hard in school, he demonstrates

self-respect. Taking advantage of every chance to learn shows that he cares about his own success.



continued

"Please pass the peas"

Good table manners show respect for others. You can take advantage of family dinnertime to teach your child manners in a gentle way.

● Let your youngster know it's okay if she doesn't like a certain food—but she should show respect for the person who prepared it. If she's not sure she'll like something, suggest that she take a small portion. Or if you're visiting someone else's home, she might simply say, "No, thanks" if she doesn't want a particular food.

● Encourage your child to be considerate of others so they can enjoy their meals. For instance, she should chew

with her mouth closed and ask others to pass a dish instead of reaching across the table to take it.

● Keep conversations pleasant. You can set an example by bringing up appropriate topics (sports, school). Ask your youngster to save certain subjects for another time—for instance, she should steer clear of disagreements or jokes and stories that you wouldn't want to hear while eating.



Respect for others

Your child can show respect for people around him by treating them kindly and fairly. Try these suggestions.

● **Spot examples.** When a person shows consideration for you or your youngster, talk about it. Perhaps someone offered you a cart at the grocery store or opened the door for you at the movie theater. Explain that it's respectful to think about others' needs and feelings.

● **Respect teachers.** Following classroom rules is one way your child can respect her teacher. You can reinforce this at home by talking respectfully about her teacher. If she insists that a grade or a punishment is unfair, you might say, "I know you're disappointed, but I'm sure your teacher had a good reason." You can then calmly follow up with the teacher by phone or email to get more information.

● **Pay attention.** Your youngster can show respect during a conversation by giving the speaker his full attention. Making eye contact, nodding, and not interrupting all show that what the person says matters to him. *Tip:* Model this for your child when he speaks to you—avoid looking at your cell phone or texting while he's talking, for example.



● **Be a good sport.** When your child plays or watches a game, she should be considerate of the coaches, players on both teams, and officials. For instance, even if she disagrees with a referee's call, she should go on and play the game rather than complaining or making a negative comment. Explain that rituals like applauding politely when a visiting team enters the gym or shaking hands with opponents shows that respect is important in sports.

Respect for property

Tell your youngster that taking responsibility for his possessions and being careful with someone else's shows respect. The following tips can help.

● **Care for belongings.** Your child can protect the things you've given him or that he has purchased himself (toys,

clothes) by putting them away when he's not using them. That way, they won't get broken or torn, and they'll last longer. He can also help take care of your home—he shouldn't track mud across the carpet, and he should handle breakable items (vases, plates) carefully.

● **Show respect outdoors.**

Teach your youngster to respect public and private property, like parks and lawns. For example, he should clean up after his dog, and walk on sidewalks and paths rather than on the grass.



● **Be a good borrower.** The library is a great place to practice respecting shared materials. The next time you and your child go there, ask her to think of ways she can be considerate. For example, handling books carefully (not tearing or marking them) keeps them in good shape for others to enjoy. It's also important to return books on time so others can read them.

Reduce, reuse, recycle... respect

Your child can show respect for the earth by helping to keep it clean and healthy today—and for future generations. Share these ideas:

1. Ask your youngster to help you gather up clothing and toys he has outgrown. Donate them to a charitable organization so the items can be used again.
2. Work together to separate plastic, paper, and glass items for recycling pickup. Explain that recycling reduces the waste that's taking up space in



landfills. And recycling materials instead of making new ones saves natural resources.

3. Let your child carry your reusable shopping bags when you go to the store. Tell him that using these bags means you won't need to waste disposable paper or plastic bags.
4. When you go for walks, take along a trash bag and pick up trash you see along sidewalks and in grassy areas. *Idea:* As a family, participate in a community cleanup.

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