

The Yellow Pages

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Teaching Principles Not Just Rules

Some children grow up with so many rules that they cannot remember them all. If your children say, *“But Mom, I don’t remember you ever telling me that,”* it may be you have given them too many rules. Because babies can’t generalize, they must specifically be taught what to do and what not to do. Without thinking, parents may continue this type of instruction into the preschool and school age years. This can result in establishing so many rules that even the parents can’t remember all of them.

From about age three and up, parents should regularly include the reason they are giving their child a particular instruction. Knowing **how to do right** and **why it should be done** are two distinctly different things. The first represents the action; the second represents the principle. Many children know how to apply a rule but not the reason behind it.

When we fail to teach the moral and practical reasons behind our rules, we end up raising children who are only outwardly moral or sensible. They can respond correctly to different circumstances only because they have been trained to the circumstance, not because they understand the principle. When a situation arises that the child needs to decide whether it’s right or wrong, a child taught by rules only, will flip through his mental rule book. If he can’t remember a rule against it, then it must be ok. If he makes a wrong choice and his parents discipline him for his behavior, his response is, *“You never told me not to!”* If a child is not clear on what makes behavior right and wrong, he will never be equipped to make wise decisions on his own. Our goal then is to raise children who not only act morally but also think morally.

A child taught to use principles has freedom of flexibility, knowing that sometimes it is ok to break a rule if it is for a higher good. For example, four-year-old Ricky and his two-year-old brother Luke share a bedroom. Mom has tucked them into bed for the night and has instructed them to stay in their beds. Because Luke is still adjusting to sleeping in a big bed, he falls out of bed and cries. Ricky now has a dilemma. Does he get out of bed to help Luke, which would mean disobeying his mom, or does he obey his mom and leave Luke crying alone on the floor. A child taught to only follow rules would be afraid to get out of bed to help his brother because he would be disobeying.

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The Interrupt Signal

Is this a typical scenario in your home? You're carrying on a conversation either in person or on the phone and your child interrupts you with a request. You say, "Just a minute. Mommy's on the phone," then you go back to your conversation. He interrupts again with a request and you tell him you will attend to him when your conversation is over and that he will just have to be patient. He interrupts a third time and you excuse yourself from the conversation to meet his request because you know this will keep him quiet. Now you're irritated and your child has learned that if he persists long enough he will get your attention.

There is a better way. Establish a signal your child can use, such as putting his hand on your side, when he needs to interrupt you. Establish another signal such as putting your hand over his to acknowledge him. Teach him that this means you know he is waiting for you and that he needs to quietly wait for you. Within a reasonable amount of time (perhaps 20 seconds for a young child), excuse yourself from the conversation for a moment to speak with your child.

Teaching Principles Not Just Rules

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Explaining the reason behind our instructions can also serve a practical purpose. For instance, Jessica notices her dad spraying something from a can around the base of the house and goes over to investigate. Her dad says, "*Jessica, I'm spraying insect poison which could harm you if you breath it. It is not safe for you to play outside right now. Please go in the house.*" By giving her information about what he was doing, Jessica's dad minimized the tension between her natural curiosity and the need to obey. He satisfied her need to investigate.

Though they may not cover all situations, one way to begin teaching by principle rather than rules alone is to establish three basic guidelines with your children:

You may not hurt yourself.

You may not hurt others.

You may not hurt things.

These guidelines provide a framework in which children can begin making decisions. Verbally tagging these guidelines onto more specific limits helps children begin to think in terms of principle. You might say, "*You could get burned by playing with matches. You may not hurt yourself.*" "*I can't let you hit Emily. You may not hurt others.*" "*No hanging on the towel rack because it could break and you may not hurt things.*" Hearing these guidelines over and over will help your children think in terms of whether or not their behavior will hurt themselves, others or things.

Teaching principles by giving reasons for the instructions we give our children is only one small part of raising virtuous and responsible children. No matter what we say as parents, if our behavior contradicts our message, our message will be ineffective. Our example carries much weight.

Sleep and Your Preschooler

Young children need lots of sleep. It's not realistic to expect children to operate on the same sleep schedule as adults. Preschoolers, ages four and five, need at least 10-12 hours of sleep each night. Some will need naps, others won't.

Does your child?
Have a problem waking up in the morning?
Sleep later in the morning when they can?
Fall asleep during the day and early evening?
Have sleep habits that conflict with family's daily schedule?
Get over-tired or cranky before bedtime?

"Yes" answers indicate a need for more sleep.



Sleep Routine Provide Security

Whatever the hour you choose for your preschooler's bedtime, follow the routine every night. Consistency helps children feel safe.

There's a difference between putting a child to bed and putting a child to sleep. Adults are responsible for putting a child to bed. The child has a choice to rest or sleep. No one can make a child sleep.

Tip: If a child is allowed to become over-tired, getting to sleep is harder. If timing is right, not too soon or too late, then getting to bed and to sleep is a lot easier.

Tips for Naptime/Bedtime Routine

- Give children transition time. Say, "It's naptime in 10 minutes." Or "After I read you a story it will be time to go to bed." You might use a timer so children will know when time is up.
- Set rules about the number of stories, drinks of water, kisses goodnight, etc.
- Plan a calming activity before bedtime. Read a story, turn down the lights, play quiet music, or just talk. Avoid TV, movies, roughhousing, or active games.
- Allow children to have some security such as a favorite stuffed animal or blanket, night-light, the door open, or a flashlight by the bed.
- Talk about fears and anxieties. Do a "monster check" if that's a concern.
- Avoid activities that compete with resting or going to sleep. Have adults and older children observe a similar quiet time that encourages little ones to go to sleep. Remember, your preschooler doesn't want to miss out on anything exciting.
- Decide on a regular bedtime that is about 10 to 12 hours before the child needs to get up. If a child is getting up too early, you may be putting your preschooler to bed too soon. On the other hand, if your preschooler is grumpy or drowsy, bedtime may not be early enough.
- Adjust daytime naps to support the bedtime schedule. Remember naptime is a time for rest and relaxing. Children may or may not actually sleep during naptime.

Adapted from Parenting the Preschooler, Joan LeFebvre, University of Wisconsin-Extension, September 2002

Cascading Bubbles

Do you know any young children who don't like playing with bubbles? Neither do I. This is a new twist on blowing bubbles using a disposable cup, straw, washcloth, rubber band and shampoo. This bubble maker creates a cascade of soapsuds that eventually fills the bathtub. Besides the bathtub, it's fun to use in a wading pool or anytime the children are outside and can get wet and soapy. Invite some little friends over for a bubble party!

Materials needed:

Styrofoam or plastic cup

Pen

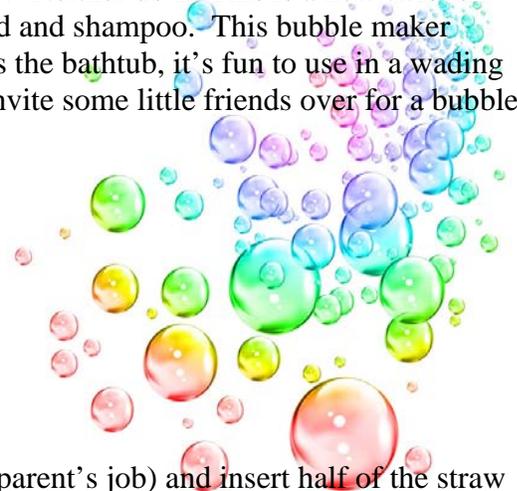
Drinking straw

Washcloth

Rubber band

Nontoxic shampoo or bubble bath

Cut the straw in half. Poke a hole in the side of the cup with the pen (parent's job) and insert half of the straw into the hole. Stretch the washcloth over the open end of the cup and secure it with a rubber band. To prevent sucking in suds have children practice blowing through the straw before adding the shampoo. Then, dip the washcloth end of the cup in water to wet it. Smear a little shampoo on the washcloth and blow. Also, make sure your children take some rest periods so no one hyperventilates!



Finger painted Seasonal Trees

Paper

Tempera or acrylic paint in brown and green

Paper plates or other shallow containers for paint

Pour a small amount of brown paint into one paper plate and green into the other paper plate. Have your child hold their fingers straight and dip the side of the child's hand in the brown paint. Stamp the side of the hand on the paper to make the trunk. Next add leaves to the trunk by dipping the index fingertip into green and stamping it on the paper. Re-dip the finger in the paint as necessary.

This craft can be done each season changing the paint colors to correspond with the seasonal leaf color. For autumn leaves use yellow, orange, red, brown and green. For a winter tree first make the trunk. Then add branches by dipping the length of the index finger into paint and then stamping it on the paper. Make a spring tree by adding branches to the trunk and using the tip of the finger to make small green leaves.

Before you do this craft with your child take her outside to look at trees. If you have a view of trees in the distance you may notice the varying shades of green found on different types of trees. You may see darker and lighter shades of green, yellow greens and more subdued greens. Depending on her age, your child may detect the differences too. When you get ready to paint the trees you may want to add tiny amounts of white or black to some of the green to make lighter and darker shades of green. You could also add a tiny amount of yellow or blue to the green.

Color and Phytochemicals

“For optimum health, scientists say, eat a rainbow of colors. Your plate should look like a box of Crayolas.”
Janice M. Horowitz, TIME, January 12, 2002

Mom always said, “eats your greens.” Now, we’re learning that blues, reds, yellows, oranges, purples, and even whites are good for you, too. The reason lies in the very substances that give fruits and vegetables their colors: phytochemicals. These natural plant compounds not only protect plants, but also may provide important disease protection to humans. From cancer to anti-aging, heart disease to eyesight, scientists are focusing on a wide range of potential health benefits.

The “Whole Foods” Way

Because colorful fruits and vegetables contain hundreds of different phytochemicals, no one color group does it all. By eating regularly from each color group, you’re giving yourself the widest health protection possible. Phytochemicals work together naturally in ways that supplements simply can’t duplicate. For healthy results, whole foods are best.

Getting five or more servings of fruits and vegetables into your diet every day is easier than you think:

- A glass of 100% juice and a handful of berries on your cereal equal two servings for breakfast.
- An apple or banana is a great one-serving mid-morning snack.
- A small, mixed-green salad adds another serving with lunch.
- Try a fruit smoothie as an afternoon pick-me-up for one to two more servings.
- Mushrooms in your stir-fry? Tomato sauce on your spaghetti? A snack of dried fruits and nuts? There are so many ways to add more servings of fruits and vegetables to your daily diet.

www.5aday.org

Eating from the Rainbow

With the abundance of local fruits and vegetables this time of the year it’s a great time to focus on eating five servings a day. You can use this chart with your children to track the number different colored fruits and vegetables you consume a day. Have the children place an ‘X’ on the chart under the color for each serving of fruit or vegetable they eat. Fruits and vegetables are listed below in their color categories.

Blue/Purple-May help maintain: a lower risk of some cancers, urinary tract health, memory function, healthy aging.

Blackberries
Blueberries
Elderberries
Purple figs
Purple grapes
Plums
Raisins

Purple cabbage
Eggplant
Purple Belgian endive
Purple peppers
Potatoes (purple
fleshed)



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Eating from the Rainbow

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Green- May help maintain: a lower risk of some cancers, vision health, strong bones and teeth

Avocados
Green apples
Green grapes
Honeydew
Kiwifruit
Limes
Green pears

Artichokes
Asparagus
Broccoflower
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Chinese cabbage
Green beans
Green cabbage
Celery
Chayote squash
Cucumbers
Endive

Leafy greens
Leeks
Lettuce
Green onion
Okra
Peas
Green pepper
Snow Peas
Sugar snap peas
Spinach
Watercress
Zucchini



White- May help maintain: heart health, cholesterol levels that are already healthy, a lower risk of some cancers.

Bananas
Brown pears
Dates
White nectarines
White peaches

Cauliflower
Garlic
Ginger
Jerusalem artichoke
Jicama
Kohlrabi
Mushrooms
Onions

Parsnips
Potatoes (white
fleshed)
Turnips
White Corn



Eating from the Rainbow

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Yellow/Orange- May help maintain: a healthy heart, vision health, a healthy immune system, and a lower risk of some cancers.

Yellow apples
Apricots
Cantaloupe
Yellow figs
Grapefruit
Lemon
Mangoes
Nectarines

Oranges
Papayas
Peaches
Yellow pears
Persimmons
Pineapples
Tangerines
Yellow watermelon

Yellow beets
Butternut squash
Carrots
Yellow peppers
Yellow potatoes
Pumpkin
Rutabagas
Yellow summer squash
Sweet corn
Sweet potatoes
Yellow tomatoes
Yellow winter squash



Red- May help maintain: a healthy heart, memory function, a lower risk of some cancers, urinary tract health.

Red apples
Cherries
Cranberries
Red grapes
Pink/Red grapefruit
Red pears
Pomegranates
Raspberries
Strawberries
Watermelon

Beets
Red peppers
Radishes
Radicchio
Red onions
Red potatoes
Rhubarb
Tomatoes



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