



## The Respectful Child

Webster defines "respect" as ... "to show honor or esteem for. To treat with deference and regard." Implied in this definition is the fact that respect must be earned, and is given from the heart. Often I encounter parents who complain about their child's lack of respect for them, only to hear them turn around and screech at the same child, "Stop it! What is the matter with you? You're behaving like a wild animal" Since children learn what they live, I have witnessed the reason this child shows the parent no respect. How can we raise respectful children?

- 1) Teach through actions. "Do as I say, not as I do" sounds like a fun idea, but as a parenting tool it rarely (if ever) works. You are your child's first and most important teacher. Just as children learn to talk by listening to us talk, they learn how to treat others by following our lead. Watch how you treat, not only your kids, but other people you come in contact with during your day. What are you teaching your kids?
- 2) Teach more than just manners. "Thank you, Mrs. Pantley." can be said as a polite compliment, or can be said with sarcasm and attitude fit for a back alley. When we teach our children manners we must also discuss the not-so-obvious details. Such as looking someone in the eye, using a polite tone of voice, and using real words (such as yes instead of uh huh!) These are not things our kids are born knowing. We need to teach these important facets of good manners.
- 3) Provide positive and consistent discipline. Parents with knowledge and skills to tackle the job of raising children will find it easier to raise respectful children. When you have good parenting skills you will find that discipline is an easy task. This means reading a few good books or taking a parenting class to help you maintain control of the parent/child relationship in a way that fosters respect in the family.
- 4) Be firm but fair. Letting kids get away with bad behavior only breeds more of the same. Make sure your kids know the rules of the family and that you discipline appropriately when rules are broken. Firm and fair discipline is not haphazard and does not change depending on your mood. It requires a consistency that your kids can count on. (They may not like it, but they can count on it!) I've heard it said that it's not the severity of a consequence that makes it effective, but the certainty of it. When your kids know exactly what your expectations are, and that there will be a penalty for failing to meet those expectations, they will more likely behave in an appropriate manner.
- 5) Praise good behavior. Your praise and encouragement have a tremendous impact on your child. "Praise" messages are not all verbal, either. An OK hand signal, a wink, a smile, a hug. All these speak volumes to a child who has just done something right. These positive messages reinforce a child's goodness, and encourage more of the same positive behavior.

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of Kid Cooperation and Perfect Parenting