

[IMAGE]

## Parenting Do's and Don'ts

By Editorial Staff

If you're a parent or knows one who is (which is just about everyone reading this), you know there are no hard-and-fast rules to follow when it comes to raising children. That said, you've also learned – or will learn the hard way soon – that some simple do's and don'ts can make life a whole lot easier:

*DO Follow the 90% Rule:* Self-esteem is one of the most critical developmental variables for a child that translates into adulthood. All parents, no matter how strict they may be or how high their expectations are for their children, should follow the simple 90 percent rule to help their children develop high self-esteem. The rule: Praise your child nine times for every time you criticize them. Mess with this ratio and you'll raise a child who feels as if even their parents don't support them enough. Remember, everyone's a critic, so your children will be subjected to plenty of criticism (much of it probably unwarranted / unsolicited) as they grow up. While you're teaching them to do right, don't forget the value of letting them know they're doing a good job – even if in the back of your mind, you know they can do better.

*DON'T Let Them Run the Show:* While you're dishing out all the praise to build character, don't forget character is a by-product of the *rules* you teach them to follow consistently. Choices come with consequences, and particularly when they're young, children need to appreciate that consistent, clear-cut consequence B will result from action A *every time*; not every once in awhile, or when you feel like it, etc. If you don't teach them this rule, they'll effectively run the show; a show you don't want to attend.

*DO Give Them Responsibility:* Parenting isn't easy, and one overlooked aspect that agonizes many parents is the thought of their child's impending flight from the home to lead their own life. For some parents, this fear can manifest early in conscious or subconscious actions to keep the child "safe and close." If this is you, stop for a moment and reflect on *your* level of responsibility and accountability – particularly things you wish your parents had taught *you* (sooner or at all). Can't cook? Don't know how to speak in public? Can't organize your time? Can't keep a clean house? All these responsibilities and countless more develop from experience –the experience your parents gave you when growing up. So teach your children to be responsible, well-rounded adults. If not, you won't have to worry about losing them –they'll be right by your side, sleeping on the couch, asking you for money and complaining when you wonder why they don't

have a job.

*DON'T Treat Them (Just) Like a Friend:* We all want to be our children's "best friend," but unfortunately, we're parents. No matter how hard we try, most children won't tell us everything and won't spend as much time with us as they do their "best" friends. But that's not a bad thing, because while you're trying to be a loving, caring, understanding, appreciative mom or dad who has the "best relationship" with your child, you also have to *parent* – a duty that often requires suppressing the emotion connection most friends possess. This is particularly relevant when your child does something that angers you, saddens you or otherwise negatively impacts you emotionally. We may scream at a friend. We may ignore a friend. We may shut them out for a few days and "wait" for their apology. We might even move on to a new friend. *But these are your children.* They deserve a parent. Be the best *you* can be and in the process, you'll help raise the best person *they* can be.

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