

Behavior Basics



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Sometimes brief is better. How clear and consistent is your parenting? To find out, give yourself this short quiz:

1. *I know what I expect from my child.* T F

Know how you want your child to act.

2. *I show my child the behavior I want to see.* T F

Make your expectations clear. Role play appropriate behavior. Teach by example, reinforcing new learning until it is automatic. Apply the same motivational system to all of the kids in your family. When a new behavior has been learned, reinforce occasionally and review the new behavior as necessary.

3. *I reward behavior I regard as desirable.* T F

Offer a surprise hug or a goody when you catch your child doing something right. Ask yourself which gets more attention from you, appropriate behavior or inappropriate.

4. *I pick and choose my battles.* T F

If the problem is small, use just a few words to address it. Before making a big deal out of something, ask yourself: in twenty years, who will know the difference?

5. *I give short, clear directions.* T F

Tell the child to do one task, and wait until it has been completed before you give additional instructions. Be positive: tell the child what to do rather than what not to do.

6. *I use visual cues to get my child's attention. T F*

Teach your child a signal that means stop and give me your full attention. Use the cue to prevent undesirable behavior.

7. *I have defined the behaviors I regard as unacceptable. T F*

Know what you will and will not tolerate. Decide what you will do when unacceptable behavior occurs.

8. *My child knows what to expect when behavior is unacceptable. T F*

Let your child know what the consequences for bad behavior will be, so that he or she can make an informed choice in advance. Let your child know ahead of time where time outs will occur, how long they will last, and how to know when they are over.

9. *I recognize that when my child's behavior does not change, I must change my behavior. T F*

Ask yourself what the child's troublesome behavior accomplishes. Ask yourself how else the child's need can be met so that the undesirable behavior becomes pointless.

10. *I recognize that my child may sometimes resort to inappropriate behavior as a way of getting noticed. T F*

Good behavior is often ignored. Kids who need attention will often act out if they have no other way of getting it.

11. *I always treat my child with respect. T F*

Stay calm. Remember how you want to be treated. Remember what it feels like to be a child. When you are upset, take a deep breath. Detach, and use a neutral tone of voice.

12. *I use humor to defuse tense situations. T F*

Keep it light. Whimsical, unpredictable behavior can often avert conflict. Avoid sarcasm. Cutting words often hurt more than physical injuries. Make sure that humorous interventions can't be construed as belittling your child or making light of his or her feelings.

13. *I avoid power struggles. T F*

Remember that the fight to gain control in a situation often leads people to disrespect each other. Show your child how to engage you appropriately, without resorting to negative behavior.

14. *I put my knowledge of my child to work. T F*

Offer abundant praise and encouragement. Provide lots of opportunities for your child to enjoy your company.

15. *I have made our home a safe environment. T F*

Refuse to problem solve when you or your child is upset. Wait for a calmer moment. Show your child how you cope with anger, sadness, and disappointment. Help your child learn healthy ways of doing the same.

16. *I have made daily life predictable for my child. T F*

Use schedules, calendars, and task lists to organize your child's day and week. Remind your child often of upcoming transitions and departures from routine. Remember that children who know what to expect can make better choices.

17. *I collaborate with other parents. T F*

Create opportunities to share ideas, tips, and techniques for raising happy, productive children. Open your homes and your families to each other for friendship and support.

18. *I join forces with teachers, doctors, other service providers, and other parents. T F*

Make teachers your allies, not your enemies. Share more positive stories than negative ones.

19. *I take good care of myself. T F*

Make sure that your home meets your needs as well as those of your children. Remember that you are your child's most important resource and that you are showing your child how to live in the world.

20. *I live passionately and have fun often. T F*

Stay focused on the present. Pat yourself on the back for difficult work well done.



To score the quiz, give yourself one point for each true answer. If your score is 1-10, you've made a good start. Plan to incorporate more of the basics into your daily life. If your score is 10-15, you've made the honor roll. Keep up the good work! If your score is 15-20, you're a summa cum laude graduate. Look for ways to reach out to other parents who might benefit from your wisdom. Remember, too, that the fruits of your labors will be evident not just in your relationship with your child but in the approach your child takes to parenting years from now.

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