
PARENTING AND PREVENTION

Building Healthy Families ~ Building Strong Children



Research on prevention of drug problems consistently states that positive family relations, involvement in the family, and closeness to the family seem to discourage alcohol and drug use by children. There are several measures we can take as a family to bring us closer together and raise healthy children. We can establish family traditions, celebrate family holidays, share daily meals, and ask questions about each other's day, to name but a few. One part of building a healthy family is "building strong children." In building strong children, it is important to:

Teach Children To Care. Teach them to care about you and others. Teach your children empathy. Ask questions like, "How would you feel if you were the only one not asked to the slumber party?" Help them to understand other people's feelings. Children can learn early in life the joy and satisfaction that comes from doing things for others.

Teach Children Responsibility. You can increase children's self-worth by giving them responsibilities, even when they are young. All kids need to have chores. One parent talks about how even his three-year-old has a job she is responsible for. She is the "shoe patrol." Her job is to go around the house picking up any shoes left lying around. That is "her job" and she is proud of her accomplishments.

Teach Family Values. What does your family stand for? What is acceptable and what is not acceptable? Children should be proud to be part of their family. Knowing what is and is not acceptable in your family gives children an anchor and guidelines to follow. When peer pressure strikes, they will then have a base from which to make decisions to say "NO."

Catch a Child Being Good. Be on the lookout for times when your child is doing something neat and let them know you like it. The average parent gives eight negative messages to a child for every positive message, statements like "Quit twirling your hair" or "Your room is a mess!" Strike a balance between the positive and negative comments.

Allow Children To Experience the Natural Consequences of their Behavior. Shielding children from the consequences of their behavior will emotionally cripple them as adults. If your child's behavior causes him or her to lose friends, the child needs to learn from the experience. Within reason, pain is a wonderful teacher.

Include Children In Family Discussions. By asking your child's opinions and inviting their input into certain family decisions, you are telling them that they are important members of the family.

Expect Children To Work To Their Ability Level. Helping children reach their potential builds self-esteem. If your child has the ability to achieve an "A" in math, expect an "A." If your child has the ability to achieve a "C" in math, expect a "C." Children need to be recognized for their accomplishments, as well as for just being your child.

"Keeping Your Kids Alcohol and Drug Free... SETTING THE LIMITS," a parenting course of the Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Council of Nebraska and materials from the Nebraska Alcohol and Drug Abuse Information Clearinghouse