

# Parenting the Positive Discipline Way

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## Take Time for Training

Skill training is often neglected because of busy life schedules or a lack of understanding of how important it is for children to contribute. We often rob children of opportunities to feel belonging and significance in meaningful ways through responsible contributions and then complain and criticize them for not developing responsibility.

Children learn valuable life skills when parents take time for training and allow children to develop self-confidence by practicing these skills. It is a mistake to think children can always learn these skills later. The longer they wait, the more difficult it is to learn responsibility.

This is not as obvious as it may sound. Adults often expect children to accomplish tasks for which there has not been adequate training. This is more typical in homes than in schools. Parents may expect children to clean their rooms, but never teach them how.

Taking time for training means being very specific about your terms and expectations. One mother spends several years helping her children make their beds. She gives them pointers such as, "What would happen if you pulled here?" (It would straighten a wrinkle.) She buys bedspreads with plaids or stripes so that her children can learn to have straight lines along the edges. By the time they are six, they have had enough training to know how to make their beds almost well enough to pass an army inspection.

When you ask children to clean the kitchen, make sure they know what that means to you. To them it may mean simply putting the dishes in the sink. Many parents get upset when their children do a terrible job with chores, even though they have never taken time for training. Taking time for training does not mean children will ever do things as well as you would like. Improvement is a life long process. And, remember, the things you want them to do may not be a high priority for them until they become adults with children of their own to hassle. We all do better at things that have a high priority in our lives. Even though cleanliness and manners may not be a high priority for children, they still need to learn these qualities. Adults do, however, need to remember that kids are kids.

Once you feel there has been adequate training, check it out by asking the child, "What is your understanding of what needs to be done for the kitchen to be clean?" If the child says, "Put the dishes in the dishwasher," ask, "What about the floors and the counters. What do you need to do to make sure they are clean?" You may experience rolled eyes as the child sarcastically replies, "Sweep the floor, wipe the counters." Let it go and acknowledge, "Great. I'm glad we have the same understanding."

Time for training can be fun. Choose one night a week to practice table manners. Invite everyone to exaggerate saying, "Pleeease pass the butter," etc. Make a game of getting points for catching others with their elbows on the table, talking with their mouths full, interrupting others, complaining, or reaching across the table. The one with the most points gets to choose the after dinner game.

Taking time for training also includes telling your children when you are going to change your methods. Mrs. Roberts heard me talk about how important it is to allow children to dress themselves. Her daughter, Connie, was in the third grade. Mrs. Roberts had stopped dressing Connie, but she was laying her clothes out for her every night. She decided she would stop doing this and have faith in Connie to handle it. However, she didn't tell Connie about her new decision. The next morning she heard Connie yell in an irritated voice, "Mother, where are my clothes?" Mrs. Roberts replied very respectfully, "They are in the closet, dear. I'm sure you can find them yourself."

Connie retorted, "Mother, when you decide to do these things, will you please let me know?"

Connie was right. It is a good idea to respectfully discuss changes with those involved before implementing them.

