

Top Ten Common-Sense Rules for Fathers

There are a lot of fairly sophisticated parenting techniques and ideas out there that are attracting attention. To be an effective father, you can skip most of them and concentrate on common sense rules that have always worked. They won't always make you the most popular Dad, but they'll always be effective:

Rule #1 Expect A Great Deal From Your Kids

If your kids know that you expect a lot from them, they'll rise to the occasion. Everything from saying please and thank-you, to efforts in school or on the athletic field, if expectations are made clear in a loving atmosphere your kids will know that you think a lot of them. When they know this, they'll respond.

Rule #2 Always Be Willing To Be the Problem

When you're convinced that someone in your family is causing the problems and you're blaming them for it, realize that this problem won't get better until you accept that you're making it worse by blaming them. It may briefly feel good to blame, but it never improves anything. Loving and accepting that person will make a positive difference.

Rule #3 Know Your Child's Life Intimately

Get to know all that you can about your kids. Know what their favorite toys and colors are, who their best friends are, who their heroes are, etc. By showing interest, you're showing you love them. By not asking, you show that they're not that important to you.

Rule #4 Say No To Your Kids

There's an awful lot of stuff out there for kids these days...and of course they want to have it all. Kids who get almost everything they want typically don't turn out to be very happy kids. Kids learn discipline, self-control, and how to

delay gratification when they are told no by their parents. It may be a difficult struggle, but saying no and meaning it will help you to have happy, healthy, and cooperative kids.

Rule #5 Hitting or Spanking Your Kids Doesn't Work

There are plenty of studies showing that kids who are spanked have lower self-esteem. Spanking your kids will also be likely to increase the very kinds of behaviors that you are spanking them for. As a father, do you really want your child to be afraid of you?

Rule #6 Treat Your Wife Extremely Well

This is where your kids get their most important information about relationships between men and women. Make a great effort not to fight in front of the kids. Remember to be kind more often than trying to be right.

Rule #7 Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Many parents spend time threatening their children when their kids aren't cooperating. But if you don't follow through on the consequences, you can threaten till the cows come home. Your children will learn to ignore the threats. They'll understand action. If certain privileges are taken away because of their lack of cooperation, they'll learn very quickly that you mean business. Try your best to align the consequences with the action. (If you don't clean your room in time, you won't have time for stories before bed.)

Rule #8 Really Listen to Your Kids

Don't just hear their words, but learn to understand the meaning behind what they say as well. I'm picking my own clothes! might mean that your child wants more responsibility or independence. Be able to reflect back what your child says to you. If you want your child to listen to you, you absolutely must listen to her/him.

Rule #9 Give Your Kids Responsibility as They Grow Older

When your kids are very young, maybe they just help make their beds in the morning and keep their rooms clean. As they get older, add things to their list. Tell them that this is how a family works...everybody has certain things that they do. If you do it when they're young it's more likely they'll do it when they're older. Don't reward them for things that should be expected of them.

Rule #10 Tell Your Kids They're Great All the Time

It is especially important to tell them this when they're not at their best. It's easy to tell them when things are going well. Make it a point to tell them specifically what you think is great about them. This will be more meaningful than generalized praise.

Sign up for the **free** "Dads Don't Fix Your Kids" Newsletter at <http://www.markbrandenburg.com> for more great articles, tips, and action plans for fathers—and receive the popular article, "150 Things Dads Can Do For Their Kids" for **free**!