

Parenting Tools:
Guiding Behavior



HOME
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At this stage of development, your child is starting to use words to express his or her feelings. Your two-year-old can listen to and understand what you say. The words you use, your tone of voice, your facial expressions, and your body movements are very powerful tools in guiding your children's behavior. A calm but firm voice conveys that you love them and that you mean what you say. John 17:17 tells us, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

Always focus on the behavior

It is not the child we want to change. Rather, it is the inappropriate behavior. Calling attention to inappropriate behavior lets the child know that the actions are not acceptable, but he is still loved. Focus on appropriate behavior. Praise and reinforcement will let the child know which behaviors are appropriate and acceptable. Make it a point to catch your child behaving well, and encourage him with your smile and loving touch. As you reflect on Scriptures such as Psalm 71:8, "Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day," you will have wisdom to know when and how to praise and encourage your child.

Have a clear set of rules

Rules must be consistent and fair. This helps your children know what to expect and to understand their limits. They need to understand the reason for each rule, so make sure you explain it in words they can understand. Ask God to give you wisdom for establishing a clear set of rules by meditating on Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight..."

Be consistent

Be clear in the expectations and consequences of your child's behavior. When you set guidelines and limits, you must stick to them. When you're not consistent with your routine, children get confused and may act out more or throw more temper tantrums. Be consistent in all things—whether it's with discipline, sleep habits, or mealtime routines. Be a parent of your word. Without consistency, children cannot feel the security of a parent's love. As 1 Corinthians 13:8 reminds us, "Love never fails."

Allow your child to make acceptable choices

Offer limited choices to your child that are acceptable to you. As Isaiah 1:17 reminds us, we need to help our child "Learn to do good..."

Know what your child is doing

As you allow your child to make acceptable choices on his/her own, you must also watch your child closely. If you see an inappropriate behavior coming, redirect your child to another activity or area. 2 Timothy 4:5 reminds us, "But you be watchful in all things..."

Communicate your expectations to your child

Let your child know you expect positive behavior. Help him or her to solve problems with positive words. Remind your child with love and respect about the expectations you have. In this way, you will help your child learn John 13:17, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

Kids will be kids, but if they are not taught appropriate behavior at an early age, they will not grow up to be responsible adults. Guiding their behavior with God as your teacher will instill His love in their

lives, which will impact their lives for eternity. As Psalm 48:14 tells us "...He will be our guide..." if we lean on Him for His wisdom.