

## ***Noticing When Your Kids Do the Right Thing***

“Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity.”—W. Clement Stone, American writer

It's so easy to say no. It's even easier to find all the little things that your child does wrong. Yet, what if you said yes more than you said no? What if you started noticing the little things your child is doing right? Even though your child will still do things wrong and get into trouble, your child will feel more uplifted rather than beaten down when you notice her doing the right thing. Here's how.

### ***Try it...***

#### ***For all parents***

- Kids are growing and learning. A lot of this process involves trial and error, which is why it seems on some days they do more wrong things than right. Open your heart more and be compassionate about your child's process of growing and discovering what's right and wrong.
- Be intentional about noticing what your child is doing right. For example, if your toddler made a mess at lunch but ate all of her vegetables, point out how proud you are of how she ate.
- Pay attention to how you respond when someone gives you a compliment. Then think about how your child feels when you compliment him.
- Continue to set and enforce boundaries consistently. You can make a point of praising good behavior and following through on consequences when your child violates known boundaries.
- Talk about how doing the right thing is about becoming a person of character, a person with strong positive values. A helpful book is [\*Teaching Your Children Values\*](#).
- Be sincere in your compliments. Mean what you say. Kids can tell right away when an adult is manipulating them by saying something nice to get them to behave a certain way.
- Don't limit yourself to complimenting only your own kids. If you see a neighbor child or a teenager at the grocery store do something good, give a personal compliment. Your children are always watching what you do, and they'll observe that you're rewarding good behavior.

#### ***For parents with children ages birth to 5***

- Delight in the discoveries of your child. For example, some kids get excited with ants or worms outside. Share their enthusiasm—even if you've seen millions of ants

before.

- Give your child two better choices when he wants to make one bad one. For example, if your child keeps stealing your watch and playing with it, offer your child two different toys that he really likes and make a trade. (Then keep your watch in a place your child cannot get into.)
- Compliment your child whenever he helps out or does a caring action.

### ***For parents with children ages 6 - 9***

- Homework and learning to read can be overwhelming, daunting tasks for children at this age. Break apart the steps and point out when your child is doing the right thing, such as recognizing specific words when reading aloud.
- Point out how proud you are when your child apologizes after doing something wrong (even if the apology didn't seem sincere). Learning to apologize is hard to do, so recognize your child's effort even if her execution isn't smooth yet.
- Notice when your child is gentle and caring toward other people and animals. These caring behaviors are important for them to learn and continue to use throughout their lives.

### ***For parents with children ages 10 - 15***

- Kids at this age often become self-conscious and worry about their appearance. When they experiment with their hair or clothing style, compliment on a part that you like (even if it's just the color).
- Many kids have shifting relationships at this age as they figure out who they are and how they fit in. When you like one or more of their friends, say so. Tell them how good they are at choosing friends.
- Schoolwork often can become more intense and demanding, and some kids get easily discouraged. Tell your child how proud you are of her efforts and how she is going deeper with education. If your child is open to it, ask how you can help. Sometimes just being encouraging is a great gift for a child at this age.

### ***For parents with children ages 16 - 18***

- The trouble that kids can find at this age can often have bigger consequences, such as getting into a car accident or getting caught for vandalism. Treat these situations seriously and be firm about how you expect your child to act. Try to separate your child from the behavior by being hard on the behavior and still loving toward your child. A helpful book is [\*Parenting Teens with Love and Logic\*](#).
- Tell your teenager that you're proud of him, and be specific. For example, say, "I was really proud of how you tackled that player and then helped him up."
- Older teenagers can sometimes be so busy that parents rarely see them, so when you do, say something positive.
- Monitor how your teenager acts toward your compliments. Some don't like too much enthusiasm. Others do. Give compliments in ways that your teenager accepts the best—and truly finds sincere.