

Great  
Ideas  
from  
Parenting  
Press



20 Tips  
from *almost*  
30 Years

# About Parenting Press

*Parenting Press publishes skill-building books for children and those who work and live with them.*

Parenting Press began in 1979 when Elizabeth Crary self-published her first book, *Without Spanking or Spoiling*. Since then we have expanded to 88 books by 40 authors.

We are dedicated to producing modern classics. By this we mean books of substance and enduring value. Books you can go back to again and again.

Our books are intensely practical and supportive. They help parents identify what they want rather than telling them what they should do. They offer concrete tools.

Our books are respectful. The tools and techniques they offer are effective without being hurtful physically or emotionally.

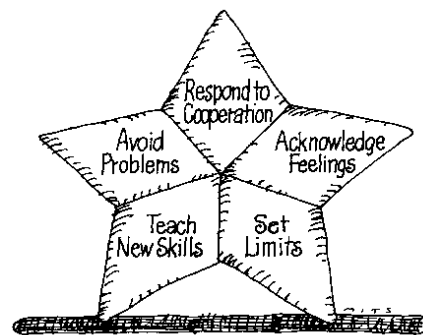
We hope you will enjoy the tips we have culled from 20 years of publishing.

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# 1 Think before you speak

I once saw a grocery bag with the question on it, “What is the difference between child abuse and discipline?” When you turned the bag around the answer was “10 seconds.” To me this means, “Think before you speak.”

Child guidance will be more effective if you understand your *values*, have reasonable *expectations* for your children, and *take care* of yourself.

**Clarify your values.** When you have a clear idea of what you want in the long term, it is easier for you to develop a plan to get it and to deal with current hassles.

**Develop reasonable expectations.** Children’s behavior varies greatly both between children of the same age and between different ages for the same child. Without reasonable expectations, a child may waste much time and energy attempting the impossible, and discourage both you and him- or herself in the process.

**Take care of yourself.** When you feel good about yourself, you are more effective. This involves spending time on yourself and learning how to motivate yourself.

*Tip from: Without Spanking or Spoiling*  
by Elizabeth Crary, M.S.

# 2 Consider your child’s temperament

Many behaviors that drive parents crazy are linked to the child’s temperament. However, temperament is much like having blue or brown eyes. It is neither good nor bad. Temperament knowledge enables parents and caregivers to understand a child’s behavior—whether it’s friendliness, restlessness, persistence, lack of flexibility, enthusiasm, mistrust, or any other behavior.

It is important to remember temperament is overridden by development. Temperament shows you *how* a child does everything. For example, all babies learn to walk—how they do so depends on their levels of activity and persistence.

Knowing this helps parents develop realistic expectations for their child. *Understanding Temperament* shows parents how to use a child’s temperament to predict behavior problems in advance and avoid them.

*Tip from: Understanding Temperament* by  
Lyndall Shick, M.A.

# 3 Clarify rules about toy ownership

Do toys and games belong to the child they were given to or to the whole family? Can you play with a toy someone else left in the living room? Who decides when toys and clothes are outgrown and what happens to them?

There are many possible ownership rules. Your family might have the rule that, “The toy belongs to the child it was given to even when she has outgrown it, and others must ask before using it.” Or, “Keep toys you don’t want to share in your room. If you leave one in a common space, anyone may use the toy.” Or, “All toys are family toys, regardless of whom they were given to.”

It is less important what the rule is than that the rule is clear and consistently enforced. Children feel anger and resentment when the rules vary from child to child. Decide on your rules and post them on the refrigerator so everyone can remember what they are. (For non-readers, illustrate the rules.)

For more ideas for dealing with siblings, see *Help! The Kids Are at It Again*.

**Tip from:** *Help! The Kids Are at It Again* by Elizabeth Crary, M.S.

# 4 Offer children several ways to get a toy

Parents and caregivers often tell children to ask for what they want. However, an informal study found that simply “asking” worked only 5% of the time. That means if asking is the only strategy we offer children, we are setting them up for failure 95% of the time.

Children can ask to have a turn, wait, trade, or make a deal. You can introduce the ideas by reading *I Want It*, *I Want to Play*, or *I Can’t Wait*.

Parents may need to actively teach young children these skills. Teaching is easiest when you break the skill into small steps. Five steps to introduce trading are:

1. Model trading: Say, “Peter, let’s see if Katie will trade for this.”
2. Give Peter a toy you think Katie will like and tell him to trade.
3. Offer Peter two toys. Ask him to choose the one he thinks Katie will like.
4. Offer him three toys and ask him to choose one for Katie.
5. Finally, ask him to find a toy Katie might like.

The more skills a child has, the easier it will be to get what he or she wants pleasantly.

**Tip from:** The Children’s Problem Solving Series: *I Want It*, *I Want to Play*, and *I Can’t Wait* by Elizabeth Crary, M.S.

# 5 Help children realize feelings change

Young children are often dominated by their feelings.

When they are frustrated, they believe they will always be frustrated.

You can help them gain control of their feelings by helping them realize that feelings change. Some parents attempt to do that by saying, “Don’t be so upset, you’ll feel better later.” However, that rarely works. What generally works better is to notice how feelings *have* changed.

For example, you can point out how your feelings are changing. Or when your child has calmed down, help her notice that now she feels calmer, “You were really upset when the blocks fell down. Now you feel happy again.” You can also read, *All My Feelings at Home* or *All My Feelings at Preschool*. Both books follow a child through the many feelings in one day.



**Tip from:** *All My Feelings at Home* and *All My Feelings at Preschool* by Susan Levine Friedman, M.S.W. and Susan Conlin, M.Ed.

# 6 Teach kids to calm angry feelings

Children as young as toddlers can begin to learn to deal with their feelings when they are taught strategies to calm themselves.

At the moment of crisis, acknowledge the child’s feelings, and offer a choice. For example, if Brittany is crying because it’s time for Teri to leave, you might say, “You’re disappointed that Teri must go home. Would you like to sit here and take deep breaths or walk her to the car?”

Offer children several different strategies—physical, auditory, visual, creative, and self-nurturing options. The toddler board book *When You’re MAD and You Know It* offers children six things they can do.

There have been two constants with my son – he loves books and he hates diaper changing.

When he was about 13 months old I started reading him *When You’re MAD and You Know It*. Sometimes we would sing the rhymes. Other times we acted them out.

One day when he was about 17 months old, he was kicking and flailing as I put him on the changing table. I said, “You’re mad you have to have your diaper changed.” He stopped struggling, gave me a quizzical look, and began to blow air out and shake his hands, two strategies in the book.

**Tip from:** *When You’re Mad and You Know It* by Elizabeth Crary, M.S.

# 7 Sidestep sleep problems

Regardless of where children sleep (the family bed or their bed), there are many ways to meet the ultimate goal: A good night's sleep for the entire family.

Often the hardest obstacle for parents is teaching their child to stay in bed through the night. *The Sleep Book for Tired Parents* offers several strategies to encourage cooperation.

- *Establish a consistent nightly ritual* which is both calming and reassuring. Your ritual could be a reading time with just you and your child, listening to soft music, or singing a few calming songs to your child. Such good feelings before bedtime make falling asleep a more comforting part of the day.

- *Offer an attachment object.* Holding a blanket or snuggling a favorite stuffed animal can be a way of self-comforting when Mom or Dad is not around or asleep.

- *Incentives may help* with children three years old or older. You might offer to cook a special breakfast for staying in bed or display a chart with a star for every night they sleep through.

**Tip from:** *The Sleep Book for Tired Parents* by Rebecca Huntley, M.S.W.

# 8 Establish and use a touching code

It is easier for children to say "NO" to abuse and teasing when they know specific words to use. One way you can help is to establish a "Touching Code." The code could be "No!" "Stop," "Don't touch me," or anything your family chooses.

Children will believe and use the Touching Code *only* if they see it work time after time. For example, if you are roughhousing with your son and he says "Stop," you need to honor his request. If your daughter Brenda continues to tickle her little brother after he says "Stop!" you need to remind her of your family rule.

You can use the book *It's My Body* to introduce the idea of a touching code.



**Tip from:** *It's MY Body* by Lory Freeman, M.A.

# 9 Affirm your child's creative energy

Active alert children are bright, eager learners. Because active alerts learn best by interacting with their environment, it is important to learn how your child learns and how to encourage it. Such a child's creative behavior can often challenge a parent's resourcefulness. Instead of limiting activity, focus and structure it.

Also, be willing to be an advocate for your active alert in school and social settings by helping others to understand your child's learning style and creative nature.

Affirmations are an important part of supporting this learning process. Active alert children need to be assured that their energetic behavior is acceptable.

Here are some affirmations suggested from the book, *Living with the Active Alert Child*:

- Your energy is beautiful.
- You can be excited and still go slowly.
- It's okay to be curious; it's okay to ask questions.
- It's okay to do two things at once.
- You can trust that you'll be protected; I will protect you.

**Tip from:** *Living with the Active Alert Child* by Linda Budd, Ph.D.

# 10 Distinguish between reporting and tattling

One way to help protect your child from sexual abuse is to distinguish between reporting and tattling. Abusers tell children no one will believe them—because no one likes tattlers. If your child can distinguish between reporting and tattling, she will be more likely to report abuse.

Kathryn Hammerseng distinguishes between the two in her book *Telling Isn't Tattling*. Children **tattle** when they want to get someone in trouble or have an adult solve their problem. Children are **telling** when they want protection for themselves, someone else, or property. *Telling Isn't Tattling* offers children the chance to practice clarifying the two ideas.

Encourage children by listening to their reporting.



**Tip from:** *Telling Isn't Tattling* by Kathryn Hammerseng

# 11

Notice the behavior you want

Praise can help or make things worse. Three guides to helpful praise are:

- *Be specific.* Specific praise tells the child exactly what he did that you liked. It focuses on the *behavior* and does not evaluate the person.

- *Be sincere.* Somehow children know when praise is false or exaggerated.

- *Be immediate.* This gives children the information when they still remember what they did.

*Five praise starters* from *Love & Limits* are listed below.

*Thank you*—for helping me put away the toys.

*Well done!*—you put away **all** the blocks.

*Nice work*—setting the table.

*I noticed*—you used words to ask for a drink.

My boys are very active. I used to spend all my time enforcing limits. After reading *Love & Limits* I began to look for and praise cooperative behavior. After about a week my 4-year-old came to me and said, “Mom, you really do want us to be helpful, don’t you?”

I realized that part of the reason my kids broke all the rules is that it was the more predictable way to get my attention.

**Tip from:** *Love & Limits* by Elizabeth Crary, M.S.

# 12

Brainstorm lots of ideas

The more ideas you have, the more likely you will be to find something that works. When most people generate ideas, they write down what they know. That is not brainstorming, that is simply listing.

Brainstorming goes beyond listing to come up with more ideas—new ideas, silly ideas. When the mind is free enough to think of new, crazy ideas, it is open to new, good ideas.

*Dealing with whining* is a challenge for many parents. Here are five of the 21 ideas offered in *365 Wacky, Wonderful Ways to Get Your Children to Do What You Want*:

- *Notice* when your child asks for something pleasantly and give it if possible.
- *Make a silly poem.* For example,  
Silly you. Silly you.  
The sour whine bug’s bitten you.  
Take a drink to clear your throat.  
That’s the magic antidote.
- *Make the rule,* “If you whine, the answer is no.”
- *Ask him to pitch his voice low.* It’s hard to whine in a low voice.
- *Give her a choice.* “You may whine in the bathroom or speak pleasantly in here.”

**Tip from:** *365 Wacky, Wonderful Ways to Get Your Children to Do What You Want* by Elizabeth Crary, M.S.

# 13 Give children negotiation skills

Children need to know how to resolve conflicts. Requiring unskilled children to solve their problems often leads them to act aggressively or to practice being incompetent.

*Kids Can Cooperate* offers a five-step process to facilitate children's ability to resolve conflicts.

1. **Gather data** to decide how to intervene.
2. **State the problem** clearly in terms of both children's needs.
3. **Solicit ideas**. Encourage many ideas. Avoid criticizing the ideas.
4. **Evaluate ideas**. Look at consequences. Hunt for win-win ideas.
5. **Ask for a decision** and help kids plan.

When children have the problem-solving skills, they can often resolve conflicts themselves.

## It's MY window

We had been on the road an hour. Mark (age 4) and Carl (age 9) were riding in the back. Suddenly Mark yelled at Carl to "Stop."

Carl: "I'm not doing anything."

Mark: "Yes, you are. You're looking out my window."

Carl: "I can look out any window."

Mark: "No, you can't. This is MY window."

Carl: "Well, what do you want?"

Mark: "I want you to ask permission to look out my window."

Carl: "All right. May I look out your window?"

Mark: "Yes."

And that, amazingly, was the end, thanks to four months of work with *Kids Can Cooperate*.

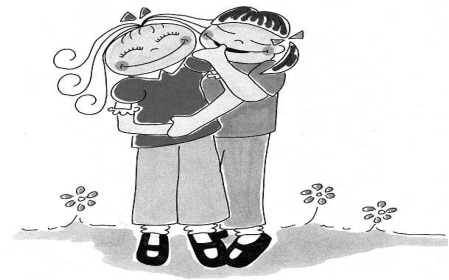
# 14 Distinguish between surprises and secrets

Children love secrets. However, some secrets hide information that parents need to know. You can make your job easier by helping your child to distinguish between secrets and surprises.

Surprises are private *only* for a limited time. Secrets are used to exclude people and have no end. These concepts are contrasted in *The Trouble with Secrets*.

Teaching your child the difference can help protect your child from abusers. Abusers want to keep their relationship a secret. Abusers extract a promise from children "not to tell." If children know that no one has a right to ask them to keep secrets from their parents they will be more likely to tell you.

Take your children seriously when they report so that they won't decide that telling is pointless.



**Tip from:** *The Trouble with Secrets* by Karen Johnsen



# 17

## Ask helpful questions

To stop unwanted actions or behavior

while connecting with your child, start by asking a question. This teaches your child to listen and invites him to think. If you tell a child what is wrong, you've done the thinking.

Ask a question in a clear, firm, and non-critical tone, "Exactly what happened here?" Or "What is the rule about throwing things inside?"

Avoid questions like, "Why did you do that?" Often kids don't know why, or don't care to tell you. Also, stay away from the obvious, "Who tracked mud on the floor?" Children either think you're stupid for asking or get defensive because the question sounds like a trick.

By asking questions you are letting your child know you're attempting to understand her point of view.

**Asking** can be used interchangeably with other tools—**Amending**, **Attending**, and **Acting**. These four puzzle pieces form the time-in process, which is explained and illustrated in *Time-in: When Time-out Doesn't Work*.

**Tip from:** *Time-in: When Time-out Doesn't Work* by Jean Illsley Clarke, M.A.

# 18

## Give kids tools to deal with bullies

The impact of bullies on children's lives is staggering. Bullies thrive in settings (school or home) where adults make excuses, look the other way, or blame the victim for being "sensitive." Some children suffer in silence for years, finally retaliating violently or committing suicide.

**Children need strategies** for dealing with bullies, and support when they can't handle the situation.

- *Avoid the situation.* Go earlier, go later, or take a different route. If an "easy target" is not available, the bully may lose interest.

- *Ignore provocation.* Ignoring means "not responding": No rebuttal, no eye contact, no turning and leaving the room. Act as though the bully does not exist. Ignoring is hard.

- *Get support.* Walk with a friend or a group of kids.

- *Get help.* If a child feels unsafe, he or she needs to find an adult to help. Your child may need to talk to several people before one will help because some adults wish to ignore the problem.

Children can practice various options in the book *Bully on the Bus*.

**Tip from:** *Bully on the Bus* by Carl Bosch, M.A.

# 19 Use family meetings

Family meetings can be an effective structure both to avoid problems and to work through problems that do come up.

Goals for family meetings: to establish time to plan, to support family members, and to practice problem solving as a family. The following ideas are from *Redirecting Children's Behavior*.

- *Hold meetings weekly*, at a time when everyone can come. Agree that if someone misses, they will abide by the decisions made at that meeting.

- *Choose a meeting place that is free from distractions*. For example, a table where everyone can sit together. No television, phone, food, or other activities.

- *Prepare an agenda*. You can post a paper on the refrigerator, or use a special blackboard. Prioritize the concerns at the meeting.

- *Rotate the position of leader and secretary each meeting*. Leader follows the agenda. Secretary takes notes on decisions.

- *Make decision by consensus rather than majority rule*. With consensus you find a solution that everyone can accept. It may take a bit longer. However, the solution is easier to implement.

**Tip from:** *Redirecting Children's Behavior* by Kathryn Kvols.

# 20 Encourage your teen to talk with you

Adolescent years are difficult for parents and teenagers. Teens strive for independence, while parents want to protect them.

Using personal examples, Louise Felton Tracy gives tips for struggling parents in her book *Grounded for Life?!?*

*Be available*. Teens need to talk, but rarely when it is convenient for parents. When parents are seen as too busy, kids go elsewhere to find a sense of belonging.

*Focus on positive behaviors and strengths*. For example, instead of harping on the "D" in math, focus on the "A" in history. This allows teens to develop confidence and independence, while giving parents results they seek.

*Give your teen accurate information*, when dealing with issues like drugs or sexuality. Scare tactics seldom work and could place a teen in danger.

Remember, if you have extreme difficulty dealing with any teen problem, you are not alone, and seeking professional counseling is always possible.

**Tip from:** *Grounded for Life?!?: Stop Blowing Your Fuse and Start Communicating with Your Teenager* by Louise Felton Tracy, M.S.

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