

**What
Individuals
Can Do**



Building Gateways to Prevention in Your Community

We all have a role to play in building strong communities in which families and children are valued and supported. It is in these kinds of communities that children are safest from abuse and neglect. Here are some things you can do as a concerned individual.

The Five R's

Prevent Child Abuse America has developed the following "Five R's," which can help individuals better understand the role they can play in child abuse prevention.

Raise the issue.

Call or write your candidates and elected officials to educate them about issues in your community and the need for child abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment programs.

Contact your local school district and faith community to encourage them to sponsor classes and support programs for new parents.

Reach out to kids and parents in your community.

Anything you do to support kids and parents in your family and extended community helps to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Be a good neighbor. Offer to baby-sit. Donate your children's used clothing, furniture, and toys for use by another family. Be kind and supportive, particularly to new parents and children.

Remember the risk factors.

Child abuse and neglect occur in all segments of our society, but the risk factors are greater in families where parents:

- * Abuse alcohol or drugs
- * Are isolated from their families or communities
- * Have difficulty controlling their anger or stress
- * Appear uninterested in the care, nourishment, or safety of their children
- * Seem to be having serious economic, housing, or personal problems

Recognize the warning signs.

Some of the warning signs that a child might be abused or neglected include:

- * Nervousness around adults
- * Aggression toward adults or other children
- * Inability to stay awake or to concentrate for extended periods
- * Sudden, dramatic changes in personality or activities
- * Acting out sexually or showing interest in sex that is not appropriate for his or her age
- * Frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries
- * Low self-esteem
- * Poor hygiene

Report suspected abuse or neglect.

If you suspect abuse or neglect is occurring, report it—and keep reporting it—until something is done. Contact child protective services (in your local phone book) or your local police department.

Other Ways You Can Help

Build a support network by getting involved in your neighborhood.

- * Develop friendly relationships with your neighbors and their children. Problems often seem less overwhelming when you have support nearby.
- * Get involved in your child's school. Join the parent-teacher organization and attend school events.
- * Talk to your friends and neighbors about child abuse and how to prevent it.

Learn how your community supports children and families.

The following programs may be offered through schools, healthcare clinics, social service agencies, or community- or faith-based organizations:

- * Parent education programs teach parents about child development and parenting skills.
- * Home-visiting programs provide social support, education, and crisis intervention to families at risk for abuse. (See Healthy Families America in the Resource Directory, page 59.)
- * Substance abuse treatment programs can help parents overcome problems with alcohol or other drugs.
- * Well-baby programs provide health and education services to new parents.
- * Childcare programs offer affordable childcare services. This may allow parents to maintain full-time jobs or stay in school while keeping their children safe.
- * Respite care provides relief to families with a child or other family member who is ill or has a disability.
- * Parent mentor programs match experienced, stable parents with parents at risk for abuse. Mentors provide support and model positive parenting skills.
- * Family support centers offer an array of preventive support services, including many of those listed above, as well as referral to other community services. (See Family Support America in the Resource Directory, page 59.)
- * Parent support groups offer a place for parents to meet and discuss parenting issues, exchange ideas, and offer support. (See Circle of Parents and Parents Anonymous[®] Inc. in the Resource Directory, page 59.)

Take part in community prevention efforts.

- * Help local organizations distribute educational materials on parenting and child abuse prevention.
- * Encourage local schools or other community organizations to provide parenting education.
- * Request a speaker or in-service training through the child protective services hotline.
- * Offer to speak to the media and other groups about your own experiences as a parent. Parents Anonymous[®] Inc. has a resource guide, *Media Guide for Parent Leaders*, that may be helpful. (See Resource Directory, page 59.)
- * Organize a fundraiser or a food drive to support an organization that helps families in your community.
- * Help the public library develop resources for parents. Work with the librarian to develop a collection of resources on child development and parenting skills.
- * Provide friendship and guidance to parents and children who need your help by volunteering for programs such as Befriend-a-Child or Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).
- * Contact your elected officials and ask them to support funding for prevention efforts and policies that support children and families.
- * Make a donation to an organization that works to prevent child abuse. You can donate money, or give clothing, food, or toys to a social service agency that helps families in your community.
- * Start or join a community coalition to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Prevention Month Calendar: April 2003

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Read to a child.	2 Compliment a child. Encourage a child. It helps build self-esteem.	3 Volunteer at a local child abuse prevention center.	4 Listen to your child's stories and dreams. Build his or her imagination.	5 Learn nonviolent ways to discipline, such as time-out with discussion.
6 Control offensive materials on your home computer.	7 Color a special picture with your child. Hang it on the refrigerator.	8 Visit a nursing home with your child.	9 <u>DO SOMETHING</u> when you see child abuse in public.	10 Baby-sit free for a parent who needs a break.	11 Get to know your neighbors. Hold a block party.	12 Take your child to the zoo.
13 Take the family to a matinee.	14 Play your child's favorite game.	15 Volunteer in a classroom or at a childcare center.	16 Make cookies with your child and frost them.	17 Set a good example, demonstrate positive relationships.	18 Encourage your children to give their allowance to charity.	19 Wear a Blue Ribbon (the symbol to prevent child abuse).
20 Go for a family bike ride.	21 Become educated and involved in legislative children's issues.	22 Give everyone in your family a hug today.	23 Have the family go for a nice long walk together.	24 Share your common experiences with other parents.	25 Rent a family movie and share a bowl of popcorn.	26 Clean out closets and give unwanted items to charity.
27 Have the entire family make a Sunday dinner.	28 Visit the Prevent Child Abuse America Web site at www.prevent-childabuse.org .	29 Take a parenting or child-development class.	30 Learn how, when, and what to report about suspected child abuse.			

Adapted from:
National Exchange Club Foundation
3050 Central Avenue
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www.preventchildabuse.com



Reporting Child Abuse

If you suspect abuse, reporting it can protect the child and get help for the family. Each State identifies mandatory reporters (groups of people who are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect). However, any concerned person can and should report suspected child abuse.

How do I report child abuse or neglect?

If you suspect a child is being harmed, contact your local child protective services (CPS) or law enforcement agency so professionals can assess the situation. When calling to report child abuse, you will be asked for specific information, which may include:

- * The child's name
- * The suspected perpetrator's name (if known)
- * A description of what you have seen or heard
- * The names of any other people having knowledge of the abuse
- * Your name and phone number

For more information about where and how to file a report, call Childhelp USA[®], National Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-4-A-CHILD[®]).

The names of reporters are not given out to families reported for child abuse or neglect; however, sometimes by the nature of the information reported, your identity may become evident to the family. You may request to make your report anonymously, but your report may be considered more credible and can be more helpful to CPS if you give your name.

Remember—your suspicion of child abuse or neglect is enough to make a report. You are not required to provide proof. Almost every State has a law to protect people who make good-faith reports of child abuse from prosecution and/or liability.

What will happen when I make a report?

Your report of possible child maltreatment will first be screened by hotline staff or a CPS worker. If the worker feels there is enough credible information to indicate that maltreatment may have occurred or is at risk of occurring, your report will be referred to staff who will conduct an investigation. In some States, reports of lower risk situations are assigned to another staff member or agency who will conduct an assessment of the family's needs.

Investigators respond within a particular time period (anywhere from a few hours to a few days), depending on the potential severity of the situation. They may speak with the child, the parents, and other people in contact with the child (such as doctors, teachers, or childcare providers). Their purpose is to determine if abuse or neglect has occurred and if it may happen again.

If the investigator finds that no abuse or neglect occurred, or what happened does not meet your State's definition of abuse or neglect, the case will be closed and the family may or may not be referred elsewhere for services. If the investigator feels the children are at risk of harm, the family may be referred to services to reduce the risk of future maltreatment. These may include mental health care, medical care, parenting skills classes, employment assistance, and concrete support such as financial or housing assistance. In rare cases where the child's safety cannot be ensured, the child may be removed from the home.

Tips for Being a Nurturing Parent

One of the most important things you can do to prevent child abuse is to build a positive relationship with your own children.

Help your children feel loved and secure.

We can all take steps to improve our relationship with our children:

- * Make sure your children know you love them, even when they do something wrong.
- * Encourage your children. Praise their achievements and talents.
- * Spend time with your children. Do things together that you all enjoy.

Seek help if you need it.

Problems such as unemployment, marital tension, or a child with special needs can add to family tension. And parenting is a challenging job on its own. No one expects you to know how to do it all. If you think stress may be affecting the way you treat your child, or if you just want the extra support that all parents need at some point, try the following:

- * **Talk to someone.** Tell a friend, healthcare provider, or a leader in your faith community about your concerns. Or join a self-help group for parents. (See Circle of Parents and Parents Anonymous® Inc. in the Resource Directory, page 59, to locate a group near you.)
- * **Get counseling.** Individual or family counseling can help you learn healthy ways to communicate with each other.
- * **Take a parenting class.** Nobody was born knowing how to be a good parent. Parenting classes can give you the skills you need to raise a happy, healthy child.
- * **Accept help.** You don't have to do it all. Accept offers of help from friends, family, or neighbors. And don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.



Time Out

It's been around since dunce caps and corners. With a modern twist, Time Out can be a valuable discipline tool.

As we go about the business of teaching our children proper behavior, there are times when emotions threaten to get out of control. When this happens, it's wise to separate yourself from your child so that you can both cool off. Time Out can be used as an effective, positive tool. There are three different ways to use Time Out, each having a different purpose.

1. To give the child time and space to cool off and calm down.

The key here is in the attitude of the parent. In advance, let your child know that when her behavior is out of control she'll be asked to go to her room. Tell her that when she is calm and under control she may join the family. How she chooses to use the time is her business, as long as it's respectful of people and property. Screaming or pounding the door is not acceptable, reading a book or other activities is fine. This is a valuable life skill that will prevent your child from "flying off the handle" and saying and doing things she might regret later.

Never drag a child to his Time Out. This robs you of the upper hand and makes you look foolish. Let him know in advance that when asked to remove himself he needs to do so immediately. If he does not, he'll be choosing to give up a privilege (one you have specified in advance), in addition to Time Out.

2. To give the parent time and space to cool off and calm down.

There are times when we get so angry at our children that we want to scream, hit, or ground them for life! This is the time to use a four-letter-word: E X I T. Make a brief statement, "I'm so angry, I need a minute to think." Then go to your room or send the child to his room so that you can calm down and regroup. This will help you get yourself under control, and it provides good modeling for your children.

3. As a method for stopping a specific misbehavior.

This can be an excellent way to put an immediate stop to a child's action. It brings a strong message, "This behavior is unacceptable and it will stop now." There are several keys:

- ★ **Be quick.** Catch your child in the act. Delayed reactions dilute the effect.
- ★ **Use selectively.** Use for hitting, talking back, and whining or other specific problems. Don't over-use.
- ★ **Keep calm.** Your anger only adds fuel to the fire and changes the focus from the behavior of the child to your anger. This prevents you from being in control.
- ★ **Stick with it.** Once you say, "Time Out," don't back down or be talked out of it. If you decide to use Time Out to control hitting, for example, use it every time your child hits, even if he spends most of the day in Time Out! Eventually, he'll decide that it's more fun to play without hitting than to sit alone in his room.

Time Out is one more effective discipline tool for parents. When used with other positive parenting methods it helps you feel good about the job you are doing with your kids.



The Power of Choice

Would you like to get your kids to willingly cooperate? Stop the daily battles? Teach your kids valuable life skills? If your answer is “Yes! Yes! Yes!” then read on. . .

There are so many things we must get our children to do and so many things we must stop them from doing! Get up. Get dressed. Don’t dawdle. Do your homework. Eat. It goes on and on. We can get our kids to cooperate and at the same time allow them to learn self-discipline and develop good decision-making skills. How? By offering choices.

Giving a choice is a very powerful tool that can be used with toddlers through teenagers.

This is one skill that every parent should have tattooed on the back of his or her hand as a constant reminder. Parents should use this skill every day, many times a day. Giving children choices is a very effective way to enlist their cooperation because children love having the privilege of choice. It takes the pressure out of your request and allows a child to feel in control. This makes a child more willing to comply.

Using choice is an effective way to achieve results, and when you get in the habit of offering choices you are doing your children a big favor. As children learn to make simple choices—Milk or juice?—they get the practice required to make bigger choices—Buy two class T-shirts or one sweatshirt?—which gives them the ability as they grow to make more important decisions—Save or spend? Drink beer or soda? Study or fail? Giving children choices allows them to learn to listen to their inner voice. It is a valuable skill that they will carry with them to adulthood.

You should offer choices based on your child’s age and your intent.

A toddler can handle two choices, a grade-school child three or four. A teenager can be given general guidelines. Offer choices such that you would be happy with whatever option your child chooses. Otherwise, you are not being fair. For example, a parent might say, “Either eat your peas or go to your room,” but when the child gets up off his chair, the parent yells, “Sit down and eat your dinner, young man!” (So that wasn’t really a choice, was it?)

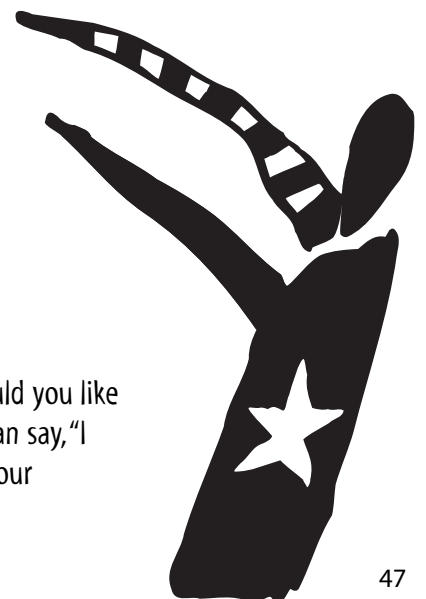
Here are some ways in which you can use choice:

- * Do you want to wear your Big Bird pajamas or your Mickey Mouse pajamas?
- * Do you want to do your homework at the kitchen table or the desk?
- * Do you want to wear your coat, carry it, or put on a sweatshirt?
- * Would you prefer to let the dog out in the yard or take him for a walk?
- * Do you want to run up to bed or hop like a bunny?
- * What do you want to do first, take out the trash or dry the dishes?
- * Do you want to watch 5 more minutes of TV or 10?

A typical problem with choices is the child who makes up his own choice!

For example, “Taylor, do you want to put on your pajamas first, or brush your teeth?” To which little Taylor answers, “I want to watch TV.” What to do? Just smile sweetly and say, “That wasn’t one of the choices. What do you want to do first, put on your pajamas or brush your teeth?”

If your child is still reluctant to choose from the options that you offer, then simply ask, “Would you like to choose or shall I choose for you?” If an appropriate answer is not forthcoming then you can say, “I see that you want me to choose for you.” Then follow through. Make your choice and help your child—by leading or carrying him—so that he can cooperate.



Winning the Chore War

“How many times do I have to remind you to take out the trash?” Sound familiar? Household jobs are a part of every family’s daily life, yet they tend to create ongoing conflict. Give yourself a pat on the back if you assign your kids chores. It’s an important way kids learn responsibility. Even children as young as two years old can help out around the house. Here are a few pointers for making the process easier on everybody.

Have a plan. Kids thrive on routine. It’s best if they have routine chores that they do at regular times. For instance, clearing the table is done right after eating. Trash is taken out immediately after the kitchen is cleaned up. Bed is made right after dressing. The more you develop these routines, the less reminding you will have to do. When you do have to remind your child it can be a brief statement, such as “Trash Time.” With more than one child you can rotate chores, but keep in mind it will take extra effort to develop new routines. Visual reminders help kids stay on track. A poster, chart, or job board can help kids stay focused.

Train and encourage. Use a four-step process when introducing a new job. First, you do the job, narrating as you work, while the child watches. Next, do the job together. Third, the child does the job while you watch, coach, and encourage. Fourth, the child is ready to go it alone. If you eliminate training then you open the door for battles since you will both be operating under different expectations.

Follow through. Once you decide on a plan, do your best to stick to it every day. If you allow excuses and delays then you’ll find yourself fighting with your child. If you have a kid who fights the routine, establish a consequence for failure to complete chores and follow through without anger or threats.

Who does what? Here’s a list of ideas to get you thinking about what your kids are capable of doing. Don’t underestimate your children! The same child who runs a complicated computer game can certainly manage the washer and dryer!

Ages 2-3
Put away toys
Help set table

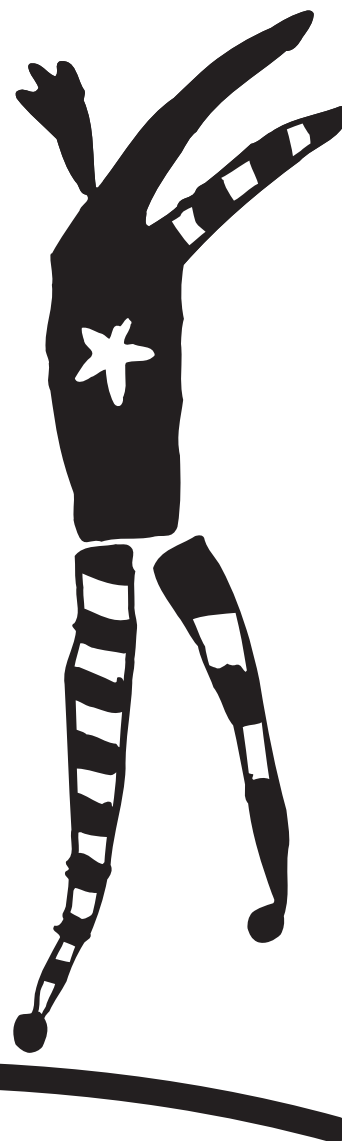
Ages 4-5
Get the mail
Help with yard work
Feed pets

Ages 6-7
Clear table after meals
Pour own drinks and get snacks
Empty wastebaskets

Ages 8-9
Sweep or mop floor
Load and run dishwasher
Run/take own bath

Ages 10-11
Help prepare dinner
Mow lawn
Clean kitchen

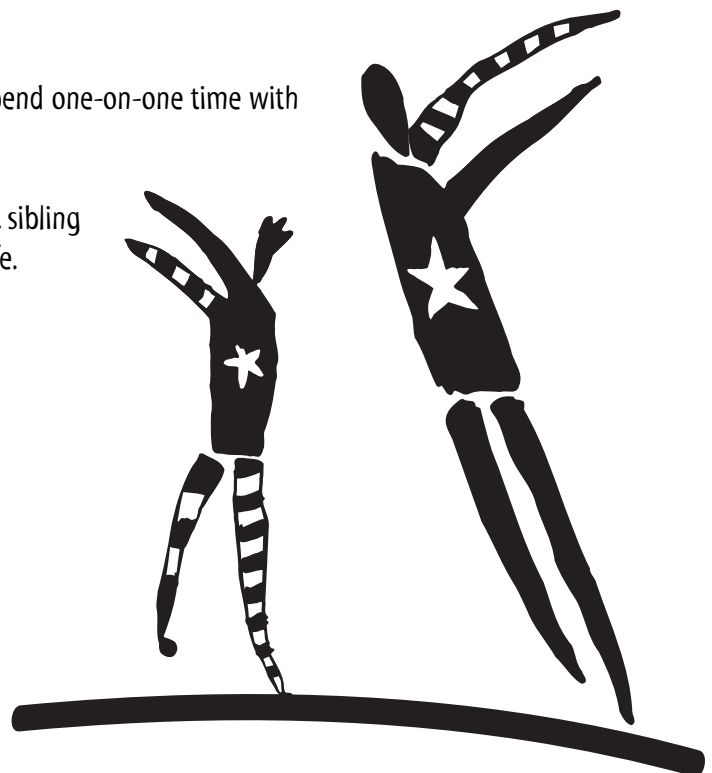
Ages 12-14
Grocery shop (*small list*)
Prepare a dinner meal
Clean bathrooms



Sibling Rivalry

The word “sibling” refers to brothers and sisters, and “sibling rivalry” means the competitive feelings and actions that often occur among children in a family. There are things that you can do to try to reduce sibling rivalry.

- * Treat each child as an individual. Help children understand that they are treated differently by you and have different privileges and responsibilities because they are different individuals.
- * Respect each child’s space, toys, and time when he wants to be alone, away from his sibling.
- * Avoid labeling or comparing one child to the other. This feeds into their competitiveness.
- * When a new child comes into the family, adequately prepare the older sibling for her new important role. Make her feel like it’s her baby, too.
- * Play detective. Watch and note when siblings are not getting along (before dinner, in the car, before bed) and plan separate quiet activities for those times.
- * Watch how you treat each child to see if you are contributing to the rivalry. Make sure you are not playing favorites.
- * Have realistic expectations of how they should get along, cooperate, share, and like each other.
- * Positively reinforce them when they are getting along or when they solve their own conflicts.
- * Make each child feel special and important. Try to spend one-on-one time with each child every day.
- * Take time out for yourself to re-energize. Remember, sibling rivalry is a normal and expected part of family life.



Setting Rules and Consequences with Teens

Rules and consequences are critical to negotiating your way through the teen years. Both the rules and the consequences may change as your teen's needs (and desires) develop. It helps to ask yourself some questions about your rules periodically.

General questions to ask about rules:

- * Are they reasonable?
- * Have the reasons for the rules been explained thoroughly?
- * Are there too many?
- * Are they enforceable?
- * Has my teen been involved in making any of the rules?
- * Are they consistent with other parents' (those whom you respect) rules?
- * Whose needs are the rules designed to meet?

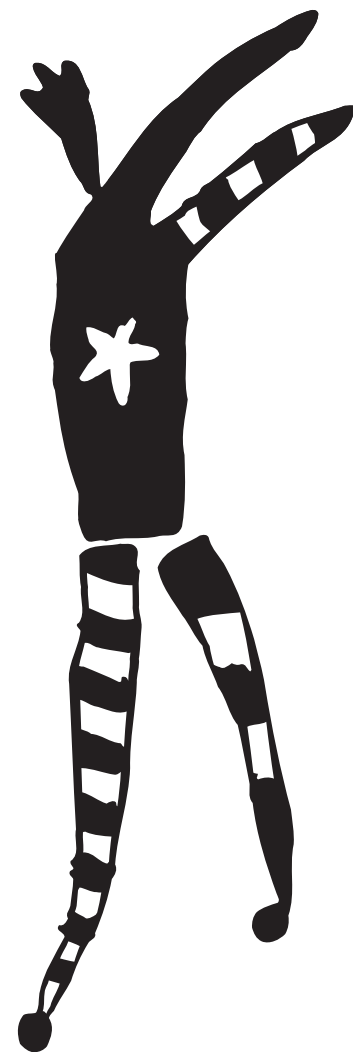
Depending on the answers to these questions and what you've decided is your bottom line, you may be able to negotiate a relaxation of these rules, as your teen is more able to make mature decisions. Or you may find that the rules are entirely unenforceable, meaning either that you need to make changes in your life in order to enforce them or you need to give them up. For example, you may decide that you should arrange your schedule to allow being home more of the time, or simply that you need to be more aware when you are at home. Remember, no matter how reasonable the rules are, your teen's job is to challenge them. This means that you need to be prepared to impose consequences.

Consequences need to meet certain conditions in order to be effective. They should:

- * Be related to the behavior so they make sense. (Being grounded for every infraction doesn't allow connection to a specific behavior, but if your teen damages someone else's property, part of the consequence might be to help pay for the damage.)
- * Teach your teen how to express feelings and desires in acceptable ways. (You don't damage other people's property just because you're angry; anger can be expressed with words.)
- * Not be so severe or unenforceable that there is no hope of compliance. (Being grounded for 6 months will contribute to noncompliance.)
- * Be useful in changing behavior. They need to be unpleasant enough that your teen doesn't want to repeat the consequence. They should not include things that you want your child to learn to enjoy, like going to Grandma's for a weekend.
- * Teach self-control. (Help your teen see the benefits of more freedom, less control, or something tangible like driving.)

What kinds of consequences might be useful with your teen?

The answer to this varies, depending on your values and the personality, intensity, and interests of your teen. Sometimes he or she can help you find workable consequences. However, be careful because children will sometimes be harsher on themselves than you might think necessary. The goal is to prevent unacceptable behavior and teach your teen to make mature decisions. Think through consequences in advance and take time to manage your own anger or frustration before talking to your teen.



What it Takes to Be a Mom or Dad

Read to your children.
Keep your promises.
Go for walks together.
Let your children help with household projects.
Spend time one-on-one with each child.
Tell your children about your own childhood.
Go to the zoo, museums, and ball games as a family.
Set a good example.
Use good manners.
Help your children with their homework.
Show your children lots of warmth and affection.
Set clear, consistent limits.
Consider how your decisions will affect your children.
Listen to your children.
Know your children's friends.
Take your children to work.
Open a savings account for college education.
Resolve conflicts quickly.
Take your children to your place of worship.
Make a kite together.
Fly a kite together.
You get the idea.

