

Parenting 19

Series

Nurturing Virtues and Values in Children!



Online Version



Department of Health



Dennis, 7 years old, is unwelcome by his peers and teachers because of his rude manners. His only satisfaction in school and in the neighbourhood appears to be bullying others. He frequently uses physical aggression to intimidate others and to get what he wants.



Cheri, 10 years old, is much attracted to small trendy items. Under temptation, she often steals them from her peers. Recently, her parents find that she is beginning to take money from their drawer.



Parents would never dream of their child growing up to be either of these children. What do they lack that make them behave the way they do?

Research has shown that these children lack certain qualities - the **essential virtues that make children do the right things and be nice to people around them**, e.g., kindness, care, cooperation, respect, self-control and responsibility. Certain ways of parenting are able to **foster the development of positive values** and thus the **essential virtues in preschool children**. This leaflet aims to introduce these key strategies. Details of the application of these strategies on selected values will be discussed in parts II and III in this series.



What are your values?

Can you stick to your values?

Do all your family members hold the same values?

What virtues are important for your child?

Basic Strategies for Cultivating Virtues in Children (6R10)

R1 Role Modeling

- ★ **Acting is more powerful than preaching.** Young children learn by imitating your examples although they may not act it out right away. Behave consistently with what you say and demonstrate to your child the virtues you teach.



R2 Having Realistic & Achievable Expectations

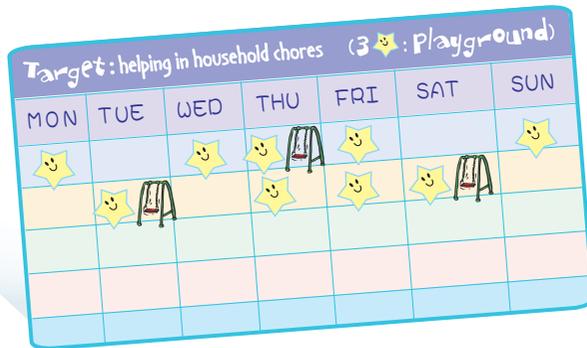
- ★ Having realistic expectations on the child means understanding his level of abilities and appreciating what he achieves. **Setting attainable goals** will help him know the standards required and work for the goals.
- ★ Before the child can master the age-appropriate skills required, parents must **guide him and help** him if necessary to achieve. For example, for a 3-year-old child to play cooperatively with others, you will need to give him guidance and set limits consistently and repeatedly.

R3 Giving Recognition

- ★ Paying attention to the child's socially appropriate behaviour and giving her praise for the behaviour you appreciate will encourage her to repeat that desirable behaviour more frequently in the future. Describe the behaviour you like when you praise her, e.g., 'Thanks for playing quietly when I was on the phone.'^{*}

R4 Reward and Behaviour Chart*

- ★ Some children need more help in establishing a new desirable behaviour. You may try using a behaviour chart to give your child extra motivation. Praise and give him a sticker when he can perform the target behaviour such as controlling his emotion or helping in household chores.



- ★ When he has achieved the set target for a specified short duration, you may give him a small reward such as a special treat to maintain the behaviour.
- ★ Remember that the strategy is **only for short-term use**. To help the child regularly perform the new behaviour and perform it for a sense of accomplishment instead of payoff, social recognition should always be used. At the same time, the tangible reinforcement should be tailed off gradually.

R5 Setting Rules with Consequences

- ★ **Setting limits in everyday life** is essential in teaching the young child about obeying rules, respecting others and taking responsibility for her own behaviour. It is also important to exert a certain degree of control to guide her into appropriate behaviours before she learns self-control.

- ★ Allowing your child to experience **reasonable consequences** to breaking the rules, trespassing limits or noncompliance will reinforce her understanding of right or wrong. For example, no bedtime story when late for bed, or go to quiet time for 5 minutes when caught fighting.* Different rules may be needed for different contexts.



- ★ When rules are always backed up by consequences, and **positive attention and praise** are consistently given for desirable behaviour, your child will gradually learn the standard expected of her, even in different contexts.

* Leaflet 15 & 16 in this Parenting series explain positive parenting strategies in more details.



Parenting series 15



Parenting series 16

R6 Reasoning/Induction

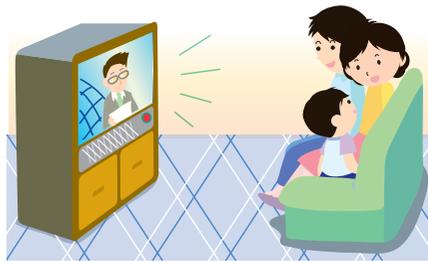
- ★ The approach of using explanation and reasoning with an emphasis on the **consequences of one's actions on others** is also known as **induction**.
- ★ Role modeling is more important than reasoning. Nevertheless, you have to **explain and discuss** with the child sometimes to bring out the values and beliefs that lie behind the act. This can be a powerful means of nurturing virtues and values.
- ★ Always **give a reason** to your child before you apply a behaviour strategy to teach him why certain behaviours are preferred to others. For younger preschoolers, simply stating the direct effect on others and possible consequence that may cost them will do, e.g., 'You will hurt your little brother when you push him. You will then have to go to quiet time for

2 minutes to help calm yourself down.'

- ★ Remember not to reason with the child immediately after the consequence is carried out so that his emotion would not be re-aroused.
- ★ In everyday conversations with your child, you may also make use of daily happenings to discuss why a person does something and how that action may affect others. For example, you may ask him why someone in the news robbed money and how that will affect others, and help him come up with an answer himself. This will increase the child's **respect for others** and his ability to **take the view of another person**.

01 Open Discussion

- ★ Opportunities for open discussion should be created within the family for members to **express their views**. Every day events provide a good entry point for such discussions.
- ★ Open discussion can also be held after reading a storybook with a theme on values. Pick a storybook that is interesting and appropriate for the child's reading level and read with her. Then discuss with her the behaviours of the characters and ask about her feelings towards them.



- ★ If parents hold an **open attitude**, allowing the child to express her opinions, it will be possible to **learn more about her reasoning**. So, listen to what she says. Praise her for making constructive or creative comments. **Use induction** to discuss with her things she has not yet thought of or which are not right. For example, your child is so angry with her friend that she wants to beat him up. 'I can see you're very angry with John. That's one way of reacting. What would happen if you hit him?' 'Can you think of any other better ways of seeing/doing it?'



The above strategies can be summarized as '**6R1O**'. Use them with patience. Children need repeated teaching and demonstration to consolidate their learning. Don't be surprised to find that they have forgotten what you have taught them time after time. With time, you will find that your perseverance and patience will pay off.