RESPECTFUL PARENT – RESPECTFUL CHILD:
Helping Parents Build Positive Lifelong Family Relationships
Meg Akabas
• Children are respectful when parents insist on it

• Respect is something that’s earned
WHY IS RESPECT IMPORTANT FOR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS?

"The social relationships among family members are by far the best predictors of children's behavioral outcomes"

( Feldman, Stiffman, and Jung, 1987).
WHY IS RESPECT IMPORTANT FOR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS?

A caring and supportive relationship remains the most critical variable throughout childhood and adolescence (Rutter, 1979; Demos, 1989; Feldman, Stiffman, and Jung, 1987).
Characteristics of Strong Families:

- communication
- encouragement of individuals
- expressing appreciation
- commitment to family
- religious/spiritual orientation
- social connectedness
- ability to adapt
- clear roles
- time together

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 1990
The Strengthening Families Protective Factors

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social-Emotional Competence of Children

+ Nurturing and Attachment
DEFINING RESPECT

- due regard for the feelings or rights of others
- esteem or deferential regard felt or shown to others
- courteous regard
- consideration or thoughtfulness
DEFINING RESPECT
(cont…)

• treating something or someone with kindness and care
• accepting the importance of someone's rights or customs
• to do nothing that would harm another or cause him/her offence
Conventional cultural/traditional view of respect:

Something that children should show to those who are older, wiser, or more important than they are.
Alternative view of respect: Something we show to everyone with whom we interact
Characteristics of Strong Families:

- communication
- encouragement of individuals
- expressing appreciation
- commitment to family
- religious/spiritual orientation
- social connectedness
- ability to adapt
- clear roles
- time together
The Strengthening Families Protective Factors

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social-Emotional Competence of Children

+ Nurturing and Attachment
STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISHING RESPECT

• Model Respect Towards Others
• Treat Children With Respect
• Reinforce Respectful Behavior From Children
• Be Consistent
Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”

-James A. Baldwin.
MODEL RESPECT TOWARDS OTHERS

• Much research shows the important influence of parental behavior/example on child behavior.

• Mirror neurons:

When we watch someone do something, our mirror neurons might forge the same neural connections made from practicing that behavior.
MODEL RESPECT TOWARDS OTHERS

Strive to model respectful behavior at all times

- towards one’s spouse/partner/significant other/ex
- towards one’s parents
- towards your siblings
- towards everyone else (friends, teachers, neighbors, doormen, employees, the homeless).
This means:

• being polite

• giving attention

• listening carefully

• no teasing (except in a very good natured way where the object of the fun can laugh along too)

• no yelling threatening, name-calling, swearing, or rude gestures

Consistently point out examples of respectful actions to your children
TREAT CHILDREN WITH RESPECT

“Who gets respect?. The one who respects others”

- 2nd century scholar
TREAT CHILDREN WITH RESPECT

- speak to them in an appropriate tone and level of maturity
- express empathy with complaints and feelings
- be consistent
- give them clear directions
- provide explanations
- set clear expectations
• give them attention
• pay careful attention to their questions
• ask for their advice on appropriate topics
• give them choices when appropriate
• acknowledge when you’ve made a mistake or you don’t know something
• provide logical adverse consequences to misbehavior – not punishments
• beware of labeling
• respect their privacy
• don’t belittle their taste
• don’t use excessive praise
• don’t assume that you always know more
• don’t phrase an instruction as a question
• don’t talk about them in front of them
REINFORCE RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR FROM CHILDREN

- Start early

“A person’s a person, no matter how small.”

-Dr. Seuss
"Parents underestimate the emotional and psychological abilities of infants."

“Young infants have remarkably rich emotional lives and parents' awareness of their infants' emotions and perceptions is important for their social and emotional well-being.”

ZERO TO THREE Parenting of Infants and Toddlers Today Study, 2009
Nearly 55% of parents believe that children do not feel good or bad about themselves until after the age of 2.

ZERO TO THREE Parenting of Infants and Toddlers Today Study, 2009
Mothers’ insightfulness - their ability to consider perspective of the infant and empathize with that perspective also relates to how their infants develop relationships with them and develop social and emotional skills (Koren-Karie, Oppenheimer, Dolev, Sher, & Etzio-Carasso)
REINFORCE RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR FROM CHILDREN (cont…)

- Teach manners from a young age (using “please,” “thank you,” “excuse me,” etc.
- Teach children to acknowledge others
- Instruct children to help others (hold doors, pick up what someone else has dropped, offer to help carry something, give up their seat, etc.)
- Make sure children follow directions
BE CONSISTENT

- Pay attention to words
- Pay attention to gestures
- Pay attention to actions
- Don’t lecture
- Use logical consequences (not punishment)
- Give lots of positive reinforcement
WORKING WITH PARENTS ON RESPECT

• Model respect for them and with their children

• Point out the comparison of acceptable behavior with friends, fellow employees, etc. and relate that to their family

• Provide information about child development

• Give them a checklist of behaviors to strive for (or have them create their own).

• Provide them self-assessment tools

• Show them how to role-play to test modeling
• Children are respectful when parents insist on it

• Respect is something that’s earned
52 Weeks of Parenting Wisdom

Effective Strategies for Raising Happy, Responsible Kids

MEG AKABAS
CERTIFIED PARENTING EDUCATOR

WITH JOTH AKABAS * FOREWORD BY FRED A. BERNESTEIN
www.parenting-solutions.com

Facebook: Parenting Solutions

@parentsmartmeg