



# FAMILY FORWARD

Volume 1, Issue 2

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

### HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHILD QUIET & HAPPY IN PUBLIC in Joy In Parenting-Kids-Parenting

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1. **Prepare.** I learned to PREPARE my kids before we went anywhere. This usually consisted of a nice talk in the car on the way to our destination. If I was really on the ball, it would occur at home, before we left, followed by some practice roll play. These are the questions I asked:  
Where are we going?  
Why are we going there?  
How should we behave while we are there?

Why should we behave this way?  
Then they would have fun showing me the right and wrong way to behave. Whenever I just throw my kids into a new situation without preparing them first, the result is usually disastrous. If they still continued to misbehave after everything, we would remove them from the scene (take them out to the car or in another area where we could talk) and allow them to practice again before taking them back. Lots of praise for great behavior worked wonders also! If you were to ask my kids, though, they would tell you what worked the best was the second thing I did.

2. **Pack.** I had been carrying a diaper bag everywhere I went. I would usually just throw random items in it for the kids to keep them happy. I found something that finally worked so much better! I purchased a bag for each of my kids to take to church! Then I purchased as many fun (yet quiet) things that we could afford. Most of the things I bought were great for all of my kids, some were specifically for each age. I bought

enough items that we could rotate them each week. I discovered that when they each had their own bag and also different things in that bag each week, my life outside the home suddenly became so much calmer and manageable again. The trick was always being a step ahead. When we first started doing the 'bags' I would fill them myself the night before and it would be a fun 'surprise' for them to open their bags and see what mom packed for them that week. Eventually, I started letting them pick out their own items to put in their bags.

I know, how can just 2 simple suggestions really make that big of a difference? Try it and see! I hope they help you as much as they have me! I have also included items that worked best in my kids bags. Obviously, everyone is different, so pack what you know your kids will like.



#### Services Offered Include:

- ⇒ Parent/Child Coaching
- ⇒ Relationship Education
- ⇒ Meal/Menu Make Over
- ⇒ Community Leadership
- ⇒ Family Walking Challenge
- ⇒ 2 Hour Food Handlers Certification
- ⇒ Budgeting and Housing Resources
- ⇒ Healthy Home Environment



#### Items to put in the bags:

- Snacks
- Coloring/activity books
- Puzzles
- Fun little toys
- Coloring/Drawing Utensils
- Magnetic Books
- Sticker Books

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## HOW TO TEACH CHILDREN TO TELL THE TRUTH

**Keep your cool.** When your kids tell a lie, your first reaction might be anger! Step back and remember that your children are still learning. When we get angry and immediately serve up a punishment, children don't get the benefit of the learning moment we can provide by discussing why lying is wrong and telling the truth is right.

**Don't set traps.** If you already know that your child was dishonest, asking them the question sets up a stage for telling lies. Better to tell your child this is what you saw and this is why it's wrong and how you can make it right. That's going to help your child know that you are on their side!

**Avoid labels.** Make sure your children know that you don't like it when they lie, however, refrain from calling them liars. Children tend to live up to labels, whether they are positive or negative!

**Give them a chance for a do-over!** If you catch your child in a lie, give them a chance to back up and tell the truth. It's about learning! Children need to understand that they can make mistakes and they can make things right!

**Praise truth telling!** When your children tell the truth, let them know how much you appreciate their courage and their honesty! Let them know, "I know it can be difficult to tell the truth. I'm so proud of you and I really like it when you are honest with me!"

**Why are they lying?** What's so important that they're lying to you about it? When you find out the reasons for your child's behavior, you can help them think through better ways of coping with the situation the next time.

**Set a good example!** Parents can be caught in lies too. Be sure to demonstrate what honesty looks like even when you know you can get away with lying. We can't expect our children to be honest when we are lying.

For more helpful parenting tips & info visit...

[drrobysilverman.com](http://drrobysilverman.com)

[goodgirlsdontgetfat.com](http://goodgirlsdontgetfat.com)



## WHO'S IN CHARGE?

### 5 WAYS YOU MAY BE GIVING UP YOUR PARENTAL AUTHORITY WITHOUT REALIZING IT

- 1. Failing to follow through with discipline.** Our failure to act tells children that we do not have the power to do what we say we will.
- 2. Never letting them cry.** Children will test boundaries. Telling them no can be hard, but you know what's best for them.
- 3. Allowing slow obedience.** Slow obedience seems innocuous, until you realize that at its heart, it's permitted rebellion.
- 4. Tolerating laziness.** You are telling children that they can make a mess and you will clean it for them. That puts you at their beck and call.

- 5. Ignoring disrespect.** When you ignore your child's disrespect towards you, you are giving them permission to trample on your rights as a parent.

[www.mombutnotamom.com](http://www.mombutnotamom.com)



# 10 Social Skills

Every Kid Should Know



BOYS & GIRLS  
100 YEARS

boystown.org/parenting

**DISCIPLINE**  
is the bridge  
between goals and  
**ACCOMPLISHMENT**

- Jim Rohn -

facebook/zerodean

## 3 Tips To Discipline Without Punishment

By Amy McCreedy

We want our children to learn from their mistakes and not repeat them. So the natural thought is to send them to the “time out” corner or up to their room to “think about what they’ve done.” Except they don’t. And they’re likely to keep up the same behaviors despite the punishment. So, how do you know how to discipline your child?

Often, we equate the term “discipline” with punishment. But the word “discipline” comes from the Latin word “disciplina,” which means “teaching, learning.” That’s the key to correcting out kids’ behaviors— giving them the tools they need to learn a better behavior. **When we discipline in a way meant only to punish and have the child “pay” for their mistake, it doesn’t help our child learn how to make the right choice next time.** No one likes being ordered around— punishment can lead to power struggles, and because our kids know this poor behavior gets them attention, they’ll keep doing it.

**When it comes to knowing how to discipline your child, we can focus on three key areas: giving them the positive attention they need and crave, taking time for training, and setting limits and sticking to them.**

1. **Fill the attention basket.** Kids need attention, plain and simple. If we don’t keep that “attention basket” full with positive attention, kids will seek out any attention they can get— even negative attention. They’ll push our buttons with negative behaviors because to a kid, even negative attention is better than no attention at all. This doesn’t mean you have to be at your child’s side 24-7— just taking a few minutes a day to spend one-on-one with your child, distraction-free and doing something they want to do, will reap immense rewards in their behavior.

Take 10 minutes once or twice a day with each child playing a game they’ve picked or reading their favorite book. Let the phone ring. Stick the cell phone in the closet. When you fill your children’s attention baskets positively and proactively, your kids will become more cooperative and less likely to seek out attention in negative ways. Life is busy for everyone, and finding extra time in the day may be daunting at first, but think of this as an investment in your relationship with your children and in improving their behavior. When it comes to knowing how to discipline your child, giving them what they need to avoid poor behaviors in the first place can have a great impact.

2. **Take time for training.** As you think about how to discipline your child, it’s important to remember that the word discipline is rooted in meanings of learning and teaching. The best way to discipline your child is to help her make better choices. You can role play the behaviors, using a calm voice. “I’d really like to play with that tractor when you’re done.” “I’d like a snack, please.” Switch roles and pretend you’re the child, and let your little one direct you through making better choices. Be encouraging when they do make the right choices. “I see you worked hard to clean up the playroom all on your own! That’s such a big help. I really appreciate it.” “Thank you for sharing the book with your brother. How kind!”

3. **Set limits and stick to them.** Kids thrive when they have structure and know their boundaries. Don’t go overboard with hundreds of rules, but focus on what’s most important for your family. Be clear about the ground rules and what happens when someone breaks the rules— make sure that everyone understands the consequences ahead of time and that the discipline is related to the misbehavior. If they forget to put away their dishes after dinner, they have to load and unload the dishwasher. Cleaning their room because they didn’t do their homework isn’t related. Most importantly, be consistent. Follow through every time with the agreed-upon consequence when kids push the rules.

Overall, remember that knowing how to discipline your child is rooted in helping them learn how to make the right choice, not punishment. Be firm and give them the attention, rules and boundaries they need.

# Clean Bedrooms-It Can Happen At Your House

By [Amy McCreedy](#)

We all know the scene: a few carefully sung words by Mary Poppins, and the Banks' children's dolls and clothes march into the toy chest and fold themselves neatly into the closet.

Parents and kids alike wish it were real. But no amount of singing or snapping is going to make that nightmare of a bedroom clean itself. And despite your best efforts, nagging isn't working either.

While you might not have Mary Poppins' super powers, you can employ strategies that will help your kids clear their clutter and rediscover that they do have a floor under that mess.

Try these "practical magic" tips that will get real results:

- 1. Give the mess a rest.** What's the worst that would happen if your kids never cleaned their rooms? Toys would get lost or broken, clothes would stay stained—and that's no fun. To let these natural consequences do the dirty work for you, first warn your kids about the pitfalls of a messy room and assure them you have complete confidence in their ability to keep things tidy on their own. Then, say nothing when nature runs its course. Refuse to rescue your kids by replacing a missing toy or running an emergency load of laundry, and soon enough, the rooms will get straightened and a lesson will be learned.
- 2. Wake you kids' inner room-cleaner with an alarm they'll notice.** The next time dirty socks and building blocks start intermixing, resist the need to nag. Instead, do a little planning so you can phrase it this way: "When your room is clean, then you may go play with your friends." The "sugar" in your sentence can be any regularly occurring privilege, from enjoying TV time to eating dinner-but avoid offering rewards or bribes, as you'll continually have to up the ante. Also, allow plenty of time for a thorough cleaning to take place—depending on the size of the mess, that's probably at least 20 minutes before a favorite show or dinnertime.
- 3. Swallow your need to control.** Nothing short of magic can control another person-but you can control your own reaction. Keep the yelling at bay by deciding what you will do whenever the mess gets out of control. At a calm time (so, not while you're wading through their rooms), inform your kids that they're old enough to keep their rooms clean. Then say something like, "If your room isn't clean by dinner every Saturday, I will clean it with a cardboard box. Any toys and clothes not put away will be stored in the basement for a week." Then, follow through. If you find your kids aren't missing their favorite toy or coolest jeans, it's time for a trip to Goodwill.

Put these techniques to work, and you and your kids will be well on your way to enjoying clean bedrooms-no song and dance routine required.

SET LIMITS IN A  
LOVING WAY

ACT WITHOUT FRUSTRATION  
OR ANGER.

AVOID THREATS AND REPEATED  
WARNINGS.

SET A LIMIT ONCE.

GIVE KIDS A HEALTHY SENSE OF  
CONTROL.

## 10 FREE LEARNING WEBSITES {FOR KIDS}

Here's a list of some fun, educational, and safe websites for your child to visit and explore on those hot summer days!

<b>Switcheroo Zoo</b> <a href="http://www.switcheroozoo.com">www.switcheroozoo.com</a> Watch, listen and play games to learn all about amazing animals!	<b>Fun Brain</b> <a href="http://www.funbrain.com">www.funbrain.com</a> Play games while practicing math and reading skills
<b>Nat Geo for Kids</b> <a href="http://www.kids.nationalgeographic.com">www.kids.nationalgeographic.com</a> Learn all about geography and fascinating animals	<b>PBS Kids</b> <a href="http://www.pbskids.org">www.pbskids.org</a> Hang out with your favorite characters all while learning!
<b>Into the Book</b> <a href="http://www.readingecb.org">www.readingecb.org</a> Go "into the book" to play games that practice reading strategies	<b>Star Fall</b> <a href="http://www.starfall.com">www.starfall.com</a> Practice your phonics skills with these read-along stories
<b>Seussville</b> <a href="http://www.seussville.com">www.seussville.com</a> Read, play games, and hang out with Dr. Seuss and his friends	<b>Storyline Online</b> <a href="http://www.storylineonline.net">www.storylineonline.net</a> Have some of your favorite stories read to you by movie stars!
<b>ABC YA</b> <a href="http://www.abcya.com">www.abcya.com</a> Practice math and reading skills all while playing fun games!	<b>Highlights Kids</b> <a href="http://www.highlightskids.com">www.highlightskids.com</a> Read, play games, and conduct cool science experiments!

## WHEN STRESS MAKES YOU A BAD PARENT AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

by Happy Place Mom

As much as we would like the term “parent” to be synonymous with “superhero” we are actually just plain old humans. Regular, fallible humans. On top of all of the struggles of parenting, we are still normal people who have to deal with bills, bosses, laundry, and unexpected disasters.

### Tips to avoid losing your temper:

1. **Avoid extra stressful situations**– When you know you are already having a bad day, avoid putting your children in situations that cause additional (and unnecessary) stress.
2. **Get a system**– Things run much more smoothly when there is a system in place. This is just as true in your family as it is in huge corporations. Things just work better when everyone knows what to expect and what part they play. You are more likely to get stressed over trash that didn’t get taken out or a bill payment that was missed if you are just in reactive mode (“flying by the seat of your pants” instead of having a system). A system can be as simple as identifying who empties the dishwasher or as complex as set meal plans, chore charts, and assigned accounting duties. Do what works best for your family’s needs.
3. **Parent as if someone is watching**– I know it sounds silly but it is kind of like “fake it ‘til you make it”. When you start to feel as if you might lose your temper, pretend you are on camera. If we are being honest, we parent just a bit differently when other people are watching. This trick will give you a minute to gather your thoughts and take the gentle way out. When you are feeling calm again later, you can talk to your children about what happened and how a behavior could have been changed. This way it won’t be your behavior that was wrong!

### When you have already lost your temper:

1. **Apologize**– When tempers flare and you know you yelled at Jimmy because of your own stress and not actually the music volume, apologize. This can be a hard thing as a parent. Admitting you are wrong to the people who you want to think you’re always right– well, it’s humbling. At the end of the day, apologizing does three things: (1) It models the behavior you want them to display-i.e. you want them to apologize when they have made a mistake. (2) It shows them that it is okay to make mistakes. (3) It builds trust between you and your child.
2. **Forgive yourself**– If you have recognized your error and apologized– then move on. Carrying around parental guilt for every little thing we may have “done wrong” is not helpful to anyone. We want our children to acknowledge when they make a mistake, apologize, and try to do better next time. We need to do the same– for our children and for our own sanity.

Let’s be clear on something important– good parenting does not always mean good (behaving) kids. Kids are human too! They are still kids. Their bodies and brains are growing. They are still adapting to social and cultural norms. Kids have bad days too and that will not change. What can change is how you react to it. You can yell at Jimmy and take your frustrations out on him, or you can choose to handle it in a way that lets him know the radio was too loud but also keeps your parent-child relationship in tact.

## Encouraging Words

By [Amy McCready](#)

Do you ever feel like the only words that come out of your mouth are direct orders? “Empty the trash, be nice to your sister, quit jumping on the couch!!” A big part of preventing bad behavior, however, is to provide encouraging words to reinforce good behavior when you see it.

And a quick “good job” doesn’t cut it-in fact, phrases like “good boy,” “you’re so smart!” and “you’re the best on your team!” are not considered all that encouraging. Instead of focusing on positive internal qualities, they put the emphasis on outward praise, which does little to promote good behavior in the future.

True encouraging words focus on the deed, not the doer. It motivates a child from the inside to demonstrate similar positive behavior in the future, and to value things like hard work, improvement, teamwork and perseverance.

### Try this list of 27 Encouraging Words and Phrases:

1. Thank you for your help!
2. You should be proud of yourself!
3. Look at your improvement!
4. That “A” reflects a lot of hard work!
5. You worked really hard to get this room clean!
6. Thanks for helping set the table, that made a big difference.
7. I noticed you were really patient with your little brother.
8. What do you think about it?
9. You seem to really enjoy science.
10. Your hard work paid off!
11. That’s a tough one, but you’ll figure it out.
12. Look how far you’ve come!
13. I trust your judgement.
14. The time you’re putting into your homework is really paying off.
15. I love being with you.
16. You really put a smile on her face with your kind words!
17. That’s coming along nicely!
18. You really worked it out!
19. That’s a very good observation.
20. Thank you for your cooperation.
21. I see a very thorough job!
22. That’s what we call perseverance!
23. I can tell you really care.
24. You make it look easy!
25. You’ve really got the hang of it!
26. I can tell you spent a lot of time thinking this through.
27. I really feel like a team when we work like this!

The best part about using encouraging words with your kids is the glow of happiness you’ll see on their faces. After all, “Your hard work is really paying off!” says you noticed their work, while, “You’re so smart,” might be hard to live up to next time. Try a few of these encouraging words with your kids, and watch their behavior-and effort-improve.

## 5 SUPER SIMPLE HABITS THAT WILL TRANSFORM YOUR PARENTING

BY: TRICIA GOYER

There are tons of books and blogs that teach us how to be a good parent, but it's really very simple. Being a good parent can start with changing a few habits. Don't believe me? Take the test. Try one of these simple habits every day throughout the next five days, and watch how it transforms your family and your home!

1. **Smile.** When we smile at our children it's showing them love and acceptance. Our smile eases our children's worries. Our smile calms them. Our smile breaks down walls, causing them to open up to us. Our smile shows our children they are accepted and loved.  
**Day one Challenge:** Make a point to smile at your child whenever you make eye contact. Let your smile greet your children at the start of the day, and meet them throughout it.
2. **Speak softly.** You may have seen this phenomena before...the louder you get, the louder your kids get. Or maybe your kids are already loud and you have to raise your voice to speak over them.. What to do instead? Speak softly. Whether it is asking your child about what he wants for breakfast or asking him to take his muddy cleats out of the living room, approach him, lean in, and speak low and soft. Your child will often respond in the same and will be much more likely to follow your request.  
**Day two challenge:** Whenever the volume in your house rises, lower yours. Also, ask requests in a soft and low voice.
3. **Say exactly what you mean.** I'm the queen of what my husband calls "beat around the bush." Instead of saying, "Please pick up your puzzle," I ask, "Who left this puzzle on the table? Is this where you're supposed to leave it?" Also, for some reason it feels nicer when I say, "Why don't you go clean your bedroom?" Instead of, "Please pick up all your toys in your room." But beating around the bush usually backfires. My kids don't believe I'm serious about my request. Instead, I'm learning to give direct commands— in a nice

way, of course— and no one has to question what I'm really saying or if I really mean it.

**Day three challenge:** Say exactly what you mean when speaking to your children or giving a request. Don't beat around the bush. Be as specific as possible.

4. **Solicit help.** Somewhere along my marriage and parenting journey I got the idea that if people just see I need help, they'll offer it. First, my family members are often too much in their own zones to even see I'm slaving away in the kitchen. Second, they can't read my mind and can't read the body language of me slamming pots in the sink. Instead, I've discovered asking for help really works— and the more specific the request, the better. "Please use this cleaner and towels and wipe down the table." And, if you need help with more than one thing. List exactly what you need so older kids know the exact help you need. "I need you to do three things for me: feed the dog, change the water, and then wipe up any mess when you're done."  
**Day four challenge:** Ask for help when it is needed. Don't play the martyr. Be specific with the type of help you need. Finally, number your request to make it easier for kids to follow.
5. **Surrender your idea of who your kids should be.** Before my kids were born I had an expectation of what parenting would look like and how my kids would be. One of my greatest struggles has been trying to fit my kids into my ideal, instead of discovering my children's unique personality, talents, and struggles. When I embrace my children- just as they are— I'm able to better understand how to train up each unique child.  
**Day five challenge:** Sit down and write out each of your children's strengths and weaknesses. Then write down what you can do to help her develop her strengths and what can you do to help her combat her weaknesses. If your child is old enough, discuss these things with her. Choose one area to work on a week and praise change!

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### Why we should try to yell less at our kids?

By [kiddycharts.com](http://kiddycharts.com)

#### Effects of persistent yelling at children.

- Self-Confidence— Children who are constantly shouted at, particularly if it involves labelling, rarely see themselves as worthy individuals. Their perception of themselves instead is of an insignificant being that lacks the ability to impact his society.
- Fear— Many children who are yelled at become fearful. This timidity can cause children to struggle with developing friendships and impair their ability to deal with conflicts.
- Aggression—Children who have been shouted at consistently reach the age of 4 or 5; they are likely to display aggressive behaviors themselves. They act out by: invading others' personal space, pushing, hitting, and biting.
- Concentration Problems—Lack of concentration is one of the results of emotional abuse. Children who have learned to "tune out" shouting do so to temporarily defend themselves against the verbal assault.

#### What can we do to reduce shouting.

- It is difficult to never shout so try to be realistic about your circumstances.
- Family life is stressful and emotional and most intimate

relationships involve rowing sometimes.

- Think about the trigger situations and try to avoid them.
- Look at the number of times you praise versus the number of times you shout.
- But there are degrees of shouting, labeling, and roaring at your child can be destructive.

#### If you do shout...

...explain to your children that sometimes we do get cross and you are sorry.

...try to make sure you do not say things that are harmful to the children; for example, refrain from name calling, and explain it is their behavior not them that is upsetting you.

...and are angry with your partner try to sort it out away from the children.

...your children are likely to shout too. Try to get down to their level and talk to them calmly instead if you can.

#### Shout out about your love to them instead.

- Let children know often that you love them and that you like them and you are proud of them.
- Let children know that mistakes are important because they are a way of learning.
- Let children know that you value their help.
- Encourage children to try.

# 5 TIPS TO HELP YOUR BEDTIME-HATING TODDLER LEARN TO LOVE SLEEP

Raising a toddler comes with its fair share of challenges, right? Between the growing sense of independence (hellooooo, tantrums!), the strange obsessions and aversions that seem to change by the minute (your toddler loves ketchup until the day he decides he hates it), and the newfound mobility (anyone else entered a room to find their toddler scaling a piece of furniture?), raising a toddler is TOUGH.

And raising a toddler who just hates going to bed? Even tougher. At the end of a long day of toddler-wrangling, no doubt all you want to do is collapse. But a toddler who hates bedtime isn't about to let that happen!

So, how can you help your bedtime-hating toddler learn to love going to sleep? We've got 5 easy, practical tips designed to help you do just that!

- 1. Make sure bedtime is happening at the right time.** That's right— your toddler may be fighting bedtime simply because it's happening at the wrong time. This may be the most-overlooked reason for toddler bedtime drama, in my experience. Specifically, I find that my clients tend to try to put their toddlers to bed too early. Remember, older toddlers (2+) need about 6 hours (or more) of afternoon awake time, between when they wake from their nap and bedtime. So if your toddler is up from her nap at 3:30, then pushing a 7 p.m. bedtime just isn't going to work for all toddlers!  
Similarly, some parents wait too long to put their toddlers to bed. That can cause overtiredness, which can actually lead to toddlers who fight bedtime. Seems counter-intuitive, I know—you'd think a totally exhausted toddler would drop right into bed, but not so! Toddlers who are overtired are more likely to fight sleep. This is especially problematic in cases where a toddler has just dropped the afternoon nap, and is no longer napping anymore—in the early stages of that transition, it's best to push an earlier bedtime, to protect against overtiredness.
- 2. Take a good look at your toddler's schedule.** This goes hand-in-hand with the previous point. In order to determine whether or not your toddler may be too tired at bedtime— or perhaps not tired enough— take a look at her daily schedule. When is the afternoon nap happening? Is it long enough? It should be at least an hour, in order to be truly restorative.  
And what about morning wake-up? If your toddler is waking late in the morning (as nice as that may be for mom and dad!), it will push everything in the schedule later, too— including bedtime. (Of course, some families like a late bedtime, especially families in which one or both parents don't get home from work until later in the evening. Stick with what works for you.) Early waking can be problematic, too— it shifts everything in the schedule earlier, and creates the need for a bedtime that may be too early to be practical.
- 3. Create a visual chart that outlines the steps of the bedtime routine.** Toddlers LOVE routine, and knowing what comes next. Capitalize on this by creating a visual representation of the bedtime routine. If your toddler is a budding artist, have him draw a picture for each of the steps. (i.e. brush teeth, put on PJs, etc.), and then put the pictures in order on a larger chart. No artist in the family?

No problem—one of my consultants had her son cut pictures out of magazines and glue them to his bedtime routine chart.

Creating the chart will help your toddler feel like it's "his", and having the bedtime routine steps laid out will help everyone know what is happening when. Plus, having the chart gives you something to "blame" when your toddler wants to skip a step, or spend too long on one part of the routine— you can just point back to the chart!

- 4. Offer choices whenever possible.** Try to build choices into the bedtime routine whenever it makes sense to do so. Personally, I found this to be SO helpful when my own boys were toddlers! I recommend offering just 2 choices (more can be too overwhelming). Also, be sure that the 2 options you offer are both options that you're okay with. For example, let your toddler choose between 2 sets of PJs, or two different storybooks, etc. This can help your toddler feel in control of what's happening at bedtime, which can go a long way towards getting you some bedtime buy-in.
- 5. Give your toddler an incentive to go to bed without a fuss.** People in general tend to perform best when we have a goal to work towards. So give your toddler something to work for! Consider creating a sticker chart (toddlers tend to love these); each night that your toddler goes through all the steps of the routine without fussing, and stays in bed after lights out, she earns a reward. The reward can be something small (sometimes the stickers are exciting enough!), for smaller benchmarks, but you can also offer something bigger, for bigger benchmarks. For example, maybe after a solid 2 or 3 weeks of good bedtime behavior, you take your toddler shopping for cute new sheets, or the family takes a trip to the zoo. Having goals both big and small, may be just what your toddler needs to cooperate at bedtime.

Now, these steps won't fix all toddler bedtime woes. For example, if your toddler struggles with nightmares or night terrors, there are separate steps you'll want to take to deal with that problem. And it may be that your toddler's issues aren't just with bedtime—if your little guy or little gal is waking at night, you will need to address that in a different way. However, these steps offer great, tangible ways to help your toddler have a change of heart regarding bedtime, and to learn to love going to bed (and staying there!)

Article can be found at [www.merakilane.com](http://www.merakilane.com).

Reward your kids with things they get to do instead of things they get to have. This teaches them that true happiness comes from experiences instead of possessions.

# 7 INEXPENSIVE WAYS TO SHOW YOUR KIDS YOU LOVE THEM

BY CAT IN FRUGAL LIVING

I've frequently written about the importance of not spoiling kids and not going overboard when it comes to their birthday or Christmas. I don't believe that buying things shows your kids you love them, and I'm assuming many of you reading this agree.

That said I was thinking of several ways I could show my children some extra love without going overboard or spending too much money. Here are some ideas:

- 1. Make their room a party.** Many people have leftover party supplies in their house whether it's streamers, a bag of balloons or tissue paper. Before your kids come home from school or if you're quiet enough to decorate their room without them waking up, put some balloons on their bed, hang streamers and toss around some tissue paper. The point is to do something surprising and silly, something you usually don't do. Kids love balloons and parties, so if they go in their room to see you totally decorated it, they'll absolutely love it.
- 2. Play with them outside.** I love sitting down on the back steps of my house and watching my kids play outside. It's an easy way to keep them physically active without paying to enroll them in extracurricular activities. I usually check my phone and hop up when one of them has started running towards our driveway. However, in order to show my kids how much I love them, I want to play, actually play, with them when they go outside. Whether that's squeezing myself into their play house or chasing them down the slide at the playground, I know that if I put in a little bit extra effort, they'll feel the love.
- 3. Make them their favorite snack or meal.** There is one dinner my husband makes me that is my absolute favorite. It takes a long time to make so I usually only get it on special occasions, but I've come to realize, food is a really amazing way to show people you love them. If your kids are old enough to ask for specific recipe or a certain kind of cookie, make it for them "just because." They'll love coming home from school to see their favorite snack or waking up on a Sunday morning to smell cookies (that you let them have for breakfast.) Occasionally, I think you can show your kids you love them by letting them break the rules and eat chocolate when it's not time for dessert.
- 4. Read to them.** Reading is a gift, and although I let my kids watch Frozen, all the time, I do love to read to them each and every day. My son especially loves books and will constantly bring them to me to read. Sometimes it gets a little irritating when he flips the book back to the front and wants me to read him the same book over and over and over again but in the spirit of love, I'll strive to read it as many times as he likes.
- 5. Make believe.** We all have a million things on our plate. There is work to be done, dishes to wash and clothes to fold. So, I'm sure we're all not jumping at the chance to have a tea party or be superheroes. But, one great and totally free way to show your kids you love them is to play make believe with

them. Let go, put aside your work and be silly. Forget about the dishes and bust out your imaginary lightsaber instead.

- 6. Speak kindly of others.** Even though my kids are barely talking past saying "DaDa!" constantly (and ignoring the fact that it was I who gave them birth), I still think it's important to speak kindly about others when I'm around them. If my kids grow up hearing me talking about someone's weight or other personal characteristics, it might make them self-conscious about their own appearance and that's not a good way for me to show them I love them.
- 7. Just say it.** The easiest way to show your kids you love them is, of course, simply to say it. Tell them you love them. Give them a hug. Kiss them and hold them and cuddle them. I grew up in a family that was not affectionate at all, and while I know my parents love me, I know I already shower my kids with so many more hugs and kisses than there were in my house.

Everyone has a different style but I know my daughter, who is very affectionate like I am, really feels my love most when I'm paying attention to her and holding her. It doesn't cost me anything and its amazing how much good it can do in my life even though it's 100% free.

