No Parent is perfect, but guidelines can help

You may often have a child who doesn’t pay attention to what your say. Sometimes, you can’t tell if it is a phase or if that child will be completely out of control.

There are researched based guidelines that you can use. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, has recommendations called “RPM3”. It is more of a mindset rather than how-to.

RPM3 stands for Responding, Preventing Monitoring, Mentoring and Modeling. It focuses on principles you can apply in different situations with your children.

* **Responding** to your child in an appropriate manner. Many parents quickly react to their child instead of thinking things through. The goal is to make sure your response is neither overblown nor too casual, and that you explain the reasoning for your response to your child. If your child is acting out at the playground, for example, don’t threaten to never take them there again if they don’t behave. Rather, calmly call their name; ask them to look at you so you know you have their attention. Remind them of the rules and give them an option of calming down or going home to rest – a natural consequence of their behavior. Being consistent in your expectations and your follow-through, while at the same time being flexible depending on the situation, are key elements to keep in mind.
* **Preventing** risky behavior or problems before they arise. To spot potential problems, you need to be actively involved in your child’s life. Knowing how your child usually thinks, feels and acts will help you notice when his or her behavior changes. Often, just spending enough one-on-one time with your child can prevent unwanted behavior.
* **Monitoring, Mentoring and Modeling** are the other key elements of the RPM3 guidelines.Monitoring means you are aware of your child’s whereabouts and who he or she is with. Talk with them even at a young age, about the things you do when you are apart. Ask them about what they do when you are apart as well. Acting as a mentor for your child means you support and encourage them in behaviors that you want to see them develop, much like a coach does to develop a player’s strengths. Modeling means you make sure your own behavior provides a consistent positive example for your child.

To learn more about these guidelines, read Adventures in Parenting, available free on the institute’s website at nichd.nih.gov (search for “RPM3”).

No parent is perfect and no child will respond flawlessly to any parenting style. But an active, attentive parent who is consistent in words and actions can be much more effective.