

Sharing Family Values

How and When to Introduce 13 of the Most Important Values to Your Children



Thank You

... for downloading this material! We truly hope that you and your family will love it and find it of extraordinary value for years to come. We value your feedback. Please don't hesitate to contact us for questions, concerns, or just to say hello.

Cheers,

Elane, Rick, and the Birth2Work Family

Contact us at info@birth2work.org

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Introduction

It's human nature not to think about something until it's a problem.

Many of us ignore our health until we're in pain. We don't think about the importance of saving money until we're holding a hefty bill in our hands and can't afford to pay it.

Teaching children about our values tends to fall into this same habit. We don't proactively teach them about our values until they do something we find objectionable. Honesty? We have that talk after we catch them lying. Sharing? We talk about that after someone starts crying because of a stolen toy. Finances? It often takes a maxed out credit card before many of jump in and explain how money works.

It doesn't have to be that way. **Proactive parents like you can do things differently.**

No matter what ages your children are, it's never too early and never too late to start teaching them your family's most important values.

The values we share in this document have consistently been identified as top personal and family values from hundreds of participants in our live courses, and from our own experience as parents, grandparents, and corporate business professionals.

Introduction

The examples given for each value are intended to get you thinking about how you might handle the situation and perhaps make your own plans about sharing your values in situations when emotions are not running high.

Each value and its example is categorized under a particular age category as our experience and research has shown these are the times when the topic comes up most frequently.

That being said, **it is never too early to start discussing any of these topics.** It's enormously beneficial to talk about any and all of them (and more) as early as possible. Children will need to hear your stories and experiences over and over again in many different contexts.

3 Rules to Keep in Mind

When it comes to teaching or reinforcing family values with your children, there are three simple rules we teach our families to follow:

1. Be the model

As adults, we often struggle to remember that our children are more likely to do as we do rather than do as we say. When it comes to our children absorbing and implementing the values that we hold dear, we must remember to model the behaviors and decisions we hope for them.

2. Be consistent

It's easy for our children to follow our values when they see us apply them consistently. It's much more difficult for them when we are haphazard in our reasoning. None of us are perfect 100% of the time. So talking about our slip ups with our children is a special opportunity to connect and grow.

3. Be open

Another way to say this one is, “be ready to defend yourself.” When we can share our thoughts and personal explanations about why we believe what we do, our children are more likely to believe we mean what we say and respect our position even if they ultimately make different interpretations and choices in the own lives.

Values to Introduce at *0 to 3 Years*

This is a great age group to establish a foundation of values that will last a lifetime. Individual emotional and social capabilities develop at different rates, but there is no doubt that learning our values regarding courtesy, fairness, and teamwork occurs early in life through experiences that we as parents can help shape in a positive and proactive way.

Values to Introduce at *0 to 3 Years*

Courtesy

We've all seen a toddler walk up to another child and attempt to rip a toy away from that other child (hopefully not modeled by our kids, but it happens). Tugging, pushing, and shoving follows with both crying in the end.

While one interaction won't be enough, each time this scenario happens is an opportunity for us as parents to reduce tension, talk about what each wants, explain that ripping a toy from another is not fair or courteous, and begin to help them explore how they would feel if it happened to them.

Pro tip:

Keep your expectations reasonable. Children don't actually comprehend the concept of sharing until age 3. The action is associated with the brain being able to process empathy.

Values to Introduce at *0 to 3 Years*

Fairness

By the time children approach three, board games are great ways to practice counting and following rules. Some children are also able to follow basic strategy at this point. Of course, at this age, many times the rules are for someone else ... after all, they want to win!

Helping them understand that everyone else wants to win, too, and that following rules is important to ensure fairness. Appealing to how they would feel if someone else won by not following the rules can help them understand the value of fairness.

Pro tip:

If the thought of playing Candyland makes you want to give up sweets for ever, [here's a list of age-appropriate new board games](#) parents and kids can enjoy together.

Values to Introduce at *0 to 3 Years*

Teamwork

Learning to work as a member of a team is a core life-skill. It involves a number of other critical social skills like active listening, respect, communication, and patience.

Completing puzzles, simple ball games, playing music together, or even searching for lost socks together are all easy opportunities to talk about the values of teams.

Simply talking about your family as a highly dedicated and highly functioning team where everyone has a part to play is one of the key principles of our family wisdom philosophy.

Pro tip:

We share a ton of great examples about how to engage your children around your home in [**Stop Calling Them Chores**](#). It's one of the most popular guides! Click the link to get your free copy.

Values to Introduce at *0 to 3 Years*

PRACTICE AT HOME:

1. Do you value courtesy, fairness, and teamwork?
2. Are the activities suggested in this suggestion something you can easily adopt in your home? What others can you think of?
3. What are some situations you've observed where it would be helpful to have skills related to courtesy, fairness, and teamwork?

Values to Introduce at *4 to 8 Years*

As our children grow, their cognitive and emotional capabilities improve and their sense of values begins to firm up. The opportunity at this age is to help them learn and grow from their emotions and experiences that they may not fully understand but are willing to share. This provides a wonderful opportunity for discussions and sharing values.

Values to Introduce at *4 to 8 Years*

Listening

The willingness and ability to listen with a critical ear, before engaging our mouth, is a value that many see as critical to long-term success. It's also a behavior that many adults are not always willing to model.

Look for an opportunity when you sense your child wants to talk but might need some encouragement to know you're willing to listen without judgment. If the conversation is hard to get started, ask your child to tell you a story about what they are thinking. This is a surefire way to get the discussion going and a great model to help ensure future listening opportunities happen.

Pro tip:

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk is a tremendously helpful book about communication between parents and children.

Values to Introduce at *4 to 8 Years*

Perseverance

As the saying goes, “if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” We’d all like to think that we learn from success, but the fact is, the road to success is mostly littered with failures. Learning to ride a bike, for example, helps our kids develop perseverance and self-confidence.

Remember the times you fell and how much it hurt? Bloody knees and some pain along the way, whether real or emotional, those are key parts of perseverance. While we’d like to avoid them, that’s not always possible.

Even if we guard against the potential pain, experience tells us, whether we are there or not, there will be a fall. Being there to provide encouragement, solace, and stories of our own helps our children when failure occurs.

Pro tip:

Teaching kids to “never give up” sounds good in theory but for some can lead to undue mental and emotional distress later in life. Learning to recognize when to let go and move on is just as important a life lesson.

Values to Introduce at *4 to 8 Years*

Discipline

Baking is a delicious and great way to help instill a sense of discipline when it comes to following a recipe. Unlike most cooking techniques, proper baking requires precision, patience, and technique.

As children learn to read and know their way around the kitchen, help them have the discipline to follow what a recipe says. And if they don't follow the instructions, make sure they taste the results anyway. They'll remember the consequences of overly salted cookies or a cake that won't come loose because someone forgot to grease the pan.

Pro tip:

Kid Chef Junior Bakes and **The Complete Baking Book for Young Chefs** are two of our favorite baking with kids cookbooks!

Values to Introduce at *4 to 8 Years*

Reliability

Taking care of another life, in the form of a pet, is one of the best ways we can help our children understand the importance of reliability. Feeding, cleaning, providing water, and exercise all require consistency and reliability.

PERSONAL STORY:

(From Rick) This idea really hit home for us one summer when we asked a neighbor to take care of our pet fish while we were on vacation. Unfortunately, the fish died while we were gone. It was clear that the neighbor had neglected their duties. That experience stayed with my kids for a long time.

Values to Introduce at *4 to 8 Years*

PRACTICE AT HOME:

1. Do you value listening, perseverance, discipline, and reliability?
2. Are the activities suggested in this suggestion something you can easily adopt in your home? What others can you think of?
3. What are some situations you've observed where it would be helpful to have skills related to listening, perseverance, discipline, and reliability?
4. What new ways can you think of to reinforce the values from the previous section(courtesy, fairness, and teamwork)?

Values to Introduce at *9 to 12 Years*

At this age, when our children are able to communicate and interact, there remain opportunities for social and emotional development. They are rapidly developing their self-identity based on their self-esteem.

Values to Introduce at *9 to 12 Years*

Independence

This is a time for us to strategically allow greater independence with our kids. Our challenge as parents is to remember that we need to allow our kids to engage in the decision process, further their learning, and grow from those experiences.

Opportunities for cultivating independence include things like small unsupervised jobs around the house done in exchange for money, researching portions of family vacations, and making appointments (with supervision.)

PERSONAL STORY:

(From Elane) One summer, my youngest daughter and her friend took the initiative to bake a cobbler after collecting fruit from the apricot tree in our backyard. They prepped the apricots, made the crust, and even decorated the top with braided dough.

It was beautiful! Unfortunately, instead of bake they set the oven to self clean. The oven did its job ... baked everything until it was black and easy to wipe out ... including the pie! Independence is great but it's a process. I definitely learned I still needed to keep an eye on things.

Values to Introduce at *9 to 12 Years*

Adaptability

No matter how well we plan, the world can throw us off track. “Shifting gears” with ease in response to new circumstances or new information is a highly sought after skill in the business world. It’s also a fundamental executive skill that when taught early can help our children navigate adolescence more easily.

Imaginative play is best for teaching this skill when children are very young. As they get older, discuss book or movie characters that constantly have to adapt to new circumstances. Instead of getting angry when dinner burns, ask your child to help make a new plan.

When they struggle with assignments or emotional situations, give them the opportunity to solve their own problems first. Don’t swoop in to fix their problem. Your child may surprise you.

Pro tip:

The next time you see one of your children endure a change, particularly one that they hadn’t expected, pull out your listening skills and listen. By the time our children are nearing their teens, they have the skills to sort out a way forward, but they’ll gain comfort in having a sounding board. You’ll also have an opportunity to ask questions if the challenge is bigger than they are ready to handle on their own.

Values to Introduce at *9 to 12 Years*

Accountability

This one is on direct opposition to the entitlement attitude we've all witnessed from some of today's tweens and teens. Accountability is about taking responsibility for your choices.

When our kids choose to make excuses instead of being accountable parents have some options. First, focus on the choice the problem not the excuse, remind them that if they want the freedom to make their own choices they have the burden of accepting the consequences.

Second, avoid grounding your children as a form of punishment. Have them come up with a way to make amends for their actions, present their plan to you then carry out the action.

PERSONAL STORY:

(From Elane) I remember asking my oldest daughter to take the trash out when she was about 12. I had gently reminded her several times and finally she snapped at me, "I don't have time!" The next day, she needed a ride for an after school activity. I responded, "Sorry, I'm busy." Of course, she huffed and puffed while complaining about getting in trouble at school, to no avail. We never had another problem getting our jobs done around the house.

Values to Introduce at *9 to 12 Years*

PRACTICE AT HOME:

1. Do you value independence, adaptability, and accountability?
2. Are the activities suggested in this suggestion something you can easily adopt in your home? What others can you think of?
3. What are some situations you've observed where it would be helpful to have skills related to independence, adaptability, and accountability?
4. What new ways can you think of to reinforce the values from the previous sections (courtesy, fairness, teamwork, listening, perseverance, discipline, and reliability)?

Values to Introduce at *13 and Beyond*

By the time the teenage years are on us, the values our children hold for life are in place. This is the time when parents should allow experience to become a greater part of reaffirming values.

Values to Introduce at *13 and Beyond*

Self-Reliance

There are numerous life-skills our children will need to be capable of as independent adults. The smart phone and its use/abuse, however is one of the first areas we like to help parents think about when teaching self-reliance.

Parents can choose to have their child pay for part or all of the cost of the smart phone and/or any special upgrades, apps, and data plans. If you've made a rule that you will not assist if and when the phone is lost or damaged, the reality of needing to be self-reliant will become urgent to teens in a way like no other lesson in life can teach.

Pro tip:

You might be thinking, "but my son or daughter has to have a mobile device ... it's a safety issue and I need to know where they are at all times!" We would argue, that we all learned to get around without cell phones. There are very inexpensive cell phones available for short term use. Plus, they can borrow a friend's device if needed.

Values to Introduce at *13 and Beyond*

Financial Stability

According to ING Direct, an overwhelming majority of teens, 87 percent, admit they don't know about personal finances or budgeting. Yet, on average, young adults aged 16 to 25 expect to retire at age 60.

If we want our children to value financial stability, now is the time to have a discussion about money, savings, and debt. It's also time for them to earn money and manage a budget. We do them no favor when we don't share with them how to manage money and have financial stability.

Pro tip:

Read our blog post **[5 Ways to Prepare Your Teen for Financial Independence](#)** for helpful tips and ideas.

Values to Introduce at *13 and Beyond*

Generosity

We've yet to find a parent who doesn't value generosity and want their children to be kind and caring adults. The best way to teach and share this value is to volunteer in the community and give back.

Whether with your religious community, the private mission focused organization, a home for seniors, or a food pantry, generosity is best practiced by volunteering regularly and often.

Pro tip:

Check out these websites for opportunities to serve in your area:

[Volunteermatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org),

[Teensgive.org](https://www.teensgive.org),

[Do a World of Good: 15 Best Places to Volunteer](#)

Values to Introduce at *13 and Beyond*

PRACTICE AT HOME:

1. Do you value self-reliance, financial stability, and generosity?
2. Are the activities suggested in this suggestion something you can easily adopt in your home? What others can you think of?
3. What are some situations you've observed where it would be helpful to have skills related to self-reliance, financial stability, and generosity?
4. What new ways can you think of to reinforce the values from the previous sections (courtesy, fairness, teamwork, listening, perseverance, discipline, reliability, independence, adaptability, and accountability)?

The Next Step

We hope you found this resource valuable. Visit us at Birth2Work.org for more incredibly useful free materials, activities, courses, and family team support!



We highly recommend:

Mindset Training for Parents: 6 Fascinating Elements

[Click here to read our blog post](#) about the incredibly positive shift you can make by adopting a new way of thinking about your role as a parent.