

Do As I Say and As I Do

Children learn to imitate at a very young age. It's how they learn to behave, care for themselves, develop new skills, and communicate with others. From their earliest moments they watch you closely and pattern their own behavior and beliefs after yours. Your examples become permanent images, which will shape their attitudes and actions for the rest of their life.

It's important to be responsible, consistent and loving with your child. This also holds true for the relationship you have with your spouse, your parents, and other family members and friends that are also a part of your child's life. Own up to mistakes when you make them, and communicate open and honestly with all family members.

It's also important to take good care of yourself. When we're focusing on what's best for our child it's easy to neglect our own needs. Your child and your family are counting on you physically and emotionally, so it's imperative that you teach your child by example that taking care of yourself helps you to take care of them and the rest of your family. This shows your child that not only do you love them and the rest of the family, but you love yourself as well. This is an important step in teaching your child about self esteem. This may involve getting a sitter and treating yourself out to dinner and a movie, or doing another favorite activity on your own. This teaches your child that you are not only their parent, but your own person with your interests and needs, and also gives them a chance to show you how well they can do without you with them for a while.

It's also important to nurture your relationship with your spouse. Let your child see you communicate in a positive and healthy manner with one another, and show love and affection for one another so your child can begin to learn early on what a healthy marriage should be like.

You'll soon see your child patterning many of his behaviors after your own. So make sure that what you say and do around your child will help build a strong sense of security and self esteem.