



Teaching “Good Judgment”

When we want kids to behave, parents often tell their children what to do and expect them to comply. However, many kids will resist this parenting strategy. While more time consuming and potentially exhausting, helping kids realize the importance of behaviors on their own can be more helpful in the long term.



Model Good Judgment

When you make a decision that your child can learn from (for example, turning off your phone to cook dinner), model that good judgment for your child.

Try This:

- Say aloud things like, “I need to stop playing on my phone so dinner will be ready on time.”
- Talk about your family’s daily schedule, and brainstorm together how to work around obstacles (like cooking dinner when practice is from 5-7).
- Use calendars, to-do lists, and timers to increase attention to important tasks.

Look For:

- Your child beginning to plan their time with prompting and then independently.
- Less arguments about eliminating distractions over time.
- Increased negotiation from your child or increased accountability. (For example: setting a timer for when they need to start/stop a task)



Create Boundaries of Control

Some things in life are within a child's control, and others are not. Help your child learn what they are able to be in charge of and what parents, teachers, or other responsible adults will control for them.

Try This:

- Get on the same page with other parenting partners about a child's scope of control.
- Make sure your child has some control over their own life. Remember: no one likes to be micromanaged.
- Often times, parents need to control the "what" while children can maintain control over the "when." (For example: Parents say, "You must do your homework." Child gets to choose to do it now or in a half hour.)

Look For:

- Increased negotiation about what your child can control. (For example: "I know I need to do my homework, but I could really use a break before I start. Can I set a timer for 15 minutes and then start my homework?")
- Less arguments between parenting partner as a child realizes you are on the same page and checking in with each other.



Turn the Question Around

When children ask you "why" (or whine about doing a behavior), turn the question back onto them. When you make a child think of their own reasons, you activate their own "good judgment" brain processes and also reinforce the decision to do the right thing.

Try This:

- Can you think of 3 reasons I want you to get off of social media and do your homework?
- How will your coach or teacher feel if you don't practice at home?
- What do you think will happen if you continue with your current behavior?

Look For:

- Children being able to more easily answer the "3 reasons" question with practice.
- Siblings helping each other think of these reasons, or using them in their discussions with each other. (For example: "If you don't pick up your toys like mom asked, someone might step on them and break them or get hurt.")



Practice Makes Progress



Give your child lots of opportunities to practice using their good judgment. It's never too late to

start, but the younger your child is, the easier it will be for your child to make changes in their behavior.

Try This:

- Go over your family's schedule the evening before. Discuss how your children are planning to use their unscheduled hours to accomplish their requirements (like homework and chores).
- When your children make a mistake, ask them how they could have done better, or what the consequences were.

Look For:

- Mistakes and arguments to happen, but more infrequently over time.
- Increased awareness of their place in the family.
- More attention to a "growth mindset" of continuous improvement.