

Expect Your Kids to Do Well

by John Rosemond

How to grow a happy child,

Part 1: If you are married, have a more active relationship with your spouse than you have with your children. Spend more time in the roles of husband and wife than you spend in the roles of mother and father. Nothing causes a child greater insecurity than the sense that his parents' marriage is not the most solid, permanent thing in his life.

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Part 2: If you are single, do not be married to your children. Have an active life outside of your role as mother or father. Be an interesting person to your kids. The well-being of a single parent is essential to the well-being of his or her children.

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Part 3: Expect your children to obey. Expect this calmly, as if you take their obedience for granted. Who is the happier employee: the one who frequently attempts to get away with breaking the rules or the one who obeys the rules? Substitute child for employee and the answer is the same. Disobedient children are not

happy campers. Said another way, the most obedient children are also the happiest children.

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Part 4: Expect your children to be responsible citizens of your family. From the time they are 3 years old, assign them to chores around the home, chores that mean something. Teach your 3-year-old to wash floors. Teach your 4-year-old to vacuum. Teach your 5-year-old to clean the bathroom. Good citizenship is a matter of making a contribution. Too many of today's kids have no meaningful roles in their families. They're not contributing. They're just there, consuming, and the more they consume, the more they demand. Needless to say, demanding people are not happy people.

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Part 5: Teach your children that happiness is not a matter of how much you have, but a matter of how much you do with what you have. Don't buy them a lot of things that will end up doing

nothing but cluttering up their lives.

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Part 6: Teach your children that two of the most fun things to do are reading and travel, both of which involve the accumulation of memories as opposed to things. Begin reading to your children early, and read to them often. Every time you are inclined to buy your child a toy, consider instead taking him or her fishing or camping or to a museum. Spend time, not money.

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Part 7: Let television and video games into your children's lives very little, if at all. The happiest children are not found staring at television sets or frantically manipulating video game consoles. They are found in parks, on playgrounds, and in other such places.

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Part 8: Help your children develop hobbies. Few things exercise imagination and creativity as well as a hobby. By the way, a hobby is not an after-school sport. A hobby is something a child can do by himself, eventually without adult supervision.

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Part 9: Teach your children good

manners. Good manners are a demonstration of attentiveness to and respect for others, and the happiest people are those who pay more attention to others than they want others to pay them.

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Part 10: Hold your children to high standards. You show respect for a child by expecting of the child. Expect the best manners. Expect the best schoolwork your child is capable of. Expect obedience. Expect your child to pitch in around the house without being asked. Hold your child accountable for his or her behavior. Make no excuses; accept no excuses. The happiest campers always do their best.

Family psychologist John Rosemond answers parents' questions and includes his speaking schedule on his website at www.rosemond.com.