

A Survival 'Cheat Sheet' for Parents

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House Rules

- ▶ Giving House Rules a try in your home
 - Decide on a few (maybe 5-8) realistic rules which you and your children agree you can stick to.
 - Write the rules out and stick them on your fridge for all to see. Use pictures or symbols for younger children. Try to write your expectations in a positive way where possible.
 - Refer to these rules when you're going about your daily routine, and remember to praise your children when they do follow the House Rules.
 - Be consistent, if you change the rules your child may feel cheated and break them.
 - If a rule is broken, remind your child what it is - "remember, 'no hitting' is one of our house rules", and utilize consequences.
- ▶ By using this technique you are sending a message loud and clear to all the family: these are the boundaries, don't cross them!

Routines

- ▶ Schedules and routines are important for children because they need to know what's coming next. If the schedule is consistent, children learn the pattern. Once a pattern is set children can infer, for instance, that brushing teeth comes after snack time. This way, there aren't too many unknowns.
- ▶ Schedules help build trust
- ▶ When children have too many unknowns, anxiety builds up and they start showing emotional reactions to the inconsistency.

Bedtime

- ▶ Lack of sleep can cause a slew of other problems, including poor behavior, an inability to concentrate, and frequent nighttime waking. In order to make sure that your child is getting adequate sleep on a regular basis, you'll need to keep the bedtime routine fairly consistent.
 - 4 - 12 months: 14-15 hours/day
 - 1 - 3 years: 12-14 hours/day
 - 3 - 6 years: 10 ¾ - 12 hours/day
 - 7 - 12 years: 10-11 hours/night
 - 12 - 18 years: 8 ¼ - 9 ½ hours/night

One study of U.S. high school students found that 13% were chronically sleep-deprived!

Bedtime Do's

- ▶ Spend some time unwinding with a quiet activity 30 minutes before starting the bedtime routine.
- ▶ Be consistent. The routine should be the same night-to-night, so that your child learns to anticipate sleep as part of the routine.
- ▶ You may want to include bath time in your regular routine, as the soothing warmth will help prepare your child's body for rest.
- ▶ Make reading together part of the bedtime routine.
- ▶ Move your child's bedtime up (to an earlier time) if he or she frequently wakes during the night.
- ▶ Leave the room while your child is still awake.
- ▶ Allow soft music or a nightlight.
- ▶ Remain calm when your child calls for you.
- ▶ Reassure your child that you will come back and check on him or her during the night.
- ▶ Always put your infant on his or her back to sleep.
- ▶ Impose reasonable consequences if your child refuses to go to sleep. For example, a favorite toy might go in "Time Out," or your child might lose TV time for continuing to act out at bedtime.
- ▶ Include rewards for progress (only once out of bed, to in bed all night, to in bed every night all week)

Bedtime Don'ts

- ▶ Make TV part of the bedtime routine.
- ▶ Offer caffeinated sodas with dinner.
- ▶ Allow frequent interruptions to the bedtime routine.
- ▶ Make lying down together or rocking your child to sleep a regular part of the bedtime routine.
- ▶ Use thick blankets, quilts, stuffed animals, or pillows in your infant's crib.
- ▶ Pick your child up if he or she continues to call for your fights going to sleep. Instead, simply reassure him or her that you're nearby.

Using Charts and Contracts

- ▶ When to use charts and contracts:
 - When you want to focus on a past problem behavior
 - When your child has a goal in mind
 - When you have a new goal you'd like your child to achieve

Charts and contracts need to be positive, creative, and personal

Dishonesty

- ▶ Lies come out of children's mouths for a variety of reasons:
 - Fear. When kids are scared of the consequences of their actions, they often lie to cover up. (Are the rules too strict? Are the limits too tight? Does your child feel free to talk with you?)
 - To protect somebody else.
 - Because she is imaginative and the truth is boring.
 - To avoid an unpleasant task. ("Did you brush your teeth?" "Yes, Dad!")
 - By mistake. Sometimes lies seem almost involuntary, and a lie just slips out, especially if your child gets caught in a misdeed. ("Who left the milk out?" "I didn't!") Then, soon enough, it's Sir Walter Scott: "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!"
 - For love, for approval, and because kids like to impress people quickly and effectively.
- ▶ Keep the conversation focused on what happened or what the problem is, rather than casting blame.
- ▶ Don't cross-examine. Grilling will make him close down, not open up, to you.
- ▶ Looking for the positive intent? Lies are a misguided survival technique.
- ▶ Lies are easy to slip into, and even easier to compound themselves, lie upon lie. Many kids slip into lying as painlessly as sliding into warm, tropical ocean water. It's much more painful getting out (shiver, shiver) than it was sliding in!
- ▶ When your kid has misbehaved, don't trap him into a lie, or set him up in a no-win situation. Confronting him with leading questions is more likely to elicit a lie than talking calmly with him about what happened.
- ▶ The truth is hard to tell. It's risky to confess (and risk is always hard). If your child confesses a misdeed to you, you need to 1) thank him for the truth, and give him positive reinforcement for his bravery and his sense of ethics, and then 2) deal with the misdeed by applying appropriate consequences.
- ▶ Don't reprimand your child for telling the truth.

- ▶ Before you talk with your kid about a lie he's told, make sure that he did lie. A false accusation, or not believing a child when he is telling the truth, can devastate.
- ▶ Focus on the misbehavior, not the lie your child used to cover it up.
- ▶ Breathe, run around the block, take 10, and calm down. Take as long as you need to take in order to deal with the situation, not the lie, or the fact that your child wasn't honest with you.
- ▶ Talk with your child. Let her know that you are aware of the truth. (Be as calm and level-voiced as possible.)
- ▶ Talk about values, and let her know that you don't value lying.
- ▶ Give her the benefit of the doubt (she may be caught in a compound lie).
- ▶ Once the situation she lied about is resolved, talk with her about the problems lying can cause. Knowledge (and your obvious disapproval) will help her avoid lying in the future.
- ▶ If you don't want a child who lies, don't label her a liar. Kids tend to internalize the labels we give them.

Television

- ▶ Studies show that too much television viewing can have adverse effects, such as more violent and aggressive behavior, poor school performance, attention problems, obesity, poor self-image, early sexual activity, and drug or alcohol use.
- ▶ Don't let your child watch more than one to two hours of TV during the day, and don't let them watch TV at bedtime at all. TV viewing at bedtime has been linked to poor sleep.
 - If your child has a TV set in their bedroom, remove it. Research shows watching TV is linked to sleep problems, especially if the TV set is in the child's bedroom. The presence of other media, such as a computer, video games or Internet in a kid's bedroom is also associated with worse sleep.

Tolerances

- ▶ Determine your tolerances for certain behaviors– what you are willing to accept and what you just cannot accept.
 - Verbal replies from your child such as “O.K.” versus “I know”
 - Immediately versus “As soon as I finish this”
 - Does the task but doesn't say “O.K.”

You have to determine what you can live with. It's your house and your family, and you set the rules, the tone, and the expectations.

Tantrums

- ▶ Young children's temper tantrums are usually due to frustration and their lack of language skills.
- ▶ After that, temper tantrums are a learned behavior; at some point they have been reinforced (usually inadvertently).
- ▶ DO NOT give in to unreasonable demands or negotiate with your screaming child.
- ▶ Talk it over afterward. Pre-teach, practice, and praise appropriate alternatives and issue a consequence for the tantrum if/when appropriate

Time

- ▶ Children do not understand "time" very well, and certainly do not hurry very well.
- ▶ Saying, "Hurry up", or "We're going to be late" do not mean very much to children.
- ▶ Start getting ready earlier.
- ▶ Offer time reminders to start teaching the meaning of time, "We have five minutes before we have to leave."
- ▶ Give instructions, "Kenna, please put your shoes on right now, we are getting ready to leave."
- ▶ Use consequences, "Kenna, you did not put your shoes on right when I asked. Because you did not do as I asked you will not have your MP3 player in the car."

Web Resources

- ▶ Boys Town Parenting <http://www.parenting.org/>
- ▶ John Rosemond's Traditional Parenting <http://www.rosemond.com>
- ▶ Collaborative Problem Solving <http://www.livesinthebalance.org>
- ▶ Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>

Recommended Reading

- ❖ Common Sense Parenting of Toddlers and Preschoolers by Bridget Barnes and Steven M. York, M.H.D.
- ❖ Common Sense Parenting by Ray Burke, Ph.D., Ron Herron, & Bridget Barnes
- ❖ Setting Limits With Your Strong-Willed Child: Eliminating conflict by establishing clear, firm, and respectful boundaries by Robert J. MacKenzie, Ed.D.
- ❖ The Kazdin Method for Parenting the Defiant Child by Alan E. Kazdin, Ph.D.
- ❖ Raising Happy and Successful Kids: A Guide for Parents by Adele M. Brodtkin, Ph.D.
- ❖ Go to Your Room! Consequences that teach. A common-sense guide to improving your child's everyday behavior by Shari Steelsmith
- ❖ The Pocket Parent: What to do when your 2- 5-year-old has tantrums, bites a friend, keeps interrupting, uses bad words, won't use the potty, and more . . . by Gail Reichlin and Caroline Winkler
- ❖ Don't Give Me That Attitude! 24 rude, selfish, insensitive things kids do and how to stop them by Michele Borba, Ed.D.
- ❖ Good Night, Sweet Dreams, I Love You, Now Get Into Bed and Go To Sleep! How tired parents can solve their children's bedtime problems by Patrick C. Friman, Ph.D.
- ❖ The Explosive Child by Dr. Ross Greene
- ❖ Taking No For An Answer: And other skills children need by Laurie Simons, M.A.
- ❖ Nurture Shock: New Thinking About Children by Po Bronson & Ashley Merryman
- ❖ On Becoming Babywise- Gary Ezzo
On Becoming Babywise brings hope to the tired and bewildered parents looking for an alternative to sleepless nights and fussy babies. It teaches parents how to lovingly guide their baby's day rather than be guided or enslaved to the infant's unknown needs.
- ❖ On Becoming Babywise II- Gary Ezzo
Feeding time, waketime and sleeptime provide wonderful opportunities for training and *Babywise Book II* will guide you all the way, from the high chair to playpen, from the living room to the back yard.