

# Parenting T.I.P.S.

Tools for Improving Parental Success

By Jody Pawel

*When I was eight years old, my parents took a parenting class and went on to teach parenting classes for several years. I was old enough to remember what my parents were like before and after that class. One might think I had a perfect family, but my older brother experienced a traumatic childhood event that left him with severe emotional, mental, and behavioral difficulties. My parents' use of the parenting skills, in addition to the professional assistance they received, resulted in a truly miraculous recovery.*

*I was so impressed that I took my first parenting class from my mother at age seventeen, long before I had any children. I have been teaching parenting classes ever since in my profes-*

*sion as a licensed social worker.*

For more than fifteen years I have taught hundreds of parents, from all walks of life, who have told countless stories about how these skills have changed their lives. I have also done extensive research to pool together the best techniques available to parents (and weed out the abundance of "bad" advice) so parents can learn to be the most effective parents possible with less confusion and more confidence. Each month, I will share some of these tools as well as solutions to common problems.

In all the years I have taught parenting classes, one skill has stood out as a "four-star" skill for gaining cooperating from children and preventing problems like power struggles and tantrums. I

## 'Don't Say Don't'

call it "Don't say Don't."

Have you ever told your child "Don't go in the street!" and they walk out in the street? or "Don't fall!" and two seconds later they skin their knees? Why is it that kids seem to do what we tell them not to do?

If you look at it from their perspective, it becomes clear: When I say "Don't spill the milk," what image do you picture in your mind? Most people picture the milk spilling. Kids are no different! An adult can take that image, figure out how the milk might spill, the options available to prevent this and choose the best alternative - all in a split second!

The younger a child is, the more difficult it is for a child to turn a "don't" around. Kids will usually enact the picture created in their

minds. So, instead of telling your child what not to do, tell them what to do. Create the picture in their minds.

Say, "Stay on the sidewalk (or grass)."; "Walk" or "Watch your step" or "watch where your feet are!"

While this sounds simple, it can be far from easy to change our habit of saying "Don't." We are so used to only noticing what kids do wrong, we have a hard time picturing what we want them to do right. Put your creativity and imagination into it and practice this skill often. Remember.....Don't Say Don't.

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