

# Tips for Promoting Character at Home

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## Make Time at Dinner for Table Talk

Helpful hints from Thomas Lickona, who wrote "Educating for Character: PRIME TIME - Dinnertime!" This can be an ideal time to share your lives and teach moral and spiritual values.

Establish a few basic rules for conversation such as: wait for the other person to finish talking before you speak, look at the person who's talking, and no put-downs. Here are some great topics you might want to use over the course of time:

- What was something interesting that happened today?
- What's something you did today that you never did before?
- What's something you're looking forward to?
- What's something someone in the family did for you recently that you appreciated?
- What's a way that you helped someone recently?
- What's a way that someone helped you recently?
- Ask anyone else at the table a question (the person may pass or request another question). The person who answers the question asks the next question. Keep going until everyone has been asked a question.
- What's something that's been on your mind lately that you haven't told anybody about?
- Who's having a problem or worry that the rest of us might help with?
- Begin the meal with a reading (from a collection of quotes, scriptures, etc.) and ask what their reaction is to it (this can be done while food is being served). Everyone need not comment and conversation may go on to other things. Clip a Dear Abby letter from the newspaper. Read the letter, but not Abby's response to it. Instead ask, "What advice do you think Abby should give?"
- One word topics: Someone suggests a one-word topic such as: school, sports, friends, clothes, music, God, prayer, heroes, love, drinking, R-rated movies, TV shows, shoplifting, etc. Family members can say anything they like in response to the topic.
- Read a short piece from a book or an article. Discuss it.

Select one or two activities to try a couple times a week. With time it will open communication with family members and create opportunities for molding character.

## Foundation: Instilling Character in Your Children

*Activities centered upon respect, caring, trustworthiness, fairness, responsibility, and citizenship.*

### Respect

- **Respect one's environment** -- begin recycling in your household and recruit your children to assist.

- **Respect one's ancestors** -- ask your children to interview older family members in order to construct a detailed family tree.
- **Respect one's self** -- require that your children use their seat belts when traveling in all types of vehicles; model this behavior by buckling up yourself.

## Caring

- **Care for those that also care** -- encourage your children to write thank you notes or e-mails after receiving birthday/holiday/special occasion gifts from friends and family.
- **Care for those less fortunate** -- volunteer as a family at a local soup kitchen.
- **Care for neighbors** -- assist a nearby neighbor with raking leaves, scooping snow, or watching their house while they are on vacation.

## Trustworthiness

- **Display promptness** -- model the importance of being on time to school, activities, and work.
- **Display courage** -- read your child a book where courage is key to the success of the characters involved.

## Fairness

- **Be fair with family members** -- play board games to reiterate how we all must play fair with each other in competitive settings.
- **Be fair with siblings** -- establish a schedule for time that each child devotes to playing video games, working on the computer, or watching their favorite television station.

## Responsibility

- **Be responsible for borrowed materials** -- allow your child to apply for their own library card at your local community library. Share with them the importance of being responsible for borrowed materials such as library books, video tapes, and resources.
- **Be responsible for chores/jobs** -- list a variety of chores on separate pieces of paper and place them in a 'Job Jar' -- when your child is bored or is misbehaving, have them draw a job from the jar that they are responsible for completing. Include a few fun jobs so that your child is excited about drawing a job.
- **Be responsible for memories** -- purchase your child a disposable camera when preparing to go on a trip or on vacation; allow them to take photos of what they enjoy the most.

## Citizenship

- **Be a good roadway citizen** -- obey traffic signs and pedestrian crosswalks when your children are riding with you.
- **Be a role model for those from other countries** -- host a foreign exchange student in your home.

## General Suggestions

- Emphasize good character in general family discussions.
  - Reward your children when they display positive character behavior.
  - Be clear in displaying good character.
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