





THE HEALTHY FOOD ADVICE CULTURE TRUE STORIES JOKES







Tiny (but Powerful!) Ways You Can courage Your Kids Every Day



Charlotte Hilton Andersen



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Experts share the little things you can do right now to help your child be more confident, resilient, curious, and motivated, while also helping them know they are loved.



MNSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

"Catch" them being good

"We spend so much time focusing on consequences [for bad behavior] but at the same time it is so important to recognize and reward positive behavior when justified. Look for when your kids do good things and then validate and reward those behaviors. We've been helping parents with troubled or challenging children for over 35 years and our experience has shown how important positive reinforcement is for kids." —Dennis Poncher, founder of Because I Love You (B.I.L.Y.), a non-profit organization supporting parents. Hint: It all leads back to these magic words that will change your life.

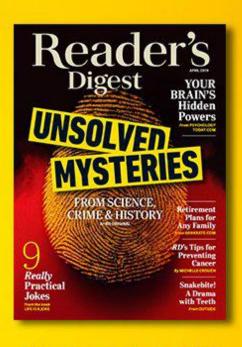


3D_KOT/SHUTTERSTOCK

Play LEGOs with them

"The child who plays and builds with blocks (or similar toys) is experimenting with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) concepts like measurement, symmetry, balance, and scale, and soft skills such as creativity, resilience, teamwork, and self-expression. This feeds self-confidence because it gives kids the chance to practice succeeding at tasks before they encounter them in other contexts and situations in the world." —*Erin Zambataro, MS, Early Learning Lead Librarian,*Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.





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OLGA-KOVALENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Set up checkers for two

"Be sure to play with your child. Children develop the benefits of play at a faster rate when they play with an adult. Adults can expand the play and offer challenges, and partner with them as they solve problems." —Erin Zambataro





NINA-BUDAY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Play the "What if?" game

"Ask your child a 'what if' question. For instance, 'What if we only build with the square blocks?' or 'What if we could breathe under water?' Young children can think creatively and learn real world concepts while enjoying a fun, playful experience." —*Erin Zambataro*. And this is an easy way to encourage your kid. Here are some other **productive things to do while waiting in line!**





ALENA-OZEROVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Offer a challenge

"Suggest a specific project that stretches your child's skills. Try 'Can you build a house that will be strong enough to withstand the wolf's huffing and puffing like the third little pig did in The Three Little Pigs?' or 'Could you help me come up with a plan for dinners this week?' By offering these challenges, you're creating opportunities for critical thinking and problem-solving, allowing your child to grow her self-confidence when she succeeds, or try again after failing." —Erin Zambataro

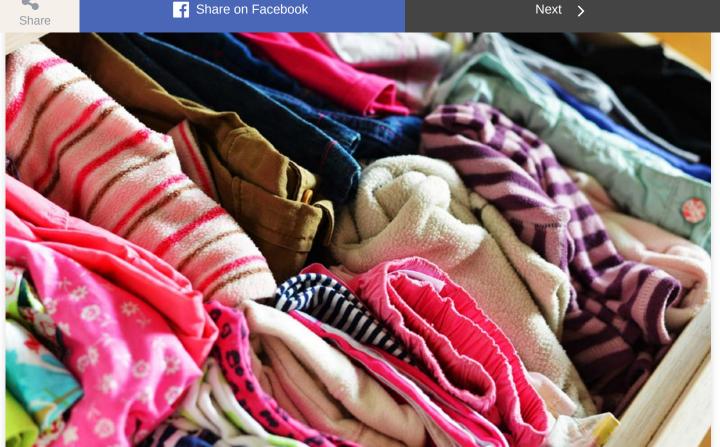


NONG-MARS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Praise them when they try something difficult

"It can be powerful to share a positive comment when kids attempt something difficult on their own. All it takes is a simple acknowledgement like 'It was tough to give your little sister your teddy bear in the car, but you did a great job of sharing.' Or 'You worked really hard at putting the cap back on the toothpaste.' Children need to learn that they are lovable, smart, and capable. When children feel good about themselves, they are more willing to try new things and persevere when facing difficult tasks." —*Erin Zambataro*. This is one of the reasons experts say you should never call your kid "smart."





ANNAAIVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let them solve their own problems

"Encourage young children to try solving problems themselves first when facing a challenge. For example, 'Your favorite shirt is dirty today and we have to get ready to go. What do you think we should do?' You can step in if your child needs further direction or encouragement but don't try to automatically solve every problem. Also, don't forget to congratulate her when she finds a successful solution." —Erin Zambataro



BESTPHOTOSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Take breaks from the iPad

"Limiting the use of technology with our young ones may encourage them to become more creative and curious about their surroundings. While media and technology use are at the very center of our children's lives today and offer essential skills for the learning environment of the 21st century, the excess of media content they consume can have a negative effect on their social-emotional, cognitive and even physical development, according to research done by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Take a technology time-out every day." —*Corina Bethencourt, certified K-6 teacher and educational blogger.* Plus, screen time is linked to speech delays in toddlers.



ROMRODPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let them get bored

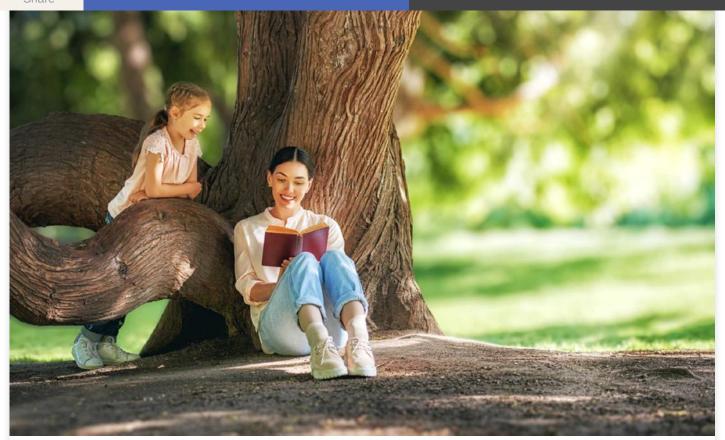
"By letting your child be bored you offer them an opportunity to find different ways to distract themselves and by doing so, they practice creativity, the ability to problem solve, develop their cognitive skills and have real experiences with their surroundings." —Corina Bethencourt



BACHO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Help them establish a daily routine

"Children thrive on feeling secure and knowing what to expect each day so they love routines. Work with your kiddo to establish a routine for him at home everyday. That way, he will know what to expect next and will not feel insecure or anxious." —Corina Bethencourt.



YUGANOV-KONSTANTIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Help them set a summer goal

"Setting and achieving goals is one of the most important skills kids develop. Start small by encouraging your little one to have goals that are within reach and appropriate for their age or ability. Then praise them for their success or help them overcome failure by providing appropriate tools and encouraging feed back." —Corina Bethencourt





RONALD-SUMNERS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Give them a choice at lunchtime

"Choices make kids feel in more control and therefore give them confidence and ultimately even make them more self-sufficient. Give your toddler the choice of which shirt they want to wear when getting dressed or what they want for lunch from a small menu of options. Let your older child choose a project for school. It is so easy to add choices in the day rather than deciding for them. Even if it takes longer for them to do themselves, let them." — *Alison Mitzner*, *MD*, *pediatrician and mother*. If getting dressed is your battleground, try these **11 tricks help your child get dressed with less fuss**.



GOODMOMENTS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Praise the effort, not just the result

"If your child is trying to learn something and do something, keep praising them as they go, not only when they finish the end result. Although when they finish, it's fine to praise them for that too. This will motivate your child to keep going and and have the confidence to try new things. If at first they don't succeed, support them to keep trying." —Alison Mitzner



ROMRODPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sign them up for piano lessons

"Playing a musical instrument helps your child develop self motivation, persistence, and increases confidence—all skills that will be useful later in life for things beyond music. Remind them that 'all experts started as beginners' and give them plenty of positive reinforcement." —Alison Mitzner. Plus studies show that learning music can help your child get better at math!





DMYTRO-ZINKEVYCH/SHUTTERSTOCK

Have them share "roses and thorns" every day

"Each day have your child share one success or positive thing from the day (the rose) and one mistake or problem from the day (the thorn). Even better, have each person in the family take a turn, say at dinnertime, sharing their experiences. This teaches children to feel good about their successes and also recognize that mistakes and problems are just part of the process. It leads to more self-assured, resilient, and competent kids at any age." —*Nicole Beurkens*, *PhD*, *licensed child psychologist*. Try these **10 little ways to encourage your kid to learn gratitude**.



PRESSMASTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Share your own "roses and thorns"

"Children are often surprised to hear that adults mess things up too. When you share your own successes and mistakes, it can normalize it for them and make them less fearful of their own errors and problems. When children can identify and appreciate their successes as well as mistakes or failures, it builds confidence and frees them up to be more creative in trying new things because they aren't as afraid of failure." —Nicole Beurkens

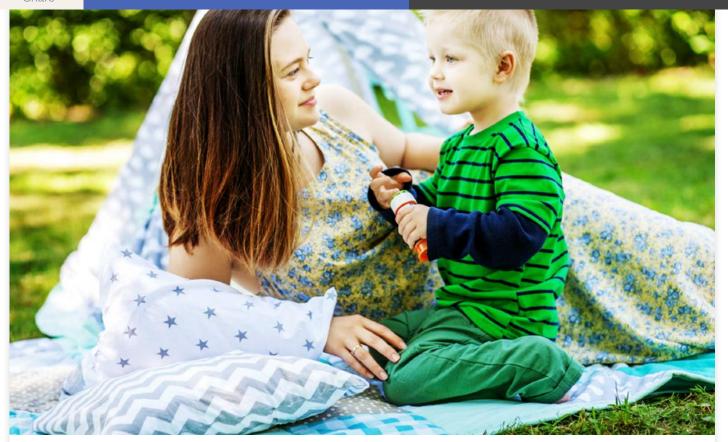


SHAVLOVSKIY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Work on a difficult puzzle together

"Giving children challenging puzzles to solve lets them know that you believe that they have the intelligence and problem solving skills to figure things out. Resist the urge to do it for them. Instead help them through it with comments like 'I know you can figure this out,' 'You've got great ideas and I bet you can come up with a way to solve this,' or simply 'You can do it!' This helps children develop the belief that they can do hard things, and putting the emphasis on the child's ability to think through and tackle challenges is critical to building positive self-esteem, resilience, curiosity, and

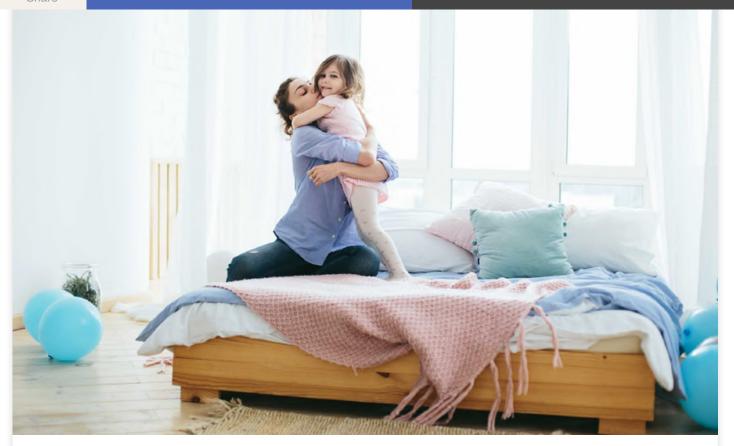
independence." —Nicole Buerkens.



OLHA-TSIPLYAR/SHUTTERSTOCK

Drop the "but..."

"Providing consistent and positive reinforcement, recognizing strengths, and clarifying desirable behaviors, sets a structure of positive interactions and validates strengths. But when praise is qualified or conditional, it backfires. For example, if you tell your child, 'Great job cleaning your room but...I wish you would do that all the time,' the initial praise loses effectiveness and turns a positive into a negative. Don't put conditions on your praise." —Mayra Mendez, PhD, LMFT, licensed psychotherapist and program coordinator for mental health services at Providence Saint John's Child and Family Development Center in Santa Monica, CA



KATE-AEDON/SHUTTERSTOCK

Give hugs

"It is so important to show your child affection. This may include daily hugging, kisses, telling your child you love them, involving yourself in play with your child, listening to what your child has to say, showing interest in your child's activities by asking them to tell you about their experiences, and prompting your child to acknowledge what went well in their day." —Mayra Mendez. Hint: This is one of the 16 things parents with young children want you to know.



AFRICA-STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Talk about that time you tried drugs or drank too much

"When talking to your teens, it's important to share your own risky experiences from your teen years. Interpret them and tell them what you learned. Prepare them for both successes and failures and to face the consequences of their decisions. Because we're not the only influence on our teens, we must be the best influence." —Tim Elmore, PhD, author of more than 30 parenting books and founder of Growing Leaders, a nonprofit leadership development and training organization for teens

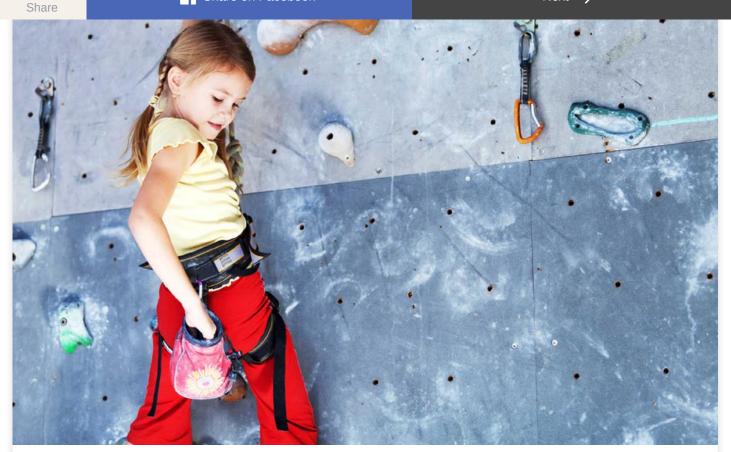


NULLPLUS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Take them canoeing on the lake

"Instead of tangible rewards, how about rewarding your child by spending some time together? Let them choose an activity to do together. Be careful you aren't teaching them that emotions can be healed by a trip to the mall." —Tim Elmore

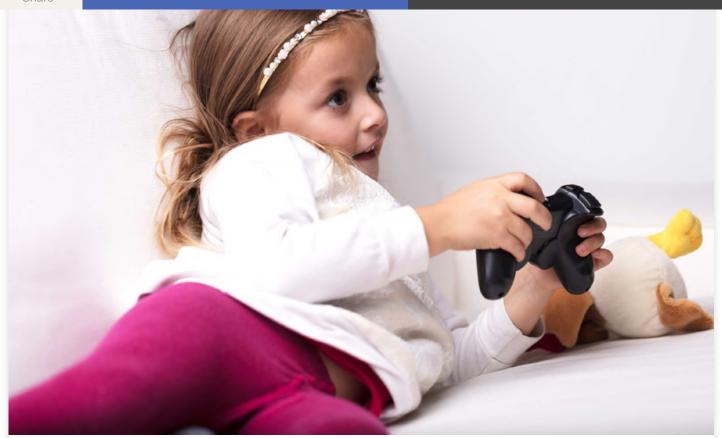




ALTANAKA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sign them up for rock climbing

"Help your child learn to take calculated risks. Talk it over with them but let them do it. Your primary job is to prepare your child for how the world really works so choose a positive risk-taking option and launch kids into it—it could be a sport, a job, or anything that feels a little scary to them. It may take a push but get them used to trying out new opportunities because it's worth it." —*Tim Elmore. These are the 10 dangerous mistakes that could put your baby's life in danger.*



GIULIO_FORNASAR/SHUTTERSTOCK

Don't buy them the newest Xbox

"Don't let your guilt get in the way of leading well. Your job is not to make yourself feel good by giving kids what makes them or you feel better when you give it. If your relationship is based on material rewards, kids will experience neither intrinsic motivation nor unconditional love." —Tim Elmore



KOSTIANTYN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Admit when you're feeling sad

"Don't hide your emotions; talk about your feelings using appropriate emotion words and they'll learn from your example. Whether they're 3, 9, or 15 years old, kids benefit having the language skills to not only describe what happened but how they're feeling about it. Understanding our own experiences also helps build empathy for others." —Sharon Soliday, MS, speech-language pathologist and CEO of The Hello Foundation. These are the 13 signs of childhood depression every parent should know.





GUNDAM_AI/SHUTTERSTOCK

Give them a daily chore

"Engage children in meaningful tasks around the home and in the family. A meaningful task simply means an assigned task that brings value to the family. It could be folding laundry, doing dishes, feeding the dog, or something similar. And, here's the key—it *isn't* going to be redone by another family after they finish. Teach them to do it properly and let them do it. These experiences build self-esteem and competence." —Sharon Soliday. Assigning chores is one of the **10 things successful parents do**.



STUDIO-ROMANTIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

Have a weekly family fun night

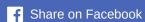
"Family rituals help children understand the world around them and create the space for authentic communication with kids. For example, having family dinner time or a scheduled family night creates the space and structure for kids to open up. Then, don't pester them with questions but take the time to listen." — Sharon Soliday. Try these **jokes for kids** for entertaining dinnertime discussions.

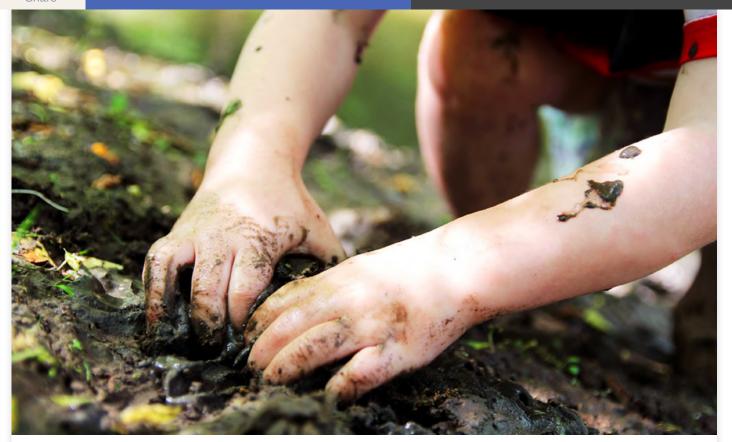


EVASTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let them know you see them

"Children need to hear daily that you see them and you love them—in seeing them, you love them. For instance, when he is having a hard morning and refuses to get out of bed, say 'I see how warm and cozy you are. I love how much you love your bed. Stay where you are and I'll come back for you in a little while.' Or when your daughter can't find anything to wear, say, 'I see how beautiful you are and understand that today nothing works. Let's look for something that you can put on together.' In his book, *Playing and Reality*, D.W. Winnicott suggests that it is through this holding and mirroring that your presence ensures the fertile ground necessary for healthy developmental growth. You don't have to be perfect. Just make sure that every day your children hear 'I see you.' And 'I love you.'" — *Timothy P. Dukes, PhD*, author of The Present Parent Handbook





CHRISTIN-LOLA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Make mud pies together

"Help them explore their environment by using their senses. Ask your kids what they see, what sounds they hear, what they feel, what it smells like, and so on. This way they feel aware and supported in any environment. Kids are curious, they have intentions, and they are always wanting to find connections. And get in there with them! When their parent is joining them they safer to explore and feel more satisfied mind, body and spirit." Lori Baudino, PhD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist and Board Certified Dance/Movement Therapist. Playing in the dirt is just as good for grown-ups and is one of the 50 things to do before you turn 50.



SAWAT-BANYENNGAM/SHUTTERSTOCK

Switch off the TV well before bed

"Intense blue light, the type produced by television, tablet, laptop, and phone screens, can be very harmful to children. It has been linked with diseases like macular degeneration as well as problems like disrupted sleep and emotional disturbances. The World Health Organization recently published an extensive **article** on what digital devices are doing to us and children in particular. Limit screen time, especially in the evening hours. It's also important to counteract screen time by getting your kids outdoors. This may reduce the risk of developing myopia from a lack of exercising long distance vision." — Carol Miller of Play2Health



LUCKY-BUSINESS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Stop saying 'good job!'

"Notice how often you say 'good job!' to your child? Parents mistakenly believe that this 'positive reinforcement' will encourage children and help them gain a sense of self-efficacy. What it does is set up a dynamic so that the child will do things to get this much-desired reward of parental approval, rather than act out of any innate sense of curiosity and desire to explore the world, as explained by the **research** of Alfie Kohn, a prominent writer on parenting and education. Don't withdraw your approval but instead make it specific and only use it in cases where it is warranted." —Louise Godbold, Executive Director of **Echo Parenting** & Education. Check out these **11 other signs you** might unknowingly be a toxic parent.



YUGANOV-KONSTANTIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Say "I love you" loudly and often

"There is no greater way to build resilience than to make a child feel unconditionally loved. Once a child feels securely attached, they have a safe base from which to explore the world. In addition, if the parent can help the child work through big, scary feelings that threaten to overwhelm, such as anger and sadness, the child then develops the skills to self soothe and won't be knocked sideways when having to deal with difficult situations later in life, as shown by research done by psychologist John Bowlby, PhD, and his student Mary Ainsworth." —Louise Godbold





YUGANOV-KONSTANTIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let them fail a test

"Your child has a big test they didn't study for? Don't call the teacher or excuse them as sick. Allow your children to make mistakes without fixing it for them, as this empowers them and teaches problem-solving skills and resiliency. Help them find the things necessary to fix it (like talking to the teacher themselves about a makeup test) and sit back and allow them to do it." —Michele Hart, licensed social worker of school based mental health and co-author of **Mental Health Emergencies**. Need more help? Try these 12 smart homework hacks.

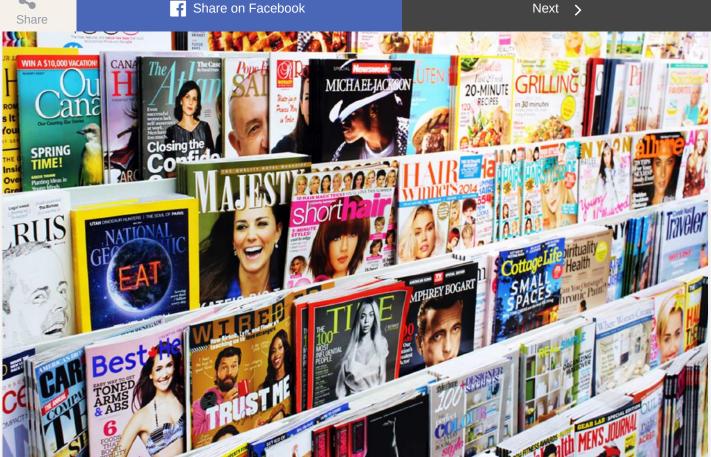


BESTPHOTOSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Teach them to meditate

"A key part of teaching children to build resilience is teaching them how to manage their anxiety and fears. Tell them it's normal to be anxious and for anxiety to temporarily rise as they take risks in decision-making and moving forward. Help them see if there is a legitimate reason for their worry and take steps to fix it. Then help them create an inner dialogue or mantra to calm and settle themselves." —Fran Walfish, PhD, Beverly Hills family and relationship psychotherapist, author of The Self-Aware Parent, and co-star on Sex Box, WE tv





NILOO/SHUTTERSTOCK

4

Talk about Photoshop in media images

"Some of the messages in our society and current culture can sabotage a child's budding selfesteem. For instance, print magazines and the media portray beauty as being only one type of woman. A child may beat herself up for not physically matching society's image of attractive. Society places too much emphasis on external beauty and not enough focus on internal beauty including character, values, morals, and the way we treat each other. Talk to your children about these influences and help them recognize the negative impacts they have." —Fran Walfish. Start with these steps to develop a positive attitude.



TATYANA-VYC/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let them walk home from school alone

"A prerequisite for building a solid foundation of self-esteem is for children to establish their own autonomy and independence from their parents. Only after healthy separation is established—within reason for your child's age and stage of life—can they truly begin to feel good about ourselves. Giving them independence will help them in how they treat other people, establish their own careers, and have warm, healthy relationships." —Fran Walfish

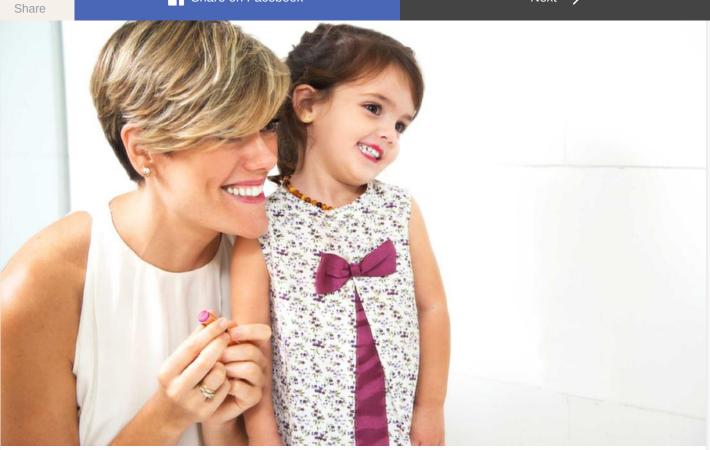


IVOLODINA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Listen for any signs of bullying

"I treat many patients who were mistreated badly by their peers in school. They were excluded, teased, and bullied. These experiences negatively affect a child's self-esteem. Everyone wants to belong to a group. When kids are rejected by their peers these feelings of undesirability are internalized. Talk often with your children about bullying and listen when they talk about their concerns." —*Fran Walfish.* Look for these **10 red flags your child is being bullied**.





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MANGOSTAR/SHUTTERSTOCK

Stop calling yourself fat

"You are the model your child will base themselves on, so provide a good example of healthy self-esteem. Ditch your harsh inner critic. Each time you notice yourself being hard or self-critical you need to gently shrug your shoulders and think, 'Oops, there I go again.' Then exchange criticism with gentle acceptance. Accepting yourself flaws and all will give your children permission to do the same." —Fran Walfish



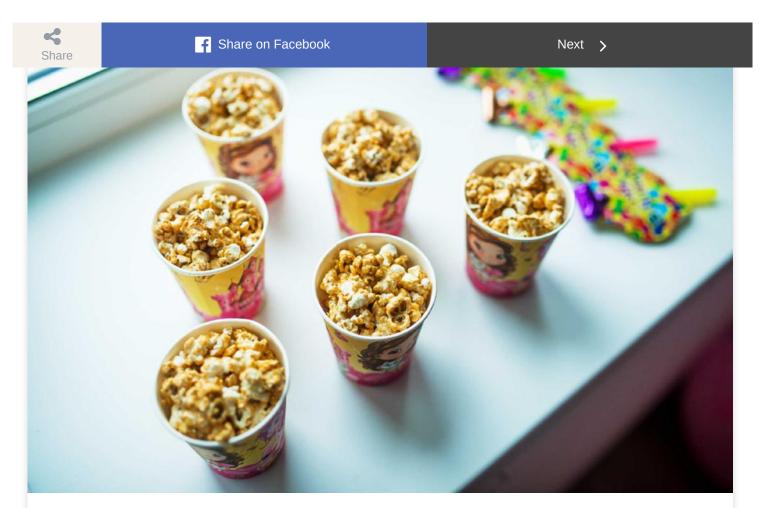


ZB89V/SHUTTERSTOCK

Take her to volunteer at the school supply drive

"When we are kind, generous, fair, and empathetic to others, this is the foundation of our self-esteem. Building self-esteem is a process, not an overnight sensation, so give your kids opportunities to serve others around them. Help them make a lifelong commitment to be compassionate and kind to others."

—Fran Walfish. Need ideas? Try one of these creative ways to volunteer and make a difference.



ELENA-APANASENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Invent a holiday together

"Kids love any reason to have a party. Ask them, 'What can we celebrate today?' Even if it's not a real holiday, they can think of something to celebrate. This will help them look for the positive things and begins to point them in a curious, creative and positive direction setting them up for more inner strength and resilience." —Maureen Healy, author of <u>Growing Happy Kids</u>, Psychology Today and PBS contributor





WAVEBREAKMEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Read a book together

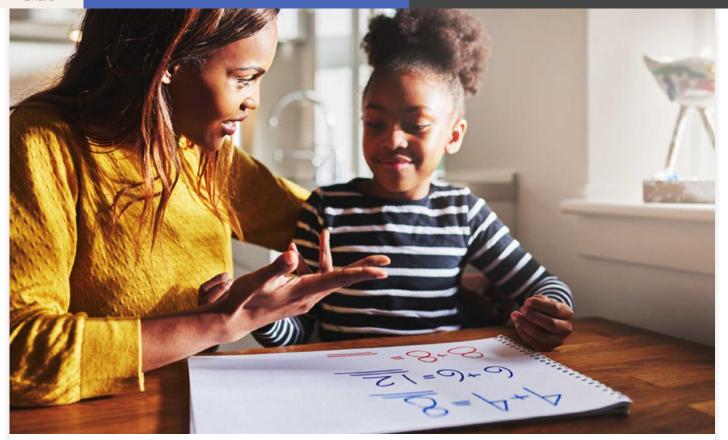
"One of the best things you can do to help your child become resilient and confident and selfsufficient is to help them to develop or improve on a new skill every day. Read a book, learn a word from the dictionary, teach them to sew on a button, or whatever. This works because it gives the child something new to be proud of about themselves each day and the expectation that they will continue have more." —Carole Lieberman, MD, author of Lions and Tigers and Terrorists, Oh My! How to Protect Your Child in a Time of Terror. Afterward, you can read these **27 hilarious parenting tweets**.



BOHBEH/SHUTTERSTOCK

Talk about terrorism

"Children hear more than we think they do and terrorism is in the news a lot lately. Yet they don't have the ability to process it yet so are confused by what they see in the media or hear from their friends. Don't ignore scary news but use it as an opportunity to talk to your child about it in a way that doesn't scare the pants off of them,but helps them to understand their world. This will help them reduce fear and build resilience." —Carole Lieberman



UBER-IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

Point out their talent for math

"A parent can help inspire confidence in a child by identifying and providing them recognition for their strengths. Over time, one can leverage this and use those strengths to bridge to new skills or increase their self-efficacy as it relates to areas of difficulty. This works because it boosts confidence in areas where they are already thriving, and the carryover effect helps them learn they can master new skills. This has been demonstrated consistently in research, although one of my favorite authors on the subject is C.J. Mruk and his book **Self-Esteem Research**, **Theory**, **and Practice**: Toward a positive psychology of self-esteem." —Richard Shuster, PhD, clinical psychologist and host of The Daily Helping





TAVEESUK/SHUTTERSTOCK

Put your phone away when they talk

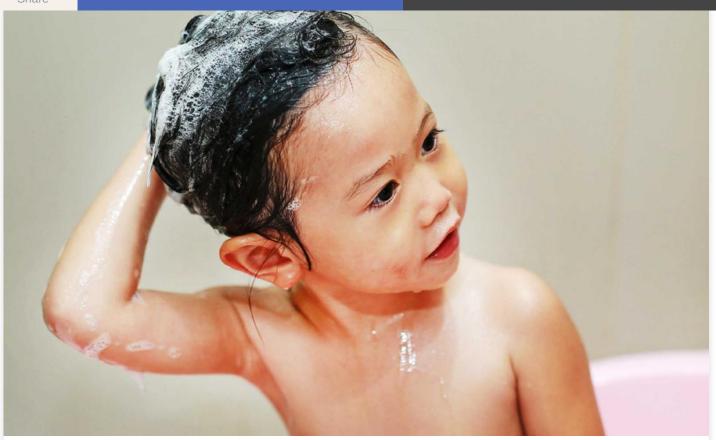
"Spend dedicated, predictably scheduled time with your child. This should be time where your phone is away, you don't have anything else scheduled, where you can just be together and you can enter into their world. Even 10 or 15 minutes each day makes a tremendous difference, especially when it's predictably scheduled. You're telling your child 'I want to know what's going on with you, and I'm going to be here with undivided attention'." — Shanna Donhauser, early childhood developmental specialist and therapist in Seattle.



ROMRODPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Tell them to climb a tree

"Children need to spend time outside every day. Research shows that 20 minutes of play outside can enhance attention in typically developing children and even increases attention in children with ADHD. A separate study shows the importance of outdoor play in overall development and in the relationship between parent and child. " — Shanna Donhauser



GOLFX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Teach them to wash their own hair

"Involve your children in everyday care activities that concern them, like diapering, feeding, bathing, and dressing. This helps children become active participants instead of passive recipients. It also helps build autonomy, self-confidence, and confidence, as shown in research done by RIE (Resources for Infant Educators).—Shanna Donhauser



GRALETTA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Put them in charge of their own lunch

"It is hard for a parent to see your child struggle or make a decision that you know may not be in their best interest, but we need to let our children fail in safe environments, according to recent **research**. If your child forgets their lunch at home on a regular school day, then don't swoop in and take it to school. Use the opportunity for your child to learn to be responsible for himself instead of relying on parents to save the day." — Jann Fujimoto, MS, speech-language pathologist in Oconomowoc, WI. Make it easier on everyone with these 47 easy school lunches nutritionists love.





B-A-N-K-E-R-D/SHUTTERSTOCK

Set them up for homework success

"Academic activities can be a tough sell, but a child is more likely to be on board with homework and studying if certain conditions are met. To meet the need for autonomy, you can let a child make decisions about how to approach schoolwork, which can increase a child's buy-in. To satisfy the need for competence, it's important to give children a chance to succeed. If they have too much work or if it's too demanding, let them work for shorter periods so that they regularly experience rewarding consequences, such as increased knowledge, completing a section of an assignment, or a snack break, even after a little bit of work. Finally, to help children meet the need for relatedness, offer to spend time with them while they work, either to provide assistance or just for an occasional break to socialize." —Joel Minden, PhD, clinical psychologist at **Chico Center** for Cognitive Behavior Therapy



IAKOV-FILIMONOV/SHUTTERSTOCK

Give them specific directions

"Parents need to be clear and specific with directions. For example, telling a child to 'be good' doesn't tell them what it is they need to do. When you give clear, specific instructions, it lowers anxiety and promotes positive actions." —Ancy Lewis, clinical social worker specializing in children with behavioral issues. Here's how to spot 11 signs that your child could be gifted.

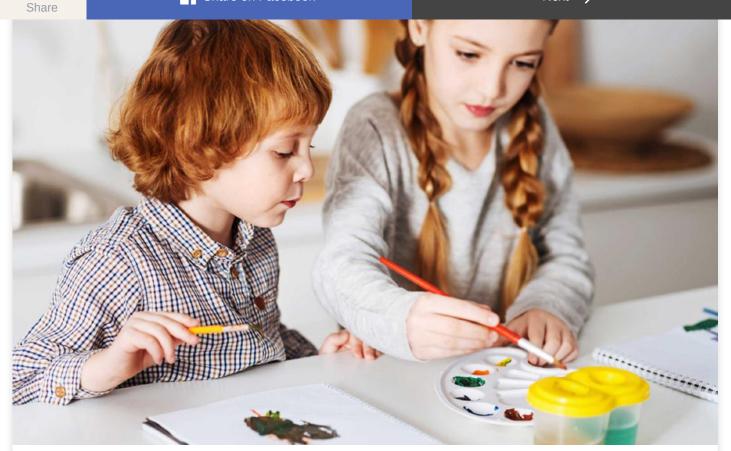


SERGEY-NOVIKOV/SHUTTERSTOCK

Let them explore

"Parents often want to protect their children by keeping them close but it's important to let them explore their surroundings, within reason. And this should be free exploration, not a scheduled activity or planned play. Let them look at what they want, even if it's just an ant on the sidewalk. This builds their brains and self-confidence." —Becky Blake, PhDc, psychoneurologist and neurodevelopmental expert, founder of Creating Superkids.





DMYTRO-ZINKEVYCH/SHUTTERSTOCK

Make them finish that 8-week art class

"You need to teach kids that once they have committed to a decision, they need stick to it. Do not give into the temptation let them quit or waffle. Doing this shows them that success usually comes in small increments, after a lot of work. They won't be good at everything the first time they try it, that's just how it goes." —*Fran Walfish*. Learn these other **17 secrets of happy families**.

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for 15 years. She's the author of two books, co-host of the Self Help Obsession podcast, and also does freelance editing and ghostwriting. She has appeared in television news segments for CBS, FOX, and NBC.

