

Using Values to Guide Good Decisions

Morals describe how to be a good person.

Values guide decisions about what is right and what is wrong.

Ethics are rules about what is right or wrong.



Children learn to tie their shoes, read and write, solve math problems, and remember science facts and events in history. Children can also learn to be good people. You can help children learn to be honest, to care about others, and to make good choices by talking about morals, values, and ethics together.

What we know:

- Values, morals, and ethics guide decisions—now and in the future.
- Openly talking about family values can help children feel secure (especially if adults are willing to listen when children have different values).

Try this:

When you see your child doing something that you value, notice it and tell your child what you saw that was good. Be specific. Here are some examples:

- "I noticed how kind you were to Ben when you tried to cheer him up." (Value: caring)
- "I really appreciated that you were honest with me about what happened at school." (Value: honesty)
- "How generous of you to give one of your stuffed animals to Carmen!" (Value: kind)
- "You figured out all by yourself how to get the homework assignment you missed. That's what I call resourceful!" (Value: resourceful)

Positive values you might notice include:

- Hard-working
- Dependable
- Loyal
- Honest
- Creative
- Caring
- Motivated
- Respectful
- Brave
- Kind
- Helpful

For fun:

Talk about your family values. Start with the short list above. Then create a digital "family values" photo book with your child. For example, the next time your child *works hard* on an project for school, take a picture of her holding it and add the photo to your "family values" photo book. Add a label or hashtag to the photo and tell how the value of *hard work* played a role in finishing the project.

Talking about values helps children learn to feel, think, and act with respect for themselves and for other people