Raising Children with Good Morals

How do our children learn right from wrong? How do we teach them to be the kind of people who enhance rather than diminish the quality of life in our society? How do we pass on to them a sense of morality, values and social responsibility?

Raising children with good values and morals is one of the most important aspects in parenting. We want our children to be artistic, do well in school and look good, but nothing is more important as their moral behavior. If our children are not good, honest, self-disciplined, kind, hard-working people, then their humanity is diminished, says Joyce Fittro a Family and Consumer Science educator from Ohio.

The following characteristics help promote moral development:

Honest and trustworthy * Faithful and loyal * Hard-working, responsible and self-disciplined * Kind, with concern for their fellow human beings * Independent, able to resist the pressure of the crowd * Generous, giving and selfless * Loving, empathetic, sensitive and tolerant * Friendly, helpful, cheerful and gentle * Concerned for justice, and respectful of legitimate authority, rules and laws * Respectful of themselves and the rights of others * Respectful of live, property, nature, elders and parents * Courteous, polite, having good manners * Fair in work and play * Merciful and forgiving, understanding the futility of holding a grudge * Service-oriented, willing to contribute to family, friends, community, country, religious, organizations and school * Courageous * Peaceful, calm and serene.

We can help children develop these characteristics by:

• Parents need to respect children and require respect in return. Discipline must be respectful and model the restrain, gentleness and fairness we expect of our children.
• Respect children and require respect in return. Being fair with them related to their level of learning and making allowances for immaturity of their development stages.
• Teach by example is one of the best ways to teach moral behaviors. This goes beyond how we treat our kids, but how they see how we treat others.
• Teach by telling. Children are surrounded by bad examples everywhere. They need our words as well as our actions. They also need to know why we do it, the values and beliefs that lie behind it. Read books, watch movies, attend church, practice your faith and your family’s values.
• Help children learn to think for themselves. Allow them to take time to think about what they did, and to put themselves in the other person’s shoes. These don’t come naturally to children, but as they grow give them encouragement to stop and think.
• Help children take on real responsibilities. Doing chores, taking care of younger siblings, doing service projects and volunteering are good examples. Balance independence and control.
• Love children and help them develop a positive self-concept. Parents who spend quality time with children as well as love them unconditionally have children who have higher levels of moral development.
A close family gives children people to identify with, examples to learn from across several generations. When children feel connected to the family they got another tool that helps hold them to a course of responsible conduct.

Source: Ohio State University Extension – Human Development and Family Life.