

Robert Brooks, Ph.D.

Resilience, Self-Esteem, Motivation, & Family Relationships

12 Quick Tips for Raising a Self-Disciplined Child

Bestselling authors and child psychologists, Dr. Robert Brooks and Dr. Sam Goldstein, have set-out to change the way we raise children in their newest book, **Raising a Self-Disciplined Child** (McGraw-Hill).

In *Raising a Self-Disciplined Child*, Drs. Brooks and Goldstein outline parenting techniques for instilling self-discipline - and thereby a large degree of happiness and self-worth - in children. They've distilled some of the vital information contained in their new book into these quick tips:

1. One of our most important roles as parents is to be a disciplinarian, but we must keep in mind that discipline stems from the word disciple and is best understood as a teaching process.
2. When interacting with your children practice empathy. Attempt to see the world through their eyes. This will help you to have an understanding of their feelings and behaviors and the most effective ways of communicating with them so that they listen to you rather than tune you out.
3. Discipline should be used to promote self-discipline, respect, responsibility and resilience rather than anger and resentment in children.
4. Show your children unconditional love. Remember that discipline is most effective in the context of a loving relationship.

5. Catch your children when they are displaying good behavior. Too often we forget to reinforce positive behavior.

6. Remember that discipline is not synonymous with punishment. Punishment is often the least effective form of discipline because it teaches kids what not to do rather than what to do.

7. Engage in problem solving with your children. Even young children can be asked to reflect upon behaviors that are causing them difficulty and consider alternative ways of handling different feelings and situations. When ideas come from them, it is more likely that they will experience a sense of ownership for their own behavior.

8. Spanking (corporal punishment) is not an effective disciplinary technique, and can often increase a child's anger and inappropriate behavior.

9. Focus on prevention of problems. If your children have difficulty handling certain situations, it may be that they are not ready cognitively or emotionally to engage in these situations or that they need more preparation. Don't punish children for events that are beyond their ability.

10. As a form of prevention as well as a way of teaching kids responsibility and caring, from an early age provide them with opportunities to help others. Don't hesitate to say, "I need your help." Children naturally want to help and the more they are involved in prosocial behaviors, the less time they have for negative behaviors.

11. Help your children understand that mistakes they make are opportunities for learning. Do not condemn or criticize their mistakes since this may prompt anger or withdrawal. Instead, teach them new skills.

12. Remember that you should discontinue using disciplinary techniques that are not working. Consider what you can do differently. Your children will not change their behavior unless you first change yours.

About the Authors

Robert Brooks, Ph.D. (Needham, MA) is an award-winning speaker, author, and educator who serves on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. He is one of today's leading speakers on the themes of resilience, self-esteem, motivation, and family relationships. During the past 25 years, Dr. Brooks has presented nationally and internationally to thousands of parents, educators, and mental health professionals and has regularly appeared on national television, radio, and in print.

Sam Goldstein, Ph.D. (Salt Lake City, UT) is an award-winning filmmaker, speaker, and author who is a faculty member at the University of Utah and on staff at the Primary Children's Medical Center.

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