

10 Principles of Dr. Glenn Latham's Positive Parenting

As an overview of "The Power of Positive Parenting" by Dr. Glenn Latham, here are 10 basic principles that we as mothers can practice.

1. *Seize opportunities to have frequent positive interactions with your children.* Aim for 8 positive interactions for every 1 negative. Tough, but necessary, to have the good outweigh the bad, and for kids to know they are loved!
2. *Clearly establish and communicate expectations.* It is too much to ask for children to know in advance what is expected of them if we never TELL THEM! Have the child show his understanding of the expectations by repeating them back to you.
3. *Clearly establish and dispense consequences.* Know in advance what the consequences will be, and dish them out at the right time. Another way to say this is to use a "poker face." Don't let emotion rule the moment, stay calm and let consequences do the teaching.
4. *Ignore behaviors which do not threaten the basic quality of life, limb, and property.* This includes most age-typical behaviors, such as tantrums from toddlers, or eye-rolling from teens. Or whining from a child of any age!
5. *Attend to inappropriate behavior unemotionally, precisely, directly, and instructionally.* Again, the poker face. Don't get over-emotional. Be direct and firm, but loving.
6. *Do not question a non-compliant child about his or her behavior, or ask them to explain their behavior.* As in, "Why on earth did you do that?" (Is there really any answer good enough?) At this point, it is just the parent blowing off steam, questions aren't really productive. Just move straight into principle #5.
7. *Use the inappropriate behavior of one child as a cue to attend to the appropriate behavior of other children.* Praise whomever is behaving. Misbehavers will often shape right up so they can have some praise too!
8. *Smile and laugh, talk and touch—a lot!* These can be some of the 8 positive interactions we are always trying to have. A pat on the back, or a ruffling of the hair.... actions like these have the ability to quickly and simply communicate your love and acceptance of the child.
9. *Assess behavior analytically and treat it clinically.* As opposed to reacting in the heat of the moment, step back and assess the situation. You may be surprised at what you see. A good question to ask yourself is, "What has the child not been taught that he needs to know?"
10. *Keep your marriage strong and happy—it is the foundation for the success of the whole family.* (Dr. Latham had only 9 points, so I added this one myself to round it up to 10.) You can't go wrong in keeping the marriage strong—it will always benefit the entire household! Regular date nights, good communication, letting go of resentments, little acts of kindness for each other... you get the idea.

I have this list hanging on my bathroom mirror where I can be reminded daily of the principles I need to keep fore-front in my mind as I mother my children! Choose just one principle to focus on at a time, and add in others as you feel ready. I know that these are true principles and when followed, will bring a measure of joy and peace to your mothering and your entire family!

--Ingrid Sorensen
Utah Young Mother 2008