

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY VALUES

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When you hear the term 'family values', what does that mean to you? Values are principles, ideals, standards or a code of ethics upon which we base our choices in life. Our values affect our health, our security, our sense of belonging, our decisions, and the way we manage our family in this ever-changing society.

One of the early-recorded sources of values is The Ten Commandments. They describe the requirement we have to be loyal, honest, respectful, to show integrity, to be trustworthy and the responsibility we have to care for ourselves and for others. The American Constitution is another rich source that protects our rights and our freedom to live peacefully.

We learn values primarily from our parents and most children quickly learn the consequences of not conforming to expectations such as stealing, cheating, lying and being disobedient. However, in our post-modern society, it seems that many values that used to be 'set in stone', are now open to interpretation. 'Right and wrong' have become open to interpretation to suit particular circumstances. This subjectivity creates confusion for children who need clear and consistent principles to enable them to make wise choices.

What can we do to establish clear values for our families? The process is simple. Decide on a list of values for your family and create a list. Under each heading, write down how a particular value will be demonstrated in your family. Take respect for example. Respect in our family means 'speaking kindly at all times, being punctual, not interrupting when others are speaking, obeying authority without question, taking good care of borrowed stuff and returning it promptly, being gentle with animals and protective of plants and trees.'

When you have created your list and described how each value should be demonstrated, decide on recognition and rewards for compliance as well as consequences for non-compliance. It is imperative that all family members agree to live within the expectations. If parents do not model the expected behaviors, then the system falls over immediately.

Bring up one value at a time so that the family can change behaviors without overwhelming them with too much processing. The training needs to be positive. Explain what needs to happen then train them. Reward success but allow for errors. Once the value is being adhered to, give related responsibility where possible.

As part of endorsing your family values it is a great idea to create a family shield to keep your family values visible. Write all your values and draw some

symbols to illustrate what your family stands for. Get your children to help you. Put a 2-3 word motto at the top. For example: 'Together and Forward', 'Courage and Honor', 'Faithful and True', 'Joy and Inspiration', 'We Make a Difference'. When the shield is finished place it where it can be seen every day.

We owe it to ourselves, and our children to adopt unwavering family values. By doing so, we create stability and security within our families and society.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.