

TEACHING YOUR KIDS SELF-CONTROL

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Self-control means to be controlled from within, to exercise constraint or hold back. When advertisements are enticing us to spend more money and get more stuff because 'it is good for us,' or, 'we deserve it,' we don't want to feel constrained. We want that stuff! Self-control is, however, a very valuable attribute to have and one we need to teach our kids. This is why.

Self-control keeps us from spending more than we have, eating more than we need and in facing health issues. It prevents us getting involved with activities that might harm us or get us in trouble. It stops us watching the kind of stuff we can't eradicate from our minds later.

Learning to be self-controlled starts at home. We need to set the boundaries and expectations for our children. In other words, we shape their lives until they learn to effectively control their own. They learn from what they see us do and what we train them to do. When we say one thing and do another, kids learn that there are two rules – one for parents and one for kids. Kids also learn that if we believed strongly enough in what we are telling them to do, **we** wouldn't be doing it. For example, if we don't want our kids to smoke, then we need to quit.

We need to train our kids to be self-controlled when it comes to eating because there are so many health issues that overeating and eating junk food produce. We need to eat moderately, healthily and not waste food. Many times we have watched in astonishment as parents pile their plates absolutely full of food at the buffet. Their children follow behind, unsupervised, doing the same thing.

We need to show our kids how to spend moderately by being moderate spenders ourselves. We ought to teach them the difference between wants and needs. If we give kids pocket money, we should train them how to use it wisely so that when we are not there to help them, they will have developed enough wisdom not to get into unnecessary debt.

We train our kids to stay out of trouble by being trouble free ourselves, by leading productive lives and by spending quality time with our kids. When kids have responsibilities and are kept busy, their time is taken up and they tend not to get into trouble. Achievers tend to have so many projects or prospects to conquer that they set goals to achieve them. To succeed they have to be self-controlled.

One of the hardest areas to control is what we do in our 'down' time. Most of us crash in front of the TV and turn to whatever is entertaining. Parents need to set the example as to what healthy viewing is. Then we need to monitor what our children watch. Many times we get caught letting the TV run from one

program to another without realizing the content. One night I forgot to turn off the TV before our church home group started in our home. One of the mothers asked me graciously if I would turn it off because she didn't want her son to watch CSI Miami. I was very impressed, not offended.

We do not always realize how kids' minds process and store information. Adults can apply reason, knowledge and experience to media input. Young children don't have those resources. What they see is the reality of the moment. Those images are imbedded in their brains and they may be adversely affected. When they understand why they need to control their lives in the area of spending, eating, viewing, acting, and eating, kids will be more inclined to take responsibility and control these areas for themselves.

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.