

TRAINING YOUR KIDS TO BE PUNCTUAL

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Currently I am writing a book on family values. Punctuality is an important value because it reflects on a person's integrity. The word 'punctuality' simply means to be on time, or to act as requested by a certain time.

Many, many people have a problem with punctuality. They say they can't wake up on time, that they can never get their act together to meet deadlines, the car broke down, a pink elephant escaped from the zoo and was blocking traffic etc. They think any excuse will satisfy the person who has been inconvenienced by having to wait for them. In fact, when someone is habitually late, what the person waiting *might well* be thinking is, "John doesn't respect me enough to be here on time." "John doesn't think my meeting is worth getting here on time for." "John is selfish." "John is really frustrating me because he is wasting my time." "John is not a person of his word." "I will not include John in my plans again because I can't rely on him." "I will warn others about John's tardiness."

Compliant and respectful people don't find being punctual a problem. The struggle is with those who do not like being told what to do. Their decision relates to how they feel about the other person/organization and whether there is a consequence for non-compliance. A habitually tardy person would always be on time for a job interview because they need the job, and they want to create a good initial impression.

The reason for being late to class may be because the person doesn't care about the subject or the teacher, or they think they can copy from somebody else's notes. Either way, it is all about them.

How can we train our kids to be punctual? As parents we need to ensure that we put a personal value on time. We also need to be punctual ourselves. We need to explain to our kids what punctuality means and the reasons why we need to be punctual all the time. They need to understand how others feel when we are not on time. Punctuality should be a family rule or seen as a core value.

The rule might say:

'Being punctual in this family means that we arrive on or before time for appointments or arranged meetings. It means that we hand in paperwork, pay bills and get jobs or chores done when requested; that we give ourselves plenty of time to reach deadlines or make appointments; that we take responsibility for our lateness by apologizing and not making lame excuses; that we accept consequences graciously if we were not on time; that if we were going to be late we would call and let the person waiting know our new time of arrival; and finally, that we would remember to

cancel and re-schedule appointments when we know we won't be able to make it at all'.

Non-compliance should incur consequences, but punctuality should be reinforced by praise and reward so that it becomes a natural occurrence.

It is always a pleasure to work with people who are always on time. Whether formal or casual, being on time endorses value in a friendship, a team, or in a work situation. Our kids need to see this quality in us and learn to be the same way. We all experience much more out of life when we don't waste it by being tardy.

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.