

10 Ways to Make Good Kids Great

A Play of the Day subscriber wrote the following:

“I went to parent/teacher conferences and I was told what a nice, pleasant girl my daughter was. Once I got up to go, I was feeling pretty good, but by the time I got to the door, I had a new set of questions, so I turned back and sat back down.

“Lots of tension suddenly ... but I asked my questions: ‘How do you challenge a pleasant kid? When your child is the likable, helpful, compliant person, are they being noticed?’ My daughter told me that I wasn’t allowed to go to any more conferences after that because all of her teachers suddenly were paying attention to her, giving her extra work, and making her work harder. Never felt bad about that.”

If you have a “good” kid, that’s wonderful. But there is always room for improvement. Nudge them from good to great. Here are 10 ways to make good kids better:

1. Understand the difference between criticism and challenge.

A challenge builds on confidence; criticism typically erodes confidence. Simply put, we want our children to move forward from a position of strength.

2. Keep the conversation open. When kids are familiar with an ongoing dialogue that is both encouraging and motivational, “upping the ante” or special challenges come with the territory.

3. Develop a family ethos that values challenge and change.

“Good to Great” will fail royally if it’s a kids-only initiative. Make sure excellence defines your family like a strand of DNA.

4. Write a weekly family game plan. This might be a good time to initiate a weekly family meeting. Develop specific family goals and encourage mutual accountability. This could cover everything from cleaner rooms to planning the family vacation to a neighborhood food drive.

5. Require an individual game plan (read: goals). This builds on No. 4. It could look like, "I'm challenging myself to finish the garage. Mom has a project for her class. What's your plan for the week, Chris?"

6. Introduce justice into the family conversation. Fact: Children who develop a social conscience also achieve more personally. This is one reason college applications now look at volunteer work. Take this a step further and encourage your kids to develop their own ideas and interventions.

7. Model self-evaluation and self-improvement. We've said this before, Dad, and the principle remains ever true: You are your kids' role model and hero. They watch everything you do. Remember what your high school English teacher said about that story you wrote? "Don't tell me, *show me.*" Hey, it's a great word for dads too.

8. Volunteer. We've already mentioned the power of social action to motivate. Well, incorporate the principle into the family plan. This isn't just about individual volunteering—we're talking about the whole family caring out loud, nudging one another from good to great.

9. Avoid using tangible rewards for achievement. But doesn't this sound counter-intuitive? Not at all. Our end game must be, "Excellence is its own reward." Paying for grades can cheapen achievement. Celebration is a different matter, but keep it within reason. We were created to live at capacity. When the kids get that, the idea becomes self-sustaining.

10. Use encouragement rather than guilt. This hearkens back to the difference between criticism and challenge. Guilt builds

resentment and sows negativity where we should be planting positive motivation. The child pushed into achievement by guilt will never own the joy of achievement and never do his or her best.

All Pro Dad is Family First's innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a by-product, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include: daily emails, blogs, Top 10 Lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube** and **Instagram**.