

10 Ways to Teach Your Children Humility

Humility, dictionary definitions say, is marked by modesty, meekness, diffidence and an unassuming attitude. Dictionaries also contrast humility with arrogance and pride.

Yet we live in a culture where pride is celebrated and arrogance is almost a prerequisite to be taken seriously in business, politics and sports. Ideas such as “Nice guys finish last” are touted as “No duh!” truth.

Well, listen up! If we think humility is only for wimps and losers, then we really don’t know what the word means. Humility can only come from those who actually have something about which to be humble. The humble are those who *could* crow but choose to keep their beaks shut.

Humility is also a close associate of gratitude, and it’s an attribute that simply oozes class. Here are 10 ways to teach humility to your kids and (maybe) ramp it up a bit in your own life:

1. Modeling. Never underestimate the power of teaching through example. Humility must be consistently modeled as a lifestyle, not an on-again, off-again example.

2. Build them up. This may sound counterintuitive, but it’s important to understand that humility always comes from a position of belief, strength and self-assurance.

3. Encourage and help them to be the very best they can be—no matter what they do. Humility works best when your child has actually achieved something. Help your child achieve with confidence.

4. Make sure they understand where their real value comes

from. It's easier to sidestep pride or arrogance when children understand they are valued simply because they are your child, not because they win the race, have a prettier mom (and a smarter dad!), earn a higher income or score the most points.

5. Never humiliate your kids. Humility cannot be imposed. It's important not to confuse humiliation, bullying and beating down with an education in humility.

6. Expose your child to the great teachers and their stories. Jesus, Mother Teresa and Eric Liddell are all wonderful role models. or Jesus, there are lots of great children's books about Him, as well as about Mother Teresa. Eric Liddell is the man who inspired the movie *Chariots of Fire*, a great film for your whole family.

7. Teach them to serve.

- Serve the homeless.
- Serve the poor.
- Serve their family.
- Serve one another.

8. Coach them on how to respond. Kids need to be taught to say "Please" and "Thank you" as much as they need to be taught to brush their teeth and to stay out of the street. So why expect them to know humility without guidance? Here's an example: "Look, Jr., that's a great job you did on your science fair project. You deserved to win the prize. Now, this is how you handle it in class tomorrow ... let's practice saying:

- 'Thanks!'
- 'I like the way my friend, Matt, did his project, too.'
- 'I don't think I could have won without the help of my teacher.'"

You get the idea.

9. Teach them how to apologize. The well-timed and sincere

apology is a key component of humility. Sometimes they're wrong; they need to acknowledge that. Sometimes they over-reach and it's time to back up. Sometimes they receive unintentional consequences they need to smooth over.

10. Teach them to give thanks. A genuinely grateful heart is a key building block for humility. Gratitude, practiced and eventually owned, enhances humility at every turn. The person saying "Thank you" affects a posture that is unassuming and modest. Try this: Every time someone offers a compliment, simply say, "Thank you." It's the kind of response that eventually soaks in, grows roots and blooms humility.

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