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Our ambitious dream at The Parenting Place is for Aotearoa New Zealand to be a place where every family flourishes and every child feels deeply loved. For over 20 years, we have been inspiring and equipping whānau to thrive through a range of nationwide programmes, resources and events. We also connect with a quarter of a million young people each year, encouraging them to lead resilient, connected lives through our Attitude programme in schools.



Toolbox courses inspire and equip families. They are bursting with great advice, humour and encouragement, offering practical strategies and insights into developmental stages. The courses are run over six weeks in a relaxed and conversational small group setting with a trained facilitator. The four courses – Building Awesome Whānau, Early Years, Middle Years, and Tweens and Teens run nationwide throughout the year.



Sometimes family life is way more challenging than we ever imagined. Family Coaching is designed to meet you wherever you are on your parenting or relationship journey. We want to be on the journey with you. Our coaches will listen to you and bring their extensive training and experience to help bring new insights, ideas and practical solutions.

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# TEACHING SELF-CONTROL

HOT  
TIPS

*Middle years*



## TEACHING THE ART OF SELF-CONTROL

Self-control is a key to getting along well with others, performing well at school and feeling secure in ourselves.

Children who do not have it will display a variety of behaviours that indicate they are not in control of their actions, impulses or feelings. The three year old who has tantrums all day long, the five year old who won't share the ball, the seven year old who pushes ahead in line, or the nine year old who tips the board game over when on a losing streak.

It's a key to getting along with others, performing well and feeling secure.

We do our children no favours when we allow them to seek to satisfy all their desires with no thought of others, or what the 'right thing' is. It leaves them feeling inadequate and unhappy at being at the mercy of their own strong feelings and impulses.

## 1. RESPONSIBILITIES

We learn to handle the big things in life by being trained in the smaller tasks. Children who are not required to help at home and be part of a team find it hard to complete more complex tasks at school, like finishing a project or even completing a puzzle or a picture.

Picking up toys, making beds, feeding pets, setting the table, carrying in the shopping, are all important in helping children learn to be a team member. It also teaches them to defer their own needs and postpone their own agenda.

## 2. EXPECT RESPECT AND POLITENESS

When a child regulates the way he or she talks to you, they take a giant step forward in being able to regulate all of their behaviour.

Controlling our feelings does not mean burying them or denying we have them. A child must learn to handle emotions and express them effectively and constructively, so that emotions do not hinder their self-expression but instead serve it.



## 3. LEARNING TO WAIT

Whether it is waiting for the biscuit you promised you would give them, or waiting to speak to you while you are talking to someone else, waiting for everyone to get to the table before eating, or waiting for their turn on the computer – waiting is a fact of life. Children who can't wait are very disadvantaged in life. They are often anxious as they have not learned that their turn will come. They may be demanding as this is the tool that has served them well in getting their needs met.

Allow space in your child's day where waiting is part of the routine. Teach them to wait until you are ready to listen before you stop your conversation

and turn to them. If you talk to your child when they interrupt, you are rewarding the interruption, thereby teaching them to behave in a way you don't want. Instead of turning the TV on so that they can get some TV right now, get them to wait until a programme starts. When you have visitors, teach your children to take the food and offer it to them before they serve themselves.

Do not be harsh with them as children can become easily discouraged. If you said that you would do something as soon as you got off the phone, do it. This breeds confidence in your word and makes children feel more secure about waiting because they know help is on its way.

We learn to handle the big things in life by being trained in the smaller tasks.

## 4. PAYING ATTENTION TO OTHERS

Children will not naturally think of others before themselves – it is a gradually learned skill. Learning to listen to others is a key to getting children to think of others. Use your meal table as a place where each child gets an opportunity to share and listen. Model good listening by asking thoughtful questions, or repeating or summarising what you've heard.

Help your children learn that their actions have an impact on others. This should be done in a caring and supportive way, not a punishing one. If your child has walked inside with mud on her shoes, let her know how you feel, using 'I statements.' 'I feel

disappointed when I see mud on our lovely carpet.' Let your child think of a solution to the problem.

If they have been unkind to one of their friends, ask them gently what it might have felt like to be the one who was not invited to join the game. This helps them develop empathy.

Manners also help children pay attention to others. If there is something they would like, help them learn there is a way of asking that is respectful and polite. It means they are stopping to think of others first.

Learning to be self-controlled is critical in becoming a mature person. Being mature leads to being masterful in life!