

GOOD IDEAS FOR PARENTS

(“T.E.A.M.”)

We all want our kids to have good values, and strong character. Nevertheless, good character doesn't just happen. It's up to each of us to lay a solid foundation for character development by teaching children right from wrong and by acting as positive role models. This is an especially difficult time to raise good children, but the task is not impossible. We hope these suggestions help.

What to Do: T.E.A.M.

TEACH:

Teach children that their character counts – that their success and happiness will depend on who they are inside, not on what they have or how they look. Tell them that people of character know the difference between right and wrong because they guide their thoughts and actions by six basic rules of living (the “Six Pillars of Character”) trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship. Explain the meaning of these words. Use examples from your own life, history, and the news.

ENCOURAGE:

Instill the “Six Pillars of Character” by rewarding good behavior. Usually, praise is enough and by discouraging all instances of bad behavior by imposing (or, in some cases, allowing others to impose) fair, consistent consequences that prove you are serious about character. Demonstrate courage and firmness of will by enforcing the core values when it is difficult or costly to do so. Character building is most effective when you regularly see and seize opportunities to: 1) strengthen awareness of moral obligations and the moral significance of choices (ethical consciousness); 2) enhance the desire to do the right thing (ethical commitment); and 3) improve the ability to foresee potential consequences, devise options, and implement principle choices (ethical competency).

ADVOCATE:

Continuously encourage children to live up to the “Six Pillars of Character” in all their thoughts and actions. Be an advocate for character. Don't be neutral about the importance of character or casual about improper conducts. Be clear and uncompromising that you want and expect your children to be trustworthy, respectful, responsible, fair, caring, and good citizens.

MODEL:

Be careful and self-conscious about setting a good example in everything you say and do. Hold yourself to the highest standards of character by honoring the “Six Pillars of Character” at all times. You may be a good model now, but remember you

don't have to be sick to get better. Everything you do, and don't do, sends a message about your values. Be sure your messages reinforce your lessons about doing the right thing even when it is hard to do so. When you slip (and most of us do) act the way you want your children to behave when they act improperly – be accountable, apologize sincerely, and work to do better.