

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Keeping the Promises We Make

WERE YOUR PARENTS GOOD AT KEEPING THEIR WORD? Could you count on the adults in your life to honor agreements? The simple act of doing what we say is an important way that we teach children to trust us and to believe that they can have faith in others. It's also the way we help them understand what it means to make commitments.

Following through on promises can be discussed as an important family value. A parent might say, "I left work early even though it was really busy because I said that we would have time to go to the park today, and it's important for me to do what I say."

Talking about our choices in terms of making good on what we say can help children to learn to think through the act of making a promise. "I don't want to tell Grandma that we will come by her house today unless I'm sure that we really do have time."

Often older children have to juggle competing commitments for playdates and parties, and urging them be careful about saying "yes" is one of the ways they learn to be considerate. "If you told Sara that you were going to her house, I think you need to honor that promise."

Of course, some of the most important promises we make in a family are to each other. Honoring the agreements we make with our children builds their abilities to be trustworthy with us.

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