

Building Leadership Skills in Children

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SHOWCASE LEADERSHIP EXAMPLES

Sometimes the greatest lessons are those that are exemplified rather than told. Children look to adults — such as parents, teachers, and family members — as role models. So it's important to be that for them. Parents can showcase leadership skills every day — and in ways that don't even intercede with their given careers. Being a leader means being brave, taking risks, trying something new and seeing something through — even when it becomes difficult.

ENCOURAGE THEM TO GET INVOLVED

Whether joining a sports team or becoming part of a church youth group, there are many activities and opportunities for children of all ages to be a part of a team — and to serve as a leader within it. The earlier students get a handle on how they can become a leader in any group, the more confidence they will build as they grow.

SUPPORT DECISION-MAKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Being a good leader often involves making tough decisions on the spot — and coming up with solutions for the benefit of the whole versus one or two. Helping to build these skills will help children become natural leaders throughout their lives. Start by giving young children options or scenarios that may be problematic — and help them make the right decision or find a solution. Eventually, they'll begin to understand how to make their right decision and come up with solutions on their own. It's important to keep in mind that there may be many "right" decisions or ways to solve the same problem. Encourage their creativity and individual thinking when making decisions and problem solving.

THINK AHEAD AND MAKE A PLAN

The "T" in this year's Apex theme — The Mighty Show — stands for "Think Ahead." The idea behind this is that leaders are more successful when they have a road map to follow. The best way to achieve our dreams and goals is to start with the end in mind. To do this, we need a plan! Time management, following sequential steps, and planning ahead are vital skills in every day life.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Leaders aren't afraid to voice their opinions and beliefs — and neither should students and children. Learning to effectively communicate can help children throughout every facet of their life as they grow and encounter all types of real-life situations. Parents can help build this skill by allowing children to freely communicate at home, and also encourage them to do small tasks such as pay the cashier at the market, order their own meal at a restaurant or ask a sales person for another size in a department store. While these may seem like small things, they are the beginnings of effective communication for little ones. As important is it for children to find their voice, they should also match this with effective eye contact.

TRANSFORMING FROM A "ME" TO "WE" MINDSET

Learning to work effectively as a team is an integral life skill, and many would argue one of the most important skill sets employers are looking for in potential candidates. Collaboration and sharing are key to teaching children how to function, work, and thrive as a group. It can be easy to integrate this mindset in children in areas beyond group projects for school — such as family meetings, planning a road trip, and group activities such as completing a puzzle or cooking together.

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