

# Parenting

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For Colorado Parents

## Family expectations: Realistic or not?

**T**o develop clear expectations, identify those that are already in place in your family. The following list may help you focus on areas that other parents have used to organize and specify their expectations.

**Social**—How to get along with others, greeting and conversation skills, how to interact with the opposite sex, offering to help others.

**Academic**—Study habits, school attendance and behavior, completing homework, respecting teachers and administrators, following school rules.

**Family chores**—Cleaning the bed-

room, helping at mealtime, volunteering, picking up after yourself, helping with outside chores, helping clean the house.

**Personal appearance and hygiene**—Regular showers or baths, clean clothes, putting away personal items, using soap and deodorant, appropriate attire, jewelry.

Let's take a look at whether your expectations are reasonable for your children. Kids develop at their own pace. How can you tell whether an expectation is reasonable or not? If you can answer "yes" to all three of the follow-

ing questions, then you probably have a reasonable expectation for your child.

1. Have you taught the skill or behavior to your child? It is unreasonable to expect something from your kids if you haven't taught it to them.

2. Can your child understand the expectation? To check, have your child describe in his or her own words what you have just said.

3. Can your child demonstrate what you expect? Ask your child to show you what you have taught. There are two important parts of clarifying expectations. (See "Expectations" on page 4)

### Serious About Drugs



**Focus on...  
Alcohol**

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that slows down bodily functions and can cause intoxication, unconsciousness or even death. Because of its widespread availability, alcohol is the most commonly abused drug in this country. Even though it is legal for persons over 21, it is just as powerful and dangerous as many prescription and illegal drugs. In fact, it is involved in almost half of all suicides, murders, and accidental deaths in the U.S. It claims more than 100,000 lives each year--25 times all illegal drugs combined. Because of differences in physiology, females can become intoxicated on half the amount of alcohol it takes a male. **When the drinker's blood alcohol level (BAL) reaches 0.05% (equivalent to a 150-lb person taking two drinks in an hour) the effects include:** diminished memory and ability to concentrate, impaired judgement and vision, lengthened reaction time, lowered inhibitions, poor muscular coordination, reduced sensitivity to taste and

pain, and temporary feelings of relaxation and well-being. **At a BAL of 0.10--0.20% (what most states consider legal intoxication) the effects include:** emotional overreaction, impaired coordination and walking, seriously impaired judgement and reasoning, severely lengthened reaction time. **At a BAL of 0.20--0.30%, the effects include:** aggressive, reckless or grandiose behavior, slurred speech, staggering, and unpredictability of emotions. **At a BAL of 0.30--0.40%, the effects include:** stupor (the person may be conscious of what's going on, but will not understand it). **A BAL above 0.40% is extremely dangerous, as this blocks the brain's ability to control breathing and heart rate. Possible effects include:** convulsions, unconsciousness, and death.

# Joe Camel and Teens

By Ray Burke, Ph.D.

**W**hy don't teens stop smoking when they hear about all the problems it causes?

Cigarette smoking has both short term and long term consequences for the smoker. Unfortunately, the negative effects (such as shortness of breath, reduced circulation, and lung cancer) are typically long term consequences and are often hidden by immediate benefits (such as looking cool in front of friends or satisfying a physical need). The negative effects also take so long to recognize that the smoker develops a physical dependence on cigarettes long before realizing that there are problems with smoking.

So lectures about smoking related illnesses and the natural consequences of smoking are not particularly effective at changing the behavior of smokers. A mom tells her son that smoking is bad for his health and he feels as fine as ever. She tells him that smoking kills people and he sees people who are alive and smoking every day. Everything we tell our children about smoking is contradicted in one way or another by the world around them.

## Leading By Example

If you're a parent and you don't want your children to smoke, then make sure you don't smoke. If mom smokes, then she is likely to have more difficulty convincing her son that he shouldn't smoke. It's not impossible, just more difficult. So, if she does smoke, she can look for ways to quit. If she continues to smoke, then the message is: "Do as I say, not as I do." And that's a harder message to sell her son.

## Consequences For Smoking

Recently, a mother told us, "I ground my teenage daughter, but she just walks out of the house whenever she wants

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to." In this case, mom is trying to enforce negative consequences that she can't control. She needs to find effective consequences that she can and will enforce. For example: When the daughter talks back or argues, she loses some of her allowance. When the daughter stays out too late or goes somewhere she's not allowed to go, then she loses use of the car. Here are some other ideas that parents have tried: cable TV being stopped, gas money no longer provided, teen telephone line disconnected, being required to go walking or jogging with the parent, informing the teen's coach that the teen is smoking and will not quit.

## Consequences For Smelling Like Smoke

What should parents do about the times when the teen says he wasn't smoking yet he smells like smoke? This is often a dilemma for parents. Once parents start following through with conse-

quences, the teen usually stops smoking, at least around the house. Yet teens spend so much time away from their parents that the teens can easily smoke with friends. What do you do when the teen comes home smelling like smoke? First, you could set up negative consequences for any time the teen smells like smoke. The reality is that parents can't be with their children throughout most of the day so all they have to go on is what they see, hear, smell, or feel. If the teen comes home smelling like smoke, then she gets a consequence for smelling like smoke. The consequence is often the same as the one given for smoking, but it's given for smelling like smoke. This helps elim-

inate some arguments, although the teen is not likely to be too happy about it. Second, depending on how well you can trust her, you could put the teen on the honor system. When she comes home smelling like smoke, ask her if she's been smoking. If she says "Yes," then she gets a consequence for smoking. If she says "No," then she doesn't

(See "Teens" on page 4)

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# The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem in Children



## A Sense of POWER

Children need to feel:

- They can do the things they set out to do
- They have the resources necessary to carry out their own purposes
- They are allowed to make or influence decisions about things that are important to them
  - Comfortable when fulfilling responsibilities
- They know how to make decisions and solve problems
- They can be in control of themselves when dealing with pressure and stress
  - They can use the skills they've learned
  - They can cope with failure



## A Sense of CONNECTIVENESS

Children need to feel:

- Connected to a heritage
- They belong to someone
- Something belongs to them
- Their connections are held in high esteem
- They are important to others
- Connected to their own bodies
  - Related to others
  - Part of something



## A Sense of MODELS

Children need to:

- Experience people who are worthy models for their own behavior
- Feel confident that they can distinguish right from wrong; good from bad
  - Feel that their own values and beliefs can successfully guide their behavior
- Have a broad range of experiences, so that new experiences aren't intimidating
- Be aware of their goals and to feel that they can work toward them
- Feel that they can make sense out of what's going on in their lives
- Know the standards by which their performance will be evaluated

## A Sense of UNIQUENESS

Children need to:

- Know there is something special about themselves
- Know and do things that no one else can do
- Know others think them special express themselves in their own way
  - Use imagination and expand creativity
    - Respect themselves
    - Enjoy being different



# Joe Camel and Teens (from page 2)

get a consequence. You might also tell her that you don't like her around friends who smoke, let her know about the hazards of secondhand smoke, and leave it at that. Only you know which option will work with your teen.

## Activities

Another approach is to try to get the teen involved in activities that cannot be done while smoking. The more he's involved with these activities, the less time he has for smoking. For example, if he goes swimming or goes out for the school swim team, whenever he's in the water, he can't smoke. Mom may have to set up some other incentives for her son to get him to go out for the swim team, but these incentives may be less costly than smoking. Let's say her son wants to go to a concert. He could contribute the money he would be spending on smoking each week to a savings jar. Mom can match the amount as an

incentive to save more and earn the money for the concert tickets faster than he would otherwise. Mom will only match his savings amount for each week that he stays on the swimming team. The important thing is that parents keep looking for ways to help their children do the best they can.

## Stop Smoking Recap

1. Send a clear message about your feelings about smoking.
2. Use negative and positive consequences you can and will enforce.
3. Smoking probably won't stop overnight. Studies have shown that most people who successfully kick the smoking habit do so after four or five attempts.
4. Try to get the teen involved in physical activities that don't involve smoking, such as running, swimming or cycling.

# Setting Expectations

(from page 1)

tions for your kids: what you say, and what you do.

**What you say**—Expectations are usually clearer and more effective when you describe them in a positive way. Instead of telling your kids what not to do, tell them what you want them to do. In this way, you make it clear what you expect of your child. Instead of, "When I ask you to help clean the house, don't talk back and roll your eyes," try, "When I ask you to help clean the house, say 'Okay' and start the job right away."

**What you do**—Making sure your children understand your expectations involves praising behavior that is consistent with your expectations and correcting behavior that is not. If your kids do what's expected of them, let them know!



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