

modern family values

Five resolutions for parenting in 2012 by Jen Singer

Head this one lately? “Kids today! They’ll never grow up, with those overbearing parents handling *everything* for them.”

Not you, of course. Right?

The truth is, in today’s world, it’s easy for any of us to veer into helicopter-parenting territory. Things are different than when our parents raised us—we’re dealing with dangerous chemicals in food and bullying on Facebook. But some things aren’t actually so different: Kids still look to their parents to learn how to make their way in the world. Here’s how to start 2012 with an up-to-date take on old-fashioned family values. This year, resolve to teach your kids how to:

#1 ORGANIZE THEIR DAYS Whether your child has to finish a project for school by Friday or get ready for a Scouts meeting tonight, he needs to learn how to organize his time—and his stuff—without Mom’s constant management (or meddling). But how? Start with a reminder that you’re not going to check in on the project every night or tell him to look for his Scout uniform again. And then, “allow your child to live with the consequences. One time missing an item means he’ll remember it next time,” says organizing expert Jamie Novak of bitesizeliving.com.

#2 FIND THEIR WAY—LITERALLY The GPS generation depends heavily on electronics—but digital maps aren’t always correct; sometimes they even freeze when you need them most. Help your child get his bearings by pointing out which way is east and west and identifying landmarks. Kids can think bigger, too, by using a globe to locate where *American Idol* contestants live. They’ll be less likely to get lost when a cell phone signal’s bad, and more likely to get a sense of their place in the community and the world.



#3 MIND THEIR MANNERS Does a 5-year-old really need to know how to politely answer the phone? Should a grade-schooler really be expected to look a grown-up in the eye and say thank you? Well, yes. Who do you think the high school teacher will want to write a recommendation for—the polite kid, or the one who thinks the world revolves around her? Manners teach your child that other people’s feelings matter. Encourage her to hold open doors for others and say good morning to carpooling parents. She’ll be the kid—and adult—that everyone likes being around.

#4 DO THEIR OWN LAUNDRY It might be time for your kids to say goodbye to the magical underwear drawer that replenishes itself. Even kindergartners can learn how to sort the darks from the whites, and most kids can help you put away clean clothes. It’ll take them a while (okay, years) to master it, so start teaching your kids by letting them turn the correct knobs and press the right buttons. By the end of middle school, most kids can do laundry on their own (with relatively few disasters).

#5 SETTLE THEIR ARGUMENTS Why hash out what’s troubling you when you’ve got Facebook for posting your grievances? Help kids avoid that mess by modeling respectful listening (as in, not cutting off your partner mid-sentence), says Arden Greenspan-Goldberg, a family therapist and author of *What Do You Expect? She’s a Teenager!* And teach kids how to verbalize their feelings. “Say, ‘If you are angry, honey, say I am angry,’” she advises. “Move them back to a good old-fashioned face-to-face discussion.” ●