



KIDS' MENTAL HEALTH

Our mental health is determined by the manner in which our external behaviors and actions are dealt with by others. How people react to us preoccupies our thoughts, feelings and self-esteem. Freud stated it simply when he said "We see ourselves through the eyes of others." The following are some ideas that make kids feel good about who they are. In doing this, the most important thing we must do is to always keep in mind our two essential responsibilities of Reciprocal Dignity and Role Modeling.

What Kids Would Like Us To Be:

1. **Be Fair**

If you did not witness an incident, deal with everyone the same, giving them all equal treatment. Be aware of your biases and prejudices. It's easy to assume that the "trouble maker" caused the problem, but you don't know that he / she did because you didn't see what happened. Our goal must always be to make intelligent decisions, not emotional reactions.

2. **Be One of their Fans**

Build your kids up by showing interest in their work, projects, play, etc. Give praise and excitement over their accomplishments, appreciate their successes. They love to hear phrases such as "Did you do that by yourself?" "Is this really yours?" and "How did you get so good at that?"

3. **Be Simple, Direct and Correct**

Be specific, consistent and simple in your rules. Young children in particular need this. Tell them what you want. Keep your procedures simple and avoid vague or ambiguous rules. Complexity lends itself to confusion and leaves children with only one option - to act out externally or internally. Once your requests are known, be consistent. An organized, predictable routine not only tells kids what is expected of them, but what they can expect. Isn't that something we all want in our lives?

4. **Be Positive Rather than Negative**

Too often we violate this rule by ignoring children until they misbehave, thus focusing attention on the incorrect behavior. What's worse, we ignore their positive behavior. Too often we use negative statement of control. We'll say "Take your feet off the chair" when we should say "Put your feet on the floor." Or we say "Stop leaving your coat on the chair" instead of "Hang up your coat." Negative statements do not tell kids what to do. This sets us up for spiteful obedience.