



The Way of the Donkey

Positive Parenting in The Way of the Donkey

Positive psychology, also called the “science of happiness,” provides insight into strategies people can use to live happy and empowered lives ~ and respond effectively to stressful situations. Amazingly, it appears that donkeys already know these ways. The following are strategies for parents to use for parenting in The Way of the Donkey!

The Seven Ways of the Donkey

Connect With Friends Donkeys bond very closely with a “buddy.”

Friendships help young people develop emotionally and gain healthy personal values. Through their interactions with friends, young people learn many important social skills, including how to communicate, cooperate, and solve problems. They gain empathy. They practice controlling their emotions and responding to the emotions of others. They develop the ability to think through and negotiate different situations that arise.

- Help your child take other people’s perspective. How do you think that person feels? Encourage self-reflection and the “Golden Rule.” How would you feel if someone treated you like that?
- The best way for young people to make friends is by engaging in activities they enjoy. Support your child in engaging in these kinds of activities to have fun. Watch for positive relationships to emerge and encourage these relationships.
- Help your child make heart-felt connections with friends and trusted adults every day.

Reach Out To Be Kind Donkeys reach out to scratch each other’s back. Mutual grooming helps to form strong bonds.

When your child reaches out to be kind to others, this not only makes others feel good, this also promotes your child’s happiness and well-being. Reaching out to be kind will result in kind responses in return. This helps your child to form better relationships.

- For young people who have difficulties forming friendships or are being treated badly, reaching out to be kind is a critical step to improve this situation. Discuss and jointly practice with your child how to reach out to be kind.
- Encourage your child to reach out to be kind to another person at least five times a day. At the end of the day, discuss the ways your child reached out to be kind, how this made the other person feel, and how this made your child feel.

Build Your Strengths Donkeys are very curious and like to learn new things.

One of the most important things young people can do is build their strengths, especially character strengths like these: creativity, curiosity, judgment, love of learning, perspective and wisdom, bravery, perseverance, honesty, zest, love, kindness, social intelligence, teamwork, fairness, leadership, forgiveness, humility, prudence, self-control, appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, spirituality.

- Help your child identify and build upon personal strengths ~ especially character strengths. Have your older child take the survey at: <http://viacharacter.org> to find out their personal character strengths. You can take the adult survey.
- Encourage your child to make a daily practice of using personal strengths. If a challenging situation arises, discuss how you child can use these strengths to respond.
- Every evening, ask “What did you do today that you are proud of?”

Be Thankful Donkeys are thankful when they receive treats, especially carrots. ;)

Being thankful for the good things that happen helps people feel more happy ~ and appears to lead to more good things happening. Gratitude makes us more resilient, strengthens relationships, and promotes forgiveness. Young people who practice gratitude report greater life satisfaction, more positive emotions, and that they feel more connected to their community.

- Every evening, ask your child what three great things that happened that day. Encourage your child to keep a gratitude journal.

If Things Get Tough... When faced with a possible threat, donkeys stop and stay calm, stand tall, and think things through.

Stop and Stay Calm Donkeys do not usually act impulsively or overreact.

Help your child learn to avoid acting impulsively when stressed. The frequent practice of mindfulness helps people achieve calmness and focus. Research has documented that mindfulness practice for young people results in improved well-being, social skills, self-regulation, and academic performance. Every school should have a comprehensive mindfulness program.

- Help your child learn and practice the principles of mindfulness.
- Remind your child that if something upsetting happens, the first response should be to stop and to breathe deeply and slowly to remain calm and focused.

Stand Tall Donkeys stand tall and have presence.

Young people who stand tall and walk with pride are more likely to be perceived as being successful and competent. They are less likely to be treated badly. Simply adopting a physical pose of standing tall creates the feeling of personal power. In other words, your child can "fake it" by standing tall and this will then help your child to feel more personal power. It is not possible for you or your child to control how others might treat your child. It is possible to control how one feels about oneself and responds.

- Help your child practice "feeling small" and then "standing tall." Remind your child to stand tall and walk with pride throughout the day ~ especially in times your child feels stressed or is facing a challenge.
- Teach your child to keep personal power in a situation where someone has been hurtful or something bad has happened by thinking this: "I choose not to give anyone the power to control how I feel about myself or respond."

Think Things Through If donkeys are in a strange or dangerous situation, they think things through to decide what to do.

Avoid trying to resolve problems that emerge for your child. Use approaches to assist your child figure out how to resolve problem situations. Teach your child how to handle situations where someone has treated them badly or if they made a mistake.

- This Think Things Through approach is recommended. Ask these questions: What has actually happened? What is my goal? What several powerful positive actions in accord with my strengths could I take? Is each action in accord with my values? For each action, what might happen? What is my best first choice? If this does not work, what else could I do?
- If someone has treated your child badly he or she should: Stop and remain calm, stand tall and keep personal power, take a positive action to leave the situation, think things through to decide what else to do, and ask for help if the problem continues. If your child been hurtful to someone else: Stop and walk away, become calm, think things through, accept personal responsibility, and take steps to make things right.

The Way of the Donkey

The Way of the Donkey is a service located in Lane County Oregon. We:

- Promote The Way of the Donkey as an approach to foster positive empowerment of kids and teens (and adults also).
- Will develop, implement, and evaluate a variety of Donkey Assisted Life Coaching activities. Take our donkeys to schools, special education classrooms, senior centers, and other places.
- Offer life affirming and caring services that can bring in income to support our Donkey Assisted Life Coaching activities ~ including Donkey Birthday Parties, Visits, Weddings, and Events!

Please visit our web site at <http://donkeyeaw.org> to find out more! Check out links for Information Resources for parents and educators on this page: <http://donkeyeaw.org/information-resources/>.

Email: info@donkeyeaw.org.