

# What Are Moral Values for Children?

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What are moral values? Many of us confuse moral values with traits like respect, honesty, gratitude, and kindness, among others. But these are traits that lead to the development of the moral values of a good person. Moral values differ from person to person and also change with time, and age. So, the question again arises, what are moral values? Let's delve deeper into this question and explain it in detail below.

What are moral values? Your moral values are the guiding principles that help you make decisions and fair judgements.

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## **What Are Moral Values– A Meaning**

What are moral values? To get to the answer, let's look at the two words that form this phrase. "Morals" and "Values".

By values, we mean traits that are more personal to you. These are traits that you view as positive for yourself. These traits push and drive you to act and react to other people and situations. Values are relative and may differ from person to person. Some good values include respect, honesty, gratitude, empathy, and courage, among others. Depending on the situation and people, values may be viewed as good or bad. E.g., honesty may be viewed as naivety and bravery without tact as foolishness by others.

Now, we come to the morals part. Morals are a code of conduct that decides what you believe is good or bad. Morals govern your behaviour and define the intent behind your actions.

Values become moral values when they are used not for selfish reasons but for doing good and making things far better than they were before.

Combine the two, and we understand what moral values are all about.

Moral values are standards that help us choose between right and wrong. Based on our moral values, we make decisions every day. Moral values influence every aspect of our life.

## **What are Moral Values for Children?**

The concept of moral values is the same for children as it is for adults. Moral values allow your children to see the difference between good and bad, be it in intent, thought, action, or conduct. You can teach moral values to your children right from the start. The moral values you teach will act as a blueprint for your children's future and shape their principles when they become adults.

## **Are Moral Values and Ethics the Same?**

Sometimes we equate moral values with ethics. But these are quite different, though both of them depend on each other. As we discussed above, moral values help you decide between the good and the bad. While ethics is your willingness to act on your moral values. E.g., moral values like honesty tell you to be honest in your dealings. But an ethical person will be honest even when they incur any losses. They do not quit being honest. Without ethics, moral values do not mean anything. And without moral values, ethics will not exist.

## **Difference Between Moral Values and Core Values**

Moral values help you decide between right and wrong. You can choose whether to follow moral values or not. Core values are the values that define you. These are your beliefs that make you into what you are. These are the values that you always follow. E.g., discipline is a core value while honesty is a moral value. Moral values and core

values can be different but also overlap each other. A disciplined person can be dishonest too. But moral values become core values when you start following them from your heart. Moral values turn into core values when they start defining you. These become a part of your beliefs. So, if honesty defines you as a person, it becomes both your moral and core value.

### **What are Moral Values Growth Stages in Children?**

Your children go through moral growth stages. This is the time when they need help from you and if they get the right help, they will grow up into morally solid adults. Here are the five stages of moral growth from infancy to teens in children.

#### **1. The First Stage- Infancy**

Infants do not have moral values. They only have a sense of right or wrong about what concerns them. When they are hungry, it does not feel right, so they cry. They become happy when they are fed. When they feel cold, they will cry until they get warm and cosy. Similarly, if they are alone, they will cry to get attention. After they get what they want, all is right for them in this world. So, at this stage, hunger, cold and related events are wrong for them while being fed, cuddled, and cared for feels right to them.

#### **2. The Second Stage- Toddlers**

At this stage of life, your children understand that others live in this world too. They learn that others also have needs and feelings. At this stage, your kids might show some empathy-based moral conduct but they do not fully understand the difference between right and wrong. They follow the rules set by you and other primary caregivers. So, when you discipline or forbid them from doing something, they know it's wrong.

#### **3. The Third Stage- Pre-schooler Age (4 to 7 years)**

This is a major turning point for your children regarding moral growth. They begin to understand that their actions have an effect and an outcome which affects other people. They learn that others also have feelings and rights. Your kids expect you to take charge and guide them. If you have instilled good values in your children, then they will behave well. If not, then their only concern will be to not get caught.

#### **4. Stage 4 (Between 7 to 10 Years)**

This is the age where your kids begin to question those who are in charge. These include their parents, elders, teachers, and other caregivers. They begin to understand that maybe their elders do not have all the answers. They respect those adults who they think are fair and know things.

At this age, your kids begin voicing out their opinions. They believe that their opinions matter. This is the stage where your kids develop a sense of fairness and build a strong sense of what they should and should not do. This is also the age of forming complex and contrasting thoughts. E.g., while your kids develop a sense of fairness, they also are in the “what’s in it for me” stage of life. They prefer values that bring benefits to them. They also understand that they need to obey their parents and teachers and be corrected and disciplined, if they break rules. So, use this stage to develop good habits and values in your children. E.g., reward them an extra hour to play if they help with the household chores. With an extra piece of candy if they clean their room. These bargains make sense to your child and develop moral values in them.

### **5. Stage 5- Preteens, Teens, and Older**

At this stage, your kids begin to develop their own moral values. This is the age when your children face peer pressure and in turn want to be popular among their peers. Your children will try out different value systems and test which fits them by choosing the moral values they like and ignore the ones they don't like. They will also analyse and question the moral values you set for them and broaden their moral horizons. At this stage, change your parenting style to avoid conflict, be more of an advice giver than an unbending strict figure.

So, these are the moral growth stages for children. In the first stage, they do things that suit and benefit them. With time, they follow and conduct themselves just like their family. And in the final stage, your children develop their own moral values. They do things that they believe are right and for the greater good.

### **What are Moral Values in Children Influenced By?**

Moral values are a set of codes of conduct for your children. Through these codes, your kids learn how to act and behave towards others. Have a look at certain factors that influence and develop moral values in your children.

#### **1. Family**

Family plays an essential role in forming moral values in your children. Your children learn the difference between good and bad from their parents, and also, from other caregivers and elders in the family. At the start, what you, as a parent, approve of their actions becomes good for them and what is rejected becomes bad for them. They will also observe what you do and copy your actions. So, if you are rude to others, they will be too. Therefore, become and practise what you want them to be. Also, teach them how to behave and conduct themselves in different situations and explain, whenever you have to discipline your children. Tell them what they did wrong and what rules they broke. Through these ways, you can instil good habits and moral values in your children.

## **2. School & Teachers**

Schools and teachers also play an essential role in building moral values in your children. Your children observe and learn a lot from their teachers, and seniors. Their concept of good and bad is also influenced by these factors. It's so common to see children following their teachers' sayings to the word. They insist that only their teachers are right, even over you. At this stage, their teachers can help your children develop good moral values.

## **3. Peer Group and Classmates**

The social groups your children interact with influence them the most. These include their fellow students, friends, playmates, and seniors. So, ensure that your children are in good company. These are the ones who will influence the building of moral values in your children.

## **4. Culture and Social Settings**

Culture and social settings play a big role in forming moral values. A person from a strict culture has different moral values than that from a permissive one. There is not much you can do to change the culture of your place. But it is up to you to teach your children the right values.

## **5. Media**

Media in any form also affects the building of moral values in children whether these be movies, books, or comics, among others. Take utmost care to see what type of content your children are exposed to. Ensure that they consume good and positive content. E.g., show your children content that shows kind and caring characters. This will develop the traits of caring and kindness in your children. Choose the content wisely to develop the right moral values in them.

## **6. Age**

Age is also an essential factor in forming moral values and conduct. Your children accept rules and norms when they are young. However, when they become older, they will form their own opinions and point of view. These may be at odds with yours or not. As we have said above, at this phase, be flexible instead of strict. Give advice instead of dictating rules.

## **7. Gender**

Gender also plays an essential role, specially in strict cultures and social settings. Even now, in certain nations, girls have to follow a stricter moral code than boys. This is a harsh truth we have to accept. But you can do your bit. Teach your children that all genders are equal and have the same rights.

## What are Moral Values Benefits for Children?

Teaching moral values to your kids benefits them in a whole lot of ways. Here is a brief overview of how moral values change your kids for the better.

1. Moral values help your children sort out right from wrong. These further develop rational thinking skills in your children that help them make good, fair, and unbiased decisions. This skill is essential for a fruitful present and a bright future.
2. Moral values instil good habits and traits in your children. Moral values help [develop good character in your children](#), like kindness, courage, gratitude, and respect for all.
3. Moral values protect your children from vices so common in the modern world. Young people, especially teens, easily fall prey to vices. They can be swayed by their edgy friends, media, or peer pressure. Moral values act as a source of strength for your children. And acts as a shield that protects them from vices and bad habits.
4. Moral values give your children the strength of character. This further raises their self-esteem and self-confidence and your children are not easily swayed by difficult situations. They grow up into self-assured adults who know how to take charge and win.
5. Young children are full of energy and zeal and these can either be used in negative as well as positive ways. Moral values help your children channel their energies and do something worthwhile.
6. Moral values develop positive character and good habits in your children. Your children in turn influence others and the cycle goes on. This turns into an ever-growing engine of goodness that improves the world all around them.

## Ways to Develop Moral Values in Kids

Use these tactics to develop positive traits and moral values in your children. These are simple to do but be consistent with them.

### 1. For Smaller Children– Be Clear About Morals

Toddlers and preschoolers need concrete and straight guidance. They cannot handle abstract concepts at this stage. Be simple and specific in your approach to teaching them moral values. E.g., Do this, to make them understand that snatching and stealing are bad. Tell them something like this. “We do not snatch other’s play things. It is wrong and bad as these toys do not belong to us. By snatching the toy, you hurt your friend’s feelings. We should be kind to others and not hurt them”.

With time your children will begin to understand more about moral values. Now you can tell them stories and read books about values. Check if your children understand the moral concepts on their own now. Nudge them to implement these values in their daily life.

## **2. Explain the Moral Values You Think are Essential**

What are moral values to instil in your children? There are so many moral values with their own set of benefits. But building the desired moral values in your children will take time. The best way is to explain those values that you think are essential. If you want your children to develop gratitude, then explain more about it. Tell your children the benefits of gratitude. If you want your children to be brave, then talk about it with them. Imagine some situations where your kids have to think and make a choice. E.g., Say, "Someone is bothering your friends or your siblings. What will you do in this case?"

## **3. Model the Moral Values for Your Children**

We have stated it many times, and are stating it again. Your children look up to you as role models. They observe and copy what you do. So, you have to become what you want them to be. Become their role model and truly practice the moral values you want them to have. Your children when young will copy you all the time. But if you are true to yourself, they will admire and follow you as adults too.

## **4. Be More Personal**

Telling stories about moral values to your kids is fine and well but make these more real to have a better impact. Share real-life incidents concerning you or other family members about moral values. Since these stories are personal, they connect with your kids and leave a better impact.

## **5. Moral Values Put into Practice**

What are moral values? Answer this question to your kids in theory as well as practice. Not only teach but let your children practise these moral values too. Start with simple to-do tasks like asking your children to talk politely and respect all, take your children to charity drives, go to an old age home with your children, help out the elderly with their chores, take your kids to feed the stray animals. These tasks build moral values and a love for nature and all kinds of life. Your children learn quickly and a lot more when you put your teachings to practise.

## **6. Praise the Good they Do**

Reward your kids for their good acts. Praise their good conduct and be specific about the praise. Tell them what they did right and how it affected others. To clarify it further, praise what they did and not, and what they are. Thank them for the good they did whether it be cleaning their room without asking or playing with each other without fighting. Do so in front of the whole family so your child feels valued. This will also nudge your children to continue with their good conduct. The real and right praise nurtures and grows the moral values you instilled in them.

## **7. Guilt Not Shame**

You have to correct your children if they do something wrong. But to discipline them does not mean shaming them. You have to rebuke their choices, but not them. If you make them feel bad about themselves, they will feel shame and if you scold them for their choices, then they will feel guilty.

Feeling guilty is a normal thing but shaming can lower your kid's self-worth. Shame conveys to your children that they are bad while guilt conveys the thought that what they did was bad. Shame is a negative mindset where your kids link the badness to them. Guilt, on the other hand, means that your children regret what they did and what they did can be corrected and mended. This creates a positive and growth mindset for your children and instead of lowering, raises their self-worth and self-esteem.

## **8. Tap into Their Feelings and Emotions**

Empathy is a basic moral value that develops other moral values too. And empathy is all about understanding the feelings and emotions of others. Make your children aware of their feelings and emotions. Point out and label their emotions and feelings so they understand them better. Now, show empathy to your children to create empathy in them. E.g., "I understand that you are sad or angry. It's ok to be sad and angry. But it's not right to hurt someone if you are angry". Then give a specific reason for denying their demand or what they wished to do.

## **9. Fun Tasks to Develop Moral Values**

You can teach moral values to your kids through fun tasks and games. E.g., group games teach your children to share and work together. These also teach your children to follow rules and develop a sense of fair play. [Click here](#) to know more about building moral values through games and tasks.

## **Final Thoughts**

What are moral values for children? Moral values are the standards that teach your children the difference between right and wrong. Moral values also serve as a base for building a positive character for your children. We have made a small effort by sharing some tips on how to instil moral values. Now, it's up to you to guide your children on the right path.