

Tips for Parents: Helping today's girls become tomorrow's successful women: Ten tips for caring adults

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This article by Sylvia Rimm contains ten pointers on how to encourage girls to become successful women. It offers suggestions and explanations for each of the pointers. The brief article comes right to the point and the guidelines will be helpful to any person who spends time with young people.

Dr. Sylvia Rimm's groundbreaking research on what was behind the success of over 1,000 women led to her best-selling book *See Jane Win*. Now, she combines the lessons, tips, and advice gleaned from her study, along with the girlhood experiences of *See Jane Win* research participants like Sandra Day O'Connor and Jane Pauley, in a book designed especially for young girls, *SEE JANE WIN FOR GIRLS: A SMART GIRL'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS*. But, as Dr. Rimm's findings show, even the most capable "I CAN" girl will benefit immensely from the help of a parent, teacher, or caring adult. Dr. Rimm suggests these ten tips to encourage and stimulate girls' self-esteem and confidence, and help them to become eager to learn and ready to lead.

1. Be a coach, not a judge.

Adults who coach encourage, constructively criticize, and praise. Coaches have high expectations and set limits, yet children will accept coaching. Why? Because children understand that their coach supports their efforts and that, ultimately, they and their coach are "on the same team." Adults who judge, however, concentrate their efforts on finding mistakes and punishing misdoings and discovering and correcting errors. Adults who are continuously judgmental alienate children. Why? Because children feel that the relationship is adversarial and that they can never do anything right.

2. Emphasize substance over appearance.

Emphasize intelligence, hard work, independence, sensitivity, and perseverance in your daughters. De-emphasize the importance of appearance. Relationships that are appearance-based fade. Relationships based on shared interests and values have much more potential for depth.

3. Have high expectations for daughters and sons.

Expect the best from all children, including post-high school education whether or not you attended college. The American Dream is for women, too.

4. Foster healthy competition.

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Encourage the exhilaration of taking a risk, entering a contest, or competing in a sport. But being Number One isn't the only learning opportunity. Winning builds confidence; losing builds character.

5. Turn down pressure to be social.

Many girls feel "different" during the changes of adolescence. Help them to feel comfortable with their differences by redirecting their energies toward positive activities like music, drama, debate, science, sports, or religious activities. They'll gain confidence, friends, and social skills without the social pressure.

6. Involve girls in all-girl activities.

Encourage girls to be involved in all-girl activities like Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, or the YWCA. Consider all-girl classes or schools if boys cause them to lose confidence or distract from their learning.

7. Learn from the success of others.

Encourage your daughters to read (and be inspired by) stories about successful women. Help girls to be comfortable with math from preschool on through activities that include counting, measuring, and scoring. Teach spatial skills through puzzles, games, and building activities.

8. Spread the wealth.

Don't let birth order get in the way of giving each of your daughters leadership opportunities, responsibilities, and some of your time alone.

9. Hit the road.

Consider traveling with your daughters--the whole family, mother-daughter, or father-daughter excursions. By high school, encourage independent trips with school groups. Travel, even day-trips, provides a spirit of adventure, enrichment, family bonding, and self-confidence.

10. Set a good example.

Let your love for learning and your own professional or artistic development provide a model. However, regardless of how busy you are, preserve time to talk with and listen to the girls in your life daily.

Dr. Sylvia Rimm (Cleveland, Ohio) is the best-selling author of *See Jane Win* and *How Jane Won*, as well as parenting favorites *Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades* and *How to Parent So Children Will Learn*. She is the director of the Family Achievement Clinic in Cleveland and a clinical professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. The author of a syndicated newspaper column on parenting, she has appeared in *Redbook* and *People* magazines, on *Oprah* and *20/20*, and as host of *Family Talk with Sylvia Rimm*. She is also a frequent parenting expert on the *Today* show.

Rimm, S. (2002). *Tips for Parents: Helping today's girls become tomorrow's successful women: Ten tips for caring adults*. Free Spirit Publishing. 2002/2003.

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