

## Positive Discipline: Are you frustrated with your child's misbehavior?

Have you found that **yelling, threatening, nagging, and punishing** don't actually change bad behavior—but they do hurt your relationship with your child?

Would you like to learn a different way to change misbehavior—one that will also help you to build a good relationship with your child?

Here's the simple but effective principle:



## To get rid of almost any misbehavior, PRAISE the opposite positive behavior.

*For example, if you want your kids to stop fighting, pay enthusiastic attention to when they are getting along. Say enthusiastically, "I love to see you two sharing the blocks with each other. Great job!" and hug both.*

### Simple steps to achieving good behavior

#### 1. Set the stage for good behavior.

- If you use the word “please” and a respectful tone of voice, you are setting the stage for your child to cooperate.
- If you give orders or harsh commands, you are setting the stage for your child to say **no** and refuse to obey.
- If add nagging and put-downs to your command, the child will probably resist even more.



#### 2. If possible, ignore misbehavior.

Many children misbehave to get attention. Ignore attention-getting misbehavior—such as whining, complaining, moping, or sometimes crying.

Ignoring misbehavior works in the long run. But at first, ignoring misbehavior may make matters worse. Your child may misbehave more to get your attention. Your child may even become aggressive (hit, kick, or bite). If so,

- Stay calm.
- Use a neutral, disinterested tone of voice.
- Give a time-out, re-direct or remove child from situation – help child calm down.

#### 3. Give your child at least 20 minutes of your uninterrupted attention each day.

During that time,

- Focus on your child.
  - Put aside other thoughts—such as concerns about household matters, work, and other relationships.
  - Ask questions that show you are interested in your child.
  - Listen to and watch him or her.
- Put aside your behavior goals for your child.



- Relax and enjoy being with your child.

#### 4. Give your attention to the good behavior that you want to increase.

Paying attention to **good** behavior encourages your child to behave well.

- To your child, your attention is the best reward for any behavior.
- **You will get more of whatever behavior you pay attention to:**
  - If you pay attention to good behavior, you will get more good behavior.
  - If you pay attention to bad behavior, you will get more bad behavior.



#### 5. Praise your child for good behavior.

- Praise for good behavior is an effective kind of attention
- The more **enthusiastic** the praise, the quicker and longer-lasting the change.

## How to praise your child effectively



- ✓ Give praise only after the child does the desired behavior.
- ✓ Give praise immediately.
- ✓ Give praise every time the child does the desired behavior.
- ✓ Stand or sit close to the child when you deliver praise.
- ✓ Use a sincere, ENTHUSIASTIC tone of voice.
- ✓ Use specific, positive words, such as “Thanks for putting the game away before taking another.”
- ✓ Use nonverbal actions (gestures) to reinforce your words
  - Physical cues—hug your child, give a high five, pat your child on the back, clap your hands
  - Visual cues—give a thumbs up, smile, wink
- ✓ Vary the words and gestures you use

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Adapted by Ruth Ettenberg Freeman, LCSW and Joe Freeman, MDiv, LCSW from Alan E. Kazdin, *Parent Management Training* (Oxford University Press, 2005) and *The Kazdin Method for Parenting the Defiant Child* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), and from Russell A. Barkley, *Defiant Children* (Guilford Press, 1997).

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