**Tips for helping your child behave**

Good behaviour from children makes parents happy. But children often don’t behave the way we’d like them to because they need our help. You might have found yourself in situations such as these:

* Frustrated, you give in to your child’s whining for candy while in the checkout line.
* Tired of telling your child to clean up her room, you do it yourself.
* Afraid of saying no too often, you allow your child to misbehave.

How can you help your child behave nicely without giving in or giving up? Focusing on what children do right helps them to stop doing what’s wrong. Follow these guidelines to encourage positive behaviour. You’ll be on your way to more peaceful days and a better relationship with your child.

* **Catch her doing what you want.**Keep a watchful eye on your child. When you find her doing something you want her to do, give plenty of praise. Affirmation will encourage her to keep up the positive behaviour.
* **Ignore minor infractions.** Often simply ignoring negative behaviour can make it go away. However, never ignore behaviour that is dangerous to the child or to others.
* **Say yes as much as possible.**Parents say no several times a day but fail to say yes when they have the opportunity. Choose your battles wisely, allowing your child more freedom while maintaining limits.
* **Phrase commands in a positive way.**Children respond better to commands that are specific. State what you want rather than what you don’t want. Instead of saying, "Stop running," say, "You need to walk."
* **Be consistent.**You want your child to know what to expect from you. Inconsistency confuses children and leads to further misbehaviour.

**Effective praise**

Praising a child correctly is important to the development of positive behaviours. Most experts agree that if you aren’t praising your child for something every day, you and your child are missing out on an important "good-behaviour-booster." Follow these six steps to make sure your praise is effective:

* **Watch for praiseworthy behaviours.** Don’t try to praise everything your child does. Wait for unexpected or previously unnoticed good behaviour and praise your child for it.
* **Praise immediately.** As soon as you notice a positive behaviour, make sure you mention it to your child.
* **Look your child in the eye.** She is more likely to recognize and accept your words of praise if your eyes are focused on her.
* **Touch your child.** Your praise is more powerful when given in conjunction with a hug, a touch on the arm or a caress of the cheek.
* **Be specific.**State exactly what you find worthy of praise. For example, "You were very patient while we were in the store. I am proud of you."
* **Don’t follow praise with negative comments.**Make sure you allow praise to sink in before you discipline for misbehaviour.

**Ignoring bad behaviour**

Ignoring negative behaviours can be tricky. Expect the following sequence of events:

* Behaviour worsens. Don’t worry; this is normal.
* Behaviour becomes unbearable. Once your child realizes that she no longer receives negative attention for her negative behaviour, she will "up the ante." Don’t give up at this point. If you do, the unbearable behaviour will more than likely continue.
* Negative behaviour decreases.

**Effective commands**

* Look your child in the eye. Get down on their level if needed.
* Be specific. For example, "Pick up the dirty clothes in your bedroom and put them in the washer."  
  Give only one command at a time.
* Make commands time-limited. Each instruction must be completed by a specified time. For instance, "Pick up the dirty clothes in your bedroom and put them in the washer before we eat dinner."
* State the consequences for not following instructions.  
  Follow through on consequences if instructions are not followed.

**Time with your children**

Spending time with your children is important. However, according to child therapist J. Kussin, spending "special time" with your child is an indispensable means of increasing positive behaviours and improving your relationship with your child.

Follow these five steps to structure special time with your child:

Plan the time in advance. Your child needs to know that she is as special as your hair appointment and your dinner out with friends.

* Allow your child to choose the activity. You can guide your child to choose an interactive activity like playing, cooking, crafting or reading. If she chooses TV, make sure you talk about what you watched afterward.
* Spend at least 20 to 30 minutes together. Special time doesn’t have to be long; it just has to be "special." A set amount of time should be allotted to make sure that this time is separate from other items on the family agenda.
* Schedule special time weekly. It gives your child something to look forward to.
* Include only one child and one parent at a time. Each child should have individual time to bond with each parent.

**Focus on what’s right**

Helping your child behave nicely starts with you. The first step to increasing your child’s positive behaviours is to recognize what is positive about your child. Complete the following exercise as the first step toward better child behaviour.

* One thing my child is good at is:
* Something I like about the way my child treats others is:
* One thing others compliment my child for is:
* I enjoy spending time with my child when we:

Once completed, the answers to these questions can serve as a means to praise and a guide for spending special time with your child.

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