

POSITIVE PARENTING!

Adapted from Triple P: Positive Parenting Program

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Five Principles of Positive Parenting

- **Ensuring A Safe, Interesting Environment**
 - A safe environment means that you can be more relaxed about parenting and your child can explore and keep busy with less risk of being hurt. Safety-proof your home; move dangerous things out of reach, latch drawers and cabinets, and use gates to block entry to dangerous parts of the house.
 - Children need an interesting environment that provides plenty of opportunities to explore, discover, experiment, and develop their skills. An interesting environment not only stimulates your child's curiosity and language/intellectual development, it also keeps your child engaged and active and reduces the likelihood of misbehavior.
- **Creating A Positive Learning Environment**
 - Parents need to be available to their children. You don't have to be with your child all the time, but it does help to be available when your child needs help, care, or attention. When your child approaches you, stop what you are doing and spend time with your child, even for just a minute or two.
 - When you see your child doing something you like, pay attention. Show your child that you like what they are doing and they will be more likely to do it again!
- **Using Assertive Discipline**
 - Be consistent and act quickly when children misbehave. Also, teach children to behave in an acceptable way.
 - You can value your child's individuality while also expecting appropriate behavior. When your child is misbehaving or upset, try to remain calm and avoid yelling, name calling, threatening, or spanking.
- **Having Realistic Expectations**
 - Problems may arise when parents expect too much too soon, or expect their children to be perfect. For example, parents who expect that their children to always be polite, happy, and cooperative or to always be neat and helpful are setting themselves up for disappointment and conflict with their children.
 - Do not expect your child to be perfect. All children make mistakes. Most mistakes are not intentional.
 - It is also important for parents to have realistic expectations of themselves. Trying to be a *perfect* parent will only lead to feelings of frustration and inadequacy. Do not be hard on yourself!
- **Taking Care Of Yourself As A Parent**
 - Parenting is easier when personal needs for intimacy, companionship recreation and time alone are being met. If your own needs as an adult are being met, it is much easier to be patient, consistent, and available to your child.
 - Example: Put your own oxygen mask on first!

Getting Started

Think about goals for change – Think about changes that you would like to see in your child’s behavior, as well as your own. Choose one or two behaviors to work on at a time.

What should we work on? – It might be useful to think about the skills that help children learn to be independent and to get along with others:

- How to communicate
- How to manage their feelings
- How to be independent
- How to solve problems

Keep track of your child’s behavior

- If you are concerned about your child’s behavior, it is useful to keep track. Keep a behavior diary: Write down when and where a problem behavior occurred, what happened before (what caused it) and what happened afterwards (how you reacted).
- Another way to keep track of your child’s behavior is to write down how often it occurs. To do this, keep a record of the number of times a problem behavior occurs during the day and write this on a chart or tally sheet. You can total the number of incidents per day.
- When you start a new parenting plan, it is useful to have a trial period of around 7 to 10 days. At the end of the trial period, you can decide whether to keep going in the same way or make minor changes. Remember, the best way to change children’s behavior is to do it gradually. Change does not happen quickly.

Promoting Children’s Development

How to Develop a Positive Relationship with Your Child

• Spend quality time with your child

Recommended age range: All Ages

Spending frequent, small amounts of time with children can be more beneficial than fewer, longer periods of time. Time that is special to your child will occur when your child approaches you to tell you something, ask a question, or involve you in the activity. When this happens, and you are not occupied with something important, stop what you are doing and make yourself available.

• Talk with your child

Recommended age range: All Ages

Talking with your child helps them learn to speak, teaches conversational and social skills, and boosts your child’s self esteem. Talk to your child about things they are interested in. Share ideas and information with your child and show that you are interested in what your child has to say. Some parents like to incorporate the “Story of the Day” into their dinner or bedtime routine, for example.

How to Encourage Behavior

• **Praise your child**

Recommended age range: All Ages

Notice your child behaving well and praise them for behavior you like. Descriptive praise (“I like how you put your plate in the trash can!”) is better than general approval (“Good job”) for encouraging a particular behavior you like. Praise works best when you are enthusiastic and mean what you say.

• **Give your child attention**

Recommended age range: All Ages

There are many ways of giving attention. A smile, wink, pat on the back, or just watching are all forms of attention that children enjoy and can be used to encourage behavior you like. These actions add to your praise and show your child how pleased you are with their behavior.

How to Teach Your Child New Skills or Behaviors

• **Use Incidental Teaching**

Recommended age range: 1-12 years

When children approach you for information, help or attention, they are often motivated and ready to learn. Prompt your child to come up with the answer and see if you can help them learn more – *What color do you think this is? Yes, it's red. What else is red?* This should be fun and enjoyable, so do not push the issue. If your child does not respond, provide the answer and wait for another teaching opportunity.

• **Use Behavior Charts**

Recommended age range: 2-12 years

Sometimes children need a little extra motivation to change a behavior, practice a new skill, or complete expected tasks. Your child can earn stamps, happy faces, stickers, or points on a chart for desired behavior. This gives your child a sense of achievement and recognition for their efforts.

Here are some guidelines for using a behavior chart:

- Get ready all things you will need. Obtain stickers, stars or stamps.
- Describe the behavior for which you are going to use a chart. State the behavior positively, such as *Sitting up nicely at the dinner table* rather than *Not leaving the dinner table*.
- Explain when your child can earn stickers or stamps.
- Explain the consequences for breaking a rule.
- Praise your child each time they earn a stamp or sticker.
- When your child is earning stamps/stickers every time, start to phase out rewards by making them harder to achieve.
- Gradually phase out the chart and make rewards less predictable by giving them every now and then. Continue to praise your child for behaving well.

A handy website is www.freeprintablebehaviorcharts.com. It has ready-made charts for all sorts of uses, and it posts helpful parenting tips, too!

Managing Misbehavior

- **Establish Clear Ground Rules**

Recommended age range: 3-12 years

A few basic ground rules can help. Rules should tell children what to do, rather than what not to do. *Walk in the house, Speak in a pleasant voice, and Keep your hands and feet to yourself* are clearer rules than *Don't run, Don't shout, and Don't fight*.

- **Use Planned Ignoring To Deal with Minor Problem Behavior**

Recommended age range: 1-7 years

Planned ignoring means to deliberately pay no attention to a child when a minor problem behavior occurs. Minor problems include whining, using a silly voice, and saying rude words. When you ignore a behavior do not look at or talk to your child. Try to remain calm. As soon as your child stops the problem behavior and behaves appropriately, praise them.

- **Give Clear, Calm Instructions**

Recommended age range: 2-12 years

Get close and gain your child's attention. Calmly tell your child what to do. Give your child time to cooperate (5 secs.). Praise cooperation! If your child does not cooperate, repeat your instruction. Back up your instruction with appropriate consequences (e.g., logical consequences or quiet time).

- **Use Logical Consequences**

Recommended age range: 2-12 years

Logical consequences are best used for mild problem behaviors that do not occur too often. If your child does not follow a rule or instruction, then choose a consequence that fits the situation. If possible, remove the activity or the toy that is at the center of the problem. Logical consequences work best if they are brief (5-10 minutes is usually long enough).

- **Use Quiet Time to Deal with Misbehavior**

Recommended age range: 18 months-10 years

Quiet time is a brief, mild, and effective way of helping children learn more acceptable behavior. Use quiet time if your child does not do as you have asked. Quiet time involves removing your child from the activity in which a problem has occurred and having them sit quietly. Short periods are more effective than longer ones (1 minute for 2 year olds, 2 minutes for 3-5 year olds). Explain the rules of quiet time. Check that your child understands they need to be quiet for a set time before they can come out of quiet time. After quiet time, do not mention the incident. Encourage your child to find something to do. Praise your child for desirable behavior as soon as possible after quiet time.