

Using Praising and Ignoring to Change Behavior

What to Know

Praise is when you tell your child you like what they are doing or how they are behaving. Praise nurtures your child's confidence and self-esteem. When you use praise, you show your child how to think and talk positively about themselves and recognize when they do well.

Descriptive praise refers to telling your child exactly what it is you like, helping your child understand exactly what it is they have done well. **Encouragement** is praise for effort, motivating your child to try hard.

When praise is focused on effort, your child is more likely to see trying hard as positive. They are more likely to keep trying and to be optimistic when facing challenges.

A **reward** is a consequence of good behavior. It could be a treat, surprise, or extra privilege. Rewards can make praise and encouragement more effective. So, when you praise or encourage your child's behavior and then reward it, the behavior is more likely to happen again. Try not to overuse rewards.

Children are more likely to repeat behavior that earns praise or encouragement. So, you can use praise and encouragement to change challenging behaviors, replacing them with desirable behaviors.

What to Do

In this activity, you will identify one behavior you would like your child to change. Focus on one behavior at a time. Write it down.

What is the opposite of this behavior? Write it down.

This is the behavior you will begin to praise. Every time you see your child choosing this behavior, praise them using reinforcing compliments. Say these phrases aloud so they come to mind and feel natural when you praise your child.

I'm proud of you for...

Thanks for trying so hard on...

I'm pleased the way you...

How thoughtful of you to...

You've made real progress on ...

Keep up the good work on...

You are a natural at...

I'm impressed with the way you...

I like it when you...

That was a really good try at...

That's a great improvement on...

I'm pleased you...

You did a good job on...

You showed a lot of creativity at...

Thanks for being so...

I appreciate you being...

Follow these steps when you are praising behavior:

1. Praise immediately.
2. Be enthusiastic.
3. Be specific.
4. Give a benefit or reward.
5. Add touch.

Here are some additional reinforcing statements you can use regularly.

I love you.

We make a great team!

I have fun with you.

I'm glad you're my son/daughter.

I enjoy spending time with you.

If you're concerned/sad/hurting, I'm here to listen.

You mean a lot to me.

Well done!

You can do it! You've done hard things before.

I like the way you're working!

Good thinking!

That's a great idea!

Excellent work!

What a great job!

That's a good point.

Thanks for sharing.

I knew you could do it!

Thanks for doing what I asked.

I couldn't have done it without you.

Wow! Cool! Way to go!

That's great! Give me five!

You're on the right track.

You're a great helper.

Follow these steps when you are complimenting behavior:

1. Say it immediately.
2. Express delight.
3. Describe the behavior.
4. Include a benefit.
5. Add touch.

In addition to praising and offering compliments, ignoring is an essential skill. Ignore minor challenging behaviors you want your child to stop doing. Children love attention and often do things to prompt a reaction. Sometimes it is best not to give them attention, but ignoring must be done in a certain way to be effective. Follow these steps:

1. Show no emotion; remain neutral.
2. Turn your attention away immediately. Act interested in something else.
3. Avoid looking at your child.
4. Have no physical contact until the behavior stops.
5. The moment the behavior stops, warmly give your child positive attention.

Track praise and your child's progress using the chart below. Write down the date and behavior you are praising. Put a plus (+) sign each time you praise your child, each day of the week.

Month/Year: _____

Behavior	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat