



Positive Parenting

School Counselor's Newsletter to aid and encourage parents of elementary school-aged children

Strengthening Your Relationship With Your Child

Most parents would agree that parenting is, to say the least, challenging. It is especially challenging when a parent feels that their relationship with their child is strained. If you happen to feel this way, don't worry, you are not alone and there are many simple and free techniques you can start today that will help you build a stronger and more positive relationship with your child. This newsletter focuses on two techniques: Giving Effective Commands and Playtime with your child.

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Special points of interest:

- How to Give Effective Commands
- Having P.R.I.D.E. in playtime.
- Resources

Contrary to public belief, verbal disapproval, such as criticism, **does not** stop behaviors; it has actually been shown to not only increase the behaviors but also increase noncompliance to adult requests in general.



How to Give Effective Commands

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."
~ James Baldwin

Parents often become frustrated when they have to repeat themselves or raise their voices at their children. A few simple changes in the way you give instruction can improve your child's compliance to commands and reduce your frustration.

Children value attention from their parents. If you consistently provide them with positive attention (i.e. praise, play), your child will begin to increase the behaviors that are rewarded with attention and decrease the behaviors that are not.



Examples of Praise

Nonverbal: hugs, smile, thumbs up, rubbing shoulder.

Verbal: "I like the way you play quietly", "That's a beautiful picture", "I'm proud of you for being polite".



- 1. Eliminate distractions**
Make sure to have your child's attention by eliminating distractions, such as the TV or conversation. Also, make eye contact with your child.
- 2. Give a command not a question**
"Turn off the TV, please." instead of "Can you turn off the TV?". Give command in a calm and firm voice. Avoid yelling the command.
- 3. Keep commands simple and clear**
Do not give multiple directives at once ("Clean up your room"); give single direct commands ("Put the red Legos in the container, please").
- 4. Make sure your child understands your command.**
Commands should match your child's ability and maturity level. Do not expect a young child or a child with attention problems to remember multiple commands or commands to be followed at a later time. You may also need to repeat or reword the command.
- 5. Praise your child for following the command.**
Give your child **immediate** praise **every** time they follow a command.
- 6. Practice, practice, practice.**
Do not become discouraged because you and/or your child are having trouble with this method. You and your child will become better at giving and following commands the more you practice.

Have P.R.I.D.E. in Playtime !

For **at least** 5 minutes **every day**, use these skills to make playtime “special time”. Remember, **consistency** is **extremely** important, spend “special time” with your child **everyday**. This daily positive interaction will make it easier for you to give effective commands.

Praise your child

Use **specific** compliments (“*I like the way the you are playing quietly !*”) instead of **general** compliments (“*Good job!*”). This lets your child know what behavior you expect from him/her and therefore acts to increase the behavior.

Reflect appropriate talk

Repeat what your child says (*Child: “I made a star”; Caregiver: “Yes, you made a star”*). This lets your child know you are listening and that you understand and accept them.

Imitate appropriate play

Do what your child is doing (*Child: “I made a star”; Caregiver: “I’m making a star, too”*). Your child will be flattered by the attention and tends to increase your child’s imitation of what you do.

Describe appropriate behavior

Describe what your child is doing (“*You’re making a tower*”). This lets your child know that you are interested in what they are doing and holds your child’s attention during play.

Enthusiastically play, praise, and describe

Showing enthusiasm makes the interaction feel more sincere and fun for **both** the parent and child.



Having P.R.I.D.E. in playtime builds your child’s self-esteem by giving him/her a sense of pride and satisfaction in acting correctly. This in turn strengthens the relationship between you and your child.



Avoid giving commands and asking questions during playtime. Statements like “Will you hand me the paper?” and “Are you having fun?” **does not** allow the child to lead the playtime and leads to conversation instead of play.



“Your children needs your **presence** more than your presents.”
~Jesse Jackson



Resources

www.parenting.org

A service of Boys Town, offers free **age-specific** parenting help, tips, advice, guidance, support and resources for discipline problems, behavior troubles, so parents can successfully raise, praise, discipline, teach and love their child. Topics address various developmental issues and are categorized by age. Site includes a free e-book, informational books, pamphlets & DVDs, and access to a national electronic hotline.

www.kidshealth.org

A service of The Nemours Foundation, www.KidsHealth.org is self-proclaimed as “the Web’s most visited site about children’s health and parenting”. The site provides **age-specific** articles, animations, games, and health resources for parents, teens, and children. Topics address a wide range of physical, emotional, and behavioral issues that affect children and teens.

Common Sense Parenting, 3rd Edition

by Ray Burke, Ph.D., Ron Herron, and Bridget Barnes

(Paperback, 2007, \$14.95, www.boystownpress.org). 2006 Winner of the National Parenting Center’s Seal of Approval. Guidebook for parents of children **ages 6-16** which **provides proven techniques** that will aid them in facing and addressing a myriad of family challenges including building good family relationships and preventing & correcting misbehavior.

References

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