



How to
Shape or
Change your
Child's
Behavior

Originally prepared by:
Elna Cain, RN, MS
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To order copies of this document contact:
nancy.donnelly@state.co.us



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

In our society, we tend to give attention to bad behavior and ignore good behavior. The newspaper, radio and TV tell of murderers, terrorists and rapists.

Hardly ever do we hear about people who do good deeds, are kind to relatives and friends and take good care of their families. The habit of giving attention to bad behavior affects family life.



Examples:

A family member takes out the trash every day and no one notices. One day when he forgets to take out the trash, other family members complain.

No one notices that the laundry is always done and the family always has clean clothes. Then, one day the washing machine breaks down, the clothes don't get washed and everyone asks "Where are my clean clothes?"

When a child is quietly drawing with his crayons
in a coloring book, we tend to leave him alone

but when he starts coloring on the walls, we suddenly start paying attention to him.

Children need lots of attention. To shape or
change a child's behavior, we need to change the
way we give attention. That is...

Give attention for good behavior
and
ignore bad behavior

Children need a lot of attention and they seek and accept any kind of attention, positive or negative.

Some examples of positive attention include:

A HUG

A SMILE

TELLING THEM "I LOVE YOU"

Thanking them for something they did or said, telling them:

"What a nice picture you drew. Let's hang it on the wall."

or

"I feel proud when you put your toys away." or

"I'm glad to see you playing nicely with your friend and taking turns with your toys."



Negative Attention Includes:

A frown

A spanking

Taking away a privilege

Yelling

"How many times do I have to tell you to...?"

Threatening

"If you don't stop it this minute I'm going to...!"

It's better for everyone if most of the attention a child gets is positive. This is hard to do since children often do things that upset us. However, it is worthwhile to give positive attention for good behavior, so good behavior increases and bad behavior decreases.



How do bad behaviors get started?

A toddler hears someone say a swear word. The toddler says the swear word in front of his parents. Surprised, the parents laugh.

The next day, the toddler uses the swear word again in front of his mother and a neighbor. Mother and the neighbor laugh.

But when the toddler uses the swear word at preschool, the teacher calls the mother and the mother gets angry at the toddler.

What should happen?



When the toddler uses the swear word in front of his parents and a neighbor, they should focus their attention positively on something else the toddler had said or done.

HOW TO SHAPE OR CHANGE YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

THINK:

Do I give attention to bad behavior and ignore good behavior?

If so, how can I change the way I give attention?

What bad behavior in my child do I most want to shape or change into a good behavior?

START:

Choose one behavior to start with, the one that concerns you the most.

Decide on the specific desired or good behavior you are trying to encourage.

Decide what steps will lead to the desired or good behavior.

EXAMPLE:

Challenging behavior—3 year-old-child will not clean up her toys.

Good or desired behavior—putting toys in toy box.

STEPS TOWARD GOOD/DESIRED BEHAVIOR:

♥♥♥ Stops playing when you give her clear direction that it is time to clean up

♥♥♥ Helps you clean up toys

♥♥♥ Cleans up toys on her own

GIVE POSITIVE ATTENTION FOR ALL STEPS TOWARD GOOD BEHAVIOR:

At first, give attention every time the child does the good behavior or takes any step toward the good behavior.

After the behavior changes, give attention for that good behavior less frequently.

EXAMPLES:

"I'm glad to see you holding your spoon."

"How nice that you ate that bite of egg with your spoon."

CHILDREN NEED TO BE TOLD AND SHOWN WHAT BEHAVIOR
IS ACCEPTABLE AND WHAT BEHAVIOR IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR:

Tell a child:

What you expect of him in different situations:

"Please hold my hand while we are in the store."

What makes you pleased, proud, and happy:

"I am happy you shared your toys today."

What you and other people like:

"Grandma and I really like it when you say 'please' and 'thank you'."

What makes you upset or sad:

"It makes me upset when you scream when you don't get what you want."



INSTRUCTIONS FOR BEHAVIOR THAT IS NOT ALLOWED:

Tell a child it is not OK to:

Hurt yourself or another person or an animal on purpose:

"It is not OK to bite me."

Destroy things that belong to you or to others:

"It is not OK to break your sister's doll."

To take things that belong to others:

"It is not OK to take Peter's truck without permission."

Suggest or give her something else to do.

"Instead of coloring on the wall, let's color in your coloring book together."

Use physical removal for times that are dangerous to the child or to others.

EXAMPLE:

A child who walks into the street—

After physically removing the child from the street, calmly tell him why it was not safe, then divert his attention by giving him something to play with or sit with him and read a book. This will allow both of you to calm down.

The following are some examples of how parents can influence their children's behavior. Make sure what you expect of your child is right for the child's age.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR	DESIRED BEHAVIOR	TIPS
Whining	<p>Talking in a normal tone of voice.</p> <p>Using words and sentences appropriate for age when asking for things.</p> <p>Not using whining to get attention.</p>	<p>Whenever possible listen and respond when children want to tell you something.</p> <p>If you are unable to fully listen or respond right away to what your child is saying, pause and explain this to her. "I need to finish my phone call first and will talk with you as soon as I am done."</p> <p>Ignore whining.</p>
Breaking household objects	<p>Handling things gently and carefully.</p> <p>Not handling or playing rough near objects that are easily broken.</p> <p>Not breaking things on purpose.</p>	<p>Breakables should be kept out of reach of children whenever possible.</p> <p>Childproof your home.</p>
Biting and/or hitting	<p>Showing anger in ways other than biting or hitting. Asking parent or caregiver for help.</p> <p>Using words to talk about what is making them mad.</p> <p>Walking away.</p>	<p>If necessary, remove the child from the situation.</p> <p>After the child has calmed down, explain to her that it hurts to be bitten or hit and must never bite or hit anyone—tell the child that feelings are ok—hurting others is not.</p> <p>Show your child other things to do when upset such as using words to express anger. ("I don't like that." or "That makes me mad.")</p>

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR	DESIRED BEHAVIOR	TIPS
Temper Tantrums	<p>Not having temper tantrums as often.</p> <p>Temper outbursts not lasting as long.</p>	<p>Calmly take the child out of the situation.</p> <p>Tell your child quietly, face-to-face that you do not like his behavior.</p> <p>Give attention when child has calmed down. "I like how you are able to calm down."</p>
Refusing to eat	<p>Sitting at a dinner table and touching a spoon or food.</p> <p>Eating any food.</p> <p>Eating more food.</p>	<p>Avoid nagging, threatening and warning your child during dinnertime. Talk about good things that have happened that day.</p> <p>When possible, let your child help prepare food and set the table. Praise your child's efforts to help.</p>
Not listening	<p>Listening to your request.</p> <p>Following your directions.</p>	<p>Make eye contact with your child—get on the child's level.</p> <p>Give clear, step-by-step directions.</p> <p>Give them praise for following directions.</p>

Remember, change doesn't happen all at once

We, as parents and caregivers, are role models for our children. Modeling good behavior begins with us.

It is the BEHAVIOR, not the child, that is good or bad.

Ignore the behavior, NOT THE CHILD.

Listen to your child.

Make sure what you expect of your child is right for the child's age.

If you would like to know more about your child's growth and development, ask your health care provider or local public health agency.

Most importantly...

LOVE YOUR CHILD
NO MATTER WHAT!!!



