Encouraging good behaviour (1-6 years)

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Encouraging good behaviour in your child

When your child behaves in challenging ways, it is good to have a range of behaviour management options. A positive and constructive approach is often the best way to guide your child's behaviour. This means giving your child attention when he behaves well, rather than just applying consequences when he does something you don't like.

Tips for encouraging good behaviour in your child

You can encourage good behaviour in your child in a positive and constructive way using these suggestions:

· **Be a role model.** Your child watches you to get clues on how to behave – and what you do is often much more important than what you say. For example, if you want your child to say 'please', say it yourself. If you don't want your child to raise his voice, speak quietly and gently yourself.

· **Catch your child being 'good'.** When your child is behaving in a way you like, give him some positive feedback. For example, 'Wow, you're playing so nicely. I really like the way you're keeping all the blocks on the table'. This works better than waiting for the blocks to come crashing to the floor before you take notice and say, 'Hey, stop that'.

· **Use descriptive praise.** Tell your child specifically what he is doing well – for example, 'Great to see you sharing'.

· **Get down to your child's level.** When you get close to your child, you can tune in to what he might be feeling or thinking. Being close also helps him focus on what you are saying about his behaviour. If you are close to your child and have his attention, you do not need to make him look at you.

· **Listen actively.** Nod as your child talks and repeat back what you think your child is feeling. For example, 'It sounds like you feel really frustrated that your blocks fell down'. This can help your child cope with big emotions like frustration, which sometimes lead to unwanted behaviour like tantrums. It also comforts your child and makes him feel respected.

· **Keep promises.** When you follow through on your promises, good or bad, your child learns to trust and respect you. He learns that you will not let him down when you have promised something nice, and he also learns not to try to change your mind when you have explained a consequence.

· **Create an environment for good behaviour.** You can shape the environment to help your child behave well. This can be as simple as making sure your child's space has plenty of safe, stimulating things to play with. It is hard for your child to remember not to touch. Reduce the chance of problems by keeping breakables and valuables out of sight.

- **Choose your battles.** Before you get involved in anything your child is doing – especially to say 'no' or 'stop' – ask yourself if it really matters. By keeping instructions, requests and negative feedback to a minimum, you create less opportunity for conflict and bad feelings. Rules are important but use them only when it is really important.

- **Keep things simple and positive.** If you give clear, simple instructions your child will know what is expected of him – for example, 'Please hold my hand when we cross the road'. Positive rules are usually better than negative ones, because they guide your child's behaviour in a positive way. For example, 'Please shut the gate' is better than 'Don't leave the gate open'.

- **Give children responsibility – and consequences.** For example, if it is your child's responsibility to pack her lunch box and he forgets, the natural consequence is feeling hungry at lunch time. At other times you might need to provide consequences for unacceptable or dangerous behaviour. For these times, it is best to ensure that you have explained the consequences and that your child has agreed to them in advance. For example, you might say, 'We agreed that the consequence for fighting was to turn off the TV. So that's what we are doing'.

Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Four weeks to a better-behaved child: breakthrough discipline techniques that really work](#)
- [I don't hit](#)
- [The Playful Parent](#)