

THE POWER OF POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT WITH CHILDREN



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Positive Reinforcement: How can you use it with children?

Providing encouragement and recognition for positive behaviors is one of the most basic forms of positive reinforcement, and it usually yields the best outcomes. When children behave within the expectations and boundaries you have set for them, they should be given verbal encouragement and recognition.

Some examples of positive reinforcement are:

- Giving a nonverbal acknowledgment like a smile, nod, or thumbs up. For example, when a child is following everyday guidelines, like cleaning up after dinner, you can acknowledge this with a quick smile or thumbs up.
- Providing recognition for a job well done. For example, if you observe your child complete a homework project or work hard to master a task (e.g., tying shoes), acknowledge this by praising the great job. (“I love the way you kept working at tying your shoes—I am so proud of you!”)
- Acknowledging an act of kindness. For example, you notice your child helping a sibling clean up a mess, you can acknowledge this for the whole family to see: “Attention everyone, Julio helped Daniel clean up the toys because he is a good big brother. This is a great example of kindness—great job Julio!” However, it is important to know the individual personalities and temperaments of your children. Some children may prefer more private recognitions of their kindness.
- Encouraging a positive behavior through verbal recognition. For example, when you know a child is working on a behavior that has been a challenge in the past, you want to offer encouragement when you observe their positive behavior. For example, “Louis, I noticed that you took turns with Elizabeth on the tablet today. I saw how happy Elizabeth was to play on the tablet with you—keep up the good work!”



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