

Promoting Positive Behavior within Your Home

by Heather Grocott

Do's and Don'ts of Promoting Positive Behavior In your Home

Don't say...	Do say...
"Stop yelling"	<i>Please use inside voice when we are in the house. It is much more respectful to speak to people this way.</i>
"You need to behave"	What does, "behave" even mean to children? Be sure to set clear expectations in your home. How is it that you expect all members of your family to, "behave?"
"No TV during dinner"	TV is an option before or after we have dinner. During dinner time, we will discuss _____ instead.
"You need to be nice to your sister/brother/etc."	What does, "be nice," mean, and why does your child have to do it? Give a specific example of what you are looking for him/her to do or act.
"No throwing"	<i>We throw balls and other things when we play outside, not in our house.</i>
"I don't have time for this right now."	This statement equals, "I don't care and I can't be bothered with you," to your child. Instead, prevent yourself from feeling this way in the first place. If you still find yourself in a bind, try phrases such as, " <i>tomorrow we will... but right now it is time to...</i> " or, " <i>I am sorry we have to rush right now, but later on we can talk about/do...</i> "
"No hitting."	<i>Hands stay down, thank you.</i>
"No running."	<i>Running is for outside, walking is for inside.</i>
"If you don't do _____, I am going to take away _____."	Threatening children by taking things away is an ineffective method of trying to promote positive behavior. With this approach you are essentially engaging in negative behavior by using a threat and taking something away, when what you really want is for your child to do something positive .

In general, we typically tend to teach our children things such as tying their shoes and riding a bike. We expect their teachers to teach them the ABCs and 123s. But who teaches our children how to behave? Who is responsible for promoting positive behavior and actions within our children? Yes, it is another one of the ten million aspects of parenting!

Promoting positive behavior in your home is essentially promoting and enriching your child with positive mental health. We care about our child's physical health, so it is just as important for us to remember that our child's mental health is given equal consideration and attention. The tricky part is that physical health is more concrete and comfortable to us as adults. Mental health, especially in the area of positive behavior, enters an area where we do not always feel as though we have expertise... We tend to question ourselves, "Am I right about this? Am I wrong?" "Was I too hard on my child?"

As parents, it is important to remember that the key to promoting positive behavior within your child is to lead by example. We must engage in positive conversations and exhibit positive behaviors throughout the course of our daily routines in order to pass this on to our children. Also, being consistent, fair, and predictable are extremely important. Other key aspects toward promoting positive behavior include:

Using positive language

Think of how you like to be spoken to by your boss or other people in your life... You are much more receptive and interested when people speak to you using positive language such as, "you did a really nice job with ____ today." Acknowledging when your child behaves positively is the first step toward promoting this behavior and ensuring that it will continue. When using positive language, tell your child what **to do** instead of what **not to do**.

Give specific instructions

Telling your child to "stop" doing something with negative language is ineffective, and it doesn't teach them **what** to do in place of the negative behavior. Instead, it is helpful to provide your child with verbal cues such as,

- * we use our feet to walk while we are in the grocery store
- * your hands were meant to love your sister, brother
- * our voices should be used to share our feelings quietly

Teach about feelings

It is important for children to know what feelings are, why we have them, and how to cope with them. Practice labeling feelings when your child exhibits any type of behavior, not just negative behavior. Using books, pictures or videos can be helpful. Next, teach your child strategies to help them deal with their feelings – "when I feel angry, I can try to ...". Using real life examples or examples from books can help. Lastly, praise your child when he or she is able to label and deal with a feeling independently.

Consider “Why”

Consider why your child sometimes engages in challenging behavior. What happened before the behavior? During? After? How might you encourage your child to act differently? Remember that all behaviors have a meaning and purpose for children.

Household Rules

Plan a family fun night and establish “household rules.” After all, how can you expect your child to behave positively if they are unsure of the expectations at home? Establish 3 to 5 simple, clearly stated, age appropriate household rules. Remember to post the rules in your home. In order to be effective, you must teach the rules, review the rules, practice the rules, support your child with the rules, and celebrate successes with the household rules!

For additional ideas of promoting positive behavior in your home, be sure to talk to your child’s teacher. Are your household expectations similar to those at home?