**Step 2**

**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR: OVERVIEW**

Now that you have made it clear to yourself and your child what behaviors needs to stop and what you would realistically like to see instead, we need to start encouraging good behaviors. We do this by increasing positive interactions with our child as well as by praising and rewarding your child for doing the good behaviors you listed above.

**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR:**

**STRENGTHENING A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP**

When families are stuck in patterns of misbehavior, many times the relationship between child and parents becomes tense and strained. Parents begin to feel like most of their time and energy goes into nagging, disciplining, reminding, and yelling at their kids. Children are angry, argumentative and get attention most often for misbehaving. During these times, no one feels like staying calm or being patient. Here are some strategies to help strengthen or rebuild the parent-child relationship. You may do many of these strategies already, but doing them more can decrease misbehavior by helping everyone feel better.

Schedule “special time” with your child every day to make it clear to him that he is important to you. Special time also gives you a chance to practice your relationship building skills. Set aside **10 to 15 minutes each day** for "special time". Each parent should use this time at least 5 days a week to practice the skills below. “Special time” must be **one-on-one**! Choose activities that are **cooperative and creative**, like Legos or crafts. **Avoid** activities that bring out frustration, hyperactivity, or aggressive behavior because they are competitive, complicated, or messy.

During Special time show positive attention by:

1. **Praising** your child for good behavior, ideas, and work.
2. **Being agreeable** with what your child says and does as long as it is not breaking rules.
3. **Describing out loud** what your younger child is doing to make it obvious that you are paying attention and value what he is doing. A**ctively listening** byrepeating back what your child says to you to make sure you understand.

Decrease negative interactions by:

1. **Not being critical**: Avoid criticizing or making sarcastic comments to your child.
2. **Not giving commands.** Giving commands can lead to refusal, which is not fun.
3. **Avoid asking questions.**  Asking questions can interrupt what a child is doing and focus attention on what you are interested in rather than your child’s interests.

Throughout the day make an extra effort to use these skills when interacting with your child. Remember to:

1. **Show affection**: Show you child that you care about him through warmth, kind words, and physical affection
2. **Actively listen**: Take time to listen to your child talk about what he wants to talk about. Help your child express his feelings and let him know that you understand that some emotions can be upsetting.
3. **Avoid criticism**: Correct misbehavior by telling your child the right thing to do, without pointing out the mistake (which can lead to frustration or misbehavior). Say “The books go on this shelf,” rather than “You put that in the wrong place, the book goes here.”
4. **Have fun**: Make the time to play with your child the game or activities that he enjoys.

**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR:**

**PRAISE**

If parents pay attention to a behavior, it is more likely to happen again. One of the most basic strategies is to praise your child for good behavior. Praise is most effective when it is **immediate** and **specific**. Try to catch your child being good and praise him as soon as he starts the good behavior. Telling your child “Great job!” is good. Saying “Great job picking up your toys” is better. Saying “Great job picking up your toys the first time I asked” tells your child exactly what he did to make you happy. Don’t cancel out your praise by bringing up past misbehavior, such as “Thanks for picking up your coat. I don’t know why I have to remind you.” If you make your child feel badly when he cooperates, he will be less likely to cooperate again. Here is our list of misbehaviors and opposite good behaviors with examples of giving praise added in:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Problem Behavior* | *Opposite Good Behavior* | *Specific Praise* |
| Argues | Accepts limits politely | You are doing a great job listening. |
| Refuses to follow instructions | Do what is told the first time | Thank you for doing what I asked the first time. |
| Tantrums | Handle frustration calmly | You did a super job staying calm when your brother took your toy. |
| Hitting / pushing / kicking | Use words to solve problem | Using your words shows me that you are really a big kid. |
| Screaming or talking too loudly | Speaks with “indoor voice” | It is so nice when you use your “indoor voice”. |
| Bosses other kids around | Lets other kids choose the game | It is so nice of you to let your friends choose the game. |
| Whines | Uses pleasant tone | I am happy to talk with you when you use such a nice voice. |
| Plays roughly with animals | Plays nicely with animals | I like the way you are playing nicely with the dog. |
| Plays roughly with, or breaks, toys | Plays carefully with toys | Look at how careful you are being with your toys. Good job. |
| Swears or uses bad language | Uses nice words | What a nice thing to say. |
| Makes threats | Uses words to express frustration | I am proud of you for using your words. |
| Criticizes others or says mean things | Gives compliments and says nice things | That was sweet of you to say nice things to your sister. |
| Acts angry or irritable | Acts pleasant and cheerful | I have so much fun with you when you are cheerful |
| Interrupts | Waits for one’s turn | Wow! You are being so patient. |
| Refuses to eat / bad table manners | Eats what prepared/leaves a clean table | I love eating with you when you use good manners. |
| Blames others | Takes responsibility | Thank you for telling me what you did. I know that was hard. |
| Stalling | Doing things on time | Thank you for getting ready quickly, now we have time to read. |
| Has anger or emotional outbursts | Uses strategies to remain calm | You did a terrific job calming your self down. |

**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR:**

**THE STRUCTURED REWARD SYSTEM**

When trying to manage a child with behavioral problems, it is common to find that praise is not enough to motivate the child to do chores, follow rules, or obey commands. As a result, it is necessary to set up a more powerful program to motivate your child. One such program that has been successful with children is the Home Poker Chip Program (for younger children) or the Home Point System (for older children). Here are the steps to follow:

* 1. **Choose a currency**: Choose something that is easy for you to manage and that you can control, like inexpensive poker chips that have different colors for each child. If you use something like pennies your kids might find them rather than earn them. It is also helpful to choose something that your child will prefer. Older kids often prefer a point system. Get a notebook and set it up like a checkbook with five columns, one each for the date, the item, deposits, withdrawals, and the running balance.
  2. **Explain the plan and involve your child:** We want this system to be as positive as possible. Tell your child that you want to show them how much you appreciate them listening to you by having him earn rewards. Encourage your child to be excited about the program by creating a bank out of an old box or by decorating a poster board with the rules.
  3. **Make a list of good behaviors**: Go back to page and look at the specific behaviors you were hoping to increase. Make sure you focus on the behaviors that are most important to you (e.g., doing what is asked the first time). You can also include specific tasks or chores that cause frequent problems (e.g., getting ready in the morning, feeding the dog). You can also give your child a bonus chip for good behavior whenever you want.
  4. **Make a list of privileges and rewards**: Including rewards that your child doesn’t get to do often (outings, sleep overs) can make the program fun. Including everyday activities (electronics, playing outside) will keep your child motivated over the longer term.
  5. **Do a little math**: Decide how many chips (or points, etc.) each good behavior is worth. Estimate how many chips your child will earn on a typical day (let’s say 10). Then price the everyday privileges so that your child spends most of his chips (about 2/3rds) everyday (that would be 6 or 7). Price the bigger rewards so that your child can do one or two each week.
  6. **Get started**: The first goal is for your child to be successful, so give your child lots of chips at first. After the plan is up and running, require better behavior to earn chips. **Do not give the chips or points away before** the child has done what s/he was told to do, only afterward. When you give points or chips for good behavior, **smile** and tell the child what you like that s/he has done. **Do not take chips away:** Your child may lose interest in earning chips if he thinks he might lose them.
  7. **Update as needed**: Tell your child from the beginning that the behaviors, rewards, and chip values will change over time.

**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR:**

Activities your Child Enjoys

Make a list of activities that your child enjoys doing on a daily basis and special prizes or activities that your child would be excited to earn. For each item decide if this is something that you are willing and able to withhold from your child if s/he does not have enough points/chips to get it. You can also write down some notes about what challenges there might be for each activity. For example, earning TV is a great reward, but what happens if the family wants to watch TV in the living room when your child has not earned enough chips?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Daily Activities  *(What does your child enjoy doing on a typical day?)* | | | |
|  | Am I willing to withhold this? | Can I withhold this? | Notes |
| 1. |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |  |
| 7. |  |  |  |
| 8. |  |  |  |
| 9. |  |  |  |
| 10. |  |  |  |
|  | | | |
| Special Rewards  *(What are some special activities of prizes that your child does not get very often?)* | | | |
|  | Am I willing to withhold this? | Can I withhold this? | Notes |
| 1. |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |
| 4. |  |  |  |
| 5. |  |  |  |
| 6. |  |  |  |
| 7. |  |  |  |
| 8. |  |  |  |
| 9. |  |  |  |
| 10. |  |  |  |

**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR:**

**Structured Reward System Work Sheet**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Currency: Poker chips/token Points Stickers Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* | | |
| *Positive Behaviors to Increase*  (see page 5 “Define Good Behavior”) | Value |
| 1. Do what’s asked of you the first time |  |
| 2. Accept “no” calmly |  |
| 3. Be respectful |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |
|  |  |
|  | | |
| *Rewards*  (see page 14 “Activities your Child Enjoys”) | | |
| Daily Privileges | Value |
| 1. Screen Time/electronics (\_\_\_ minutes) |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |
| Special Activities | | |
| Activity | Value |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| 4. |  |
| 5. |  |
| 6. |  |
| 7. |  |
| 8. |  |
| 9. |  |
| 10. |  |

**ENCOURAGING GOOD BEHAVIOR:**

**Summary**

1. Strengthen your relationship with your child
   1. Show affection, actively listen, avoid criticism, have fun, model good behavior
   2. Set aside “Special Time”
2. Praise
   1. Catch your child being good
   2. Praise good behaviors that are the opposite of the misbehaviors your want to get rid of
   3. Be specific and immediate
3. Structured reward systems
   1. If you are not using a system, start one
   2. If this behavior is not your system, add it
   3. If the behavior is in your system, change it
      1. Change the wording to match your expectations
      2. Increase the point value