

Promoting Positive Behaviour

No one likes nagging, yelling and punishing, neither adults who do it nor children who are on the receiving end. Here are a few ways to encourage the kind of behaviour that can make the day go more smoothly for everyone.

Organize to prevent problems

- Organize the environment to make it easy for children to do the right thing. For example, install coat hooks and toy storage shelves where children can reach them; put away breakables.
- Provide enough appropriate supplies and materials for everyone.
- Supervise carefully, be observant and act to change the situation *before* behaviour gets out of control.

Keep a routine

- Establish some structure and routines throughout the day.
- Prepare children for upcoming activities. “After the toys are put away, we’ll put on our jackets and go outside to play.”
- Make sure that children have nutritious snacks and meals.
- Avoid too much TV or any long periods of inactivity.

Decide what’s negotiable and what’s not

- Set simple, firm, clear limits which apply to everyone.
- Once you’ve set the limits, stick to them.
- Within the limits you set, allow children to make choices that are appropriate to the situation and to their ages.

Keep your language positive

- Show children how you want them to behave by setting a good example.
- Say what *to do* instead of what *not to do*: “Use your quiet voice in the house.” Avoid overuse of words such as “no”, “don’t” and “stop”.
- Show children that you like being with them: smile, make eye contact, call them frequently by their name and use words of encouragement and hugs.
- Use your voice as a teaching tool. Speak slowly, calmly, distinctly and directly.
- Let children know you notice when you like their behaviour. A little positive feedback goes a long way!

Pay attention to feelings

- Listen for the feelings behind children’s words and actions and reflect them back: “It sounds like you’re feeling”
- Remember that, just like adults, children sometimes have a bad day and that is okay.

Examine your attitude

- Know what behaviour is typical for different ages. Let this guide you as you decide what you can reasonably expect from a particular child.
- Choose activities that *you* enjoy and do these with children. Enthusiasm is contagious.
- Be aware of your own stress level and take care of yourself.

This resource sheet was adapted from material developed by Janice MacAulay, Jane Fox and Cindy Helman for Caregiver Training, a collaborative training program of the Family Resource Services Group and Home Child Care Agencies of Ottawa-Carleton.