

Praise

Catch your child being good

When most parents think of discipline, they think of punishment. But good discipline is really guidance, and that often involves using praise.

Children learn what they are like from other people. The ways parents respond to children influence how children feel about themselves.

Using praise to help correct inappropriate behavior can be just as effective as using punishment. And praise helps children feel good about themselves.

Correcting inappropriate behavior and punishing a child is sometimes necessary. But you should balance out punishment by giving at least an equal amount of praise. Catch your child being good!

A little praise goes a long way. If you want your child to think he or she is valuable, lovable, and appreciated, your child needs to know that you feel that way.

On Back

How you can use praise as a way to discipline your child.

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You & Your Child



Catch your child being good

Praise when your child does something well

If the only time you respond is when you are displeased, your child may come to think he or she is a bad person. And when you only respond to your child when he or she does something wrong, your child may come to think that misbehaving is the only way to get your attention.

When your child does something well, tell or show him or her how much you appreciate it.

Catch your child being good

When children behave nicely, it may seem unnecessary to respond because nothing is being done wrong.

Good discipline means noticing good behavior and accomplishments and responding with praise or appreciation. A simple “I like how you are playing by yourself with the blocks” or “This is really a nice wall you have built” will mean a great deal to your child.

Be specific

Make sure your child understands what you are praising him or her for. Just saying “Good boy” is too vague. Save it for the dog. Be more specific. “Thank you for picking up the candy wrappers. That was a big help to me.”

Don't overdo it

You don't have to go overboard in praising your child. And you don't have to exaggerate.

Simply thanking your child for something he or she did is a good way to give praise.

Praise in other ways besides words

Telling your child you appreciate something he or she did is one way to praise. Other ways include showing interest in what your child says and does, and listening to what he or she has to say.

A smile, a hug, a thumbs-up signal, or a high-five also lets your child know that you are pleased. For example, right after your child puts away his or her toys, give your child a smile and then explain what it is that pleases you.

Praise immediately

Don't wait to give praise. If your child helps to clear the dinner table, praise him or her when the last dish is taken into the kitchen.

Praise all the time at first, but less often later

If you give your child a chore, for example, and your child finishes it, make sure you let him or her know that you appreciate the job. This will help your child learn the chore and feel satisfied when he or she succeeds in finishing it.

After your child does the chore almost all the time, praise him or her only once in a while.

Don't use love as a reward

You always love and accept your child no matter what he or she does. Tell your child that you do.

Make sure your child understands that your love for him or her has nothing to do with you not liking bad behavior. When your child misbehaves, for example, you might say, “I love you, James, but I don't like it when you call me names.”

