

## Positive Guidance

- **Look for the reasons behind behavior.** Remember, behavior is communication. Children's challenging behavior is usually caused by: 1) A lack of knowledge or experience; 2) A need for attention; 3) Physical triggers, such as fatigue or hunger; 4) Emotional triggers like boredom or fear. If you can find and alleviate the cause, the behavior typically stops.
- **Tell the children specifically what to do, rather than what not to do.** The words, "Put your crayons in the box and put the paper in the drawer," are much more helpful than, "Don't make a mess with the art supplies."
- **Point out positive behavior.** Let the children know when they get it right. "You put your toys away and hung up your coat. You're a hard worker." Clear, [descriptive encouragement rather than praise](#) helps your child understand your expectations and builds confidence.
- **Try the "when/then" strategy.** "When we put away the books, then we can go outside."
- **Divert a behavioral issue by offering two choices that are both okay with you.** For example, perhaps a child runs away from you when walking through the church. You could say, "You can walk next to me or I can hold your hand. Which would you like to do?" If the child refuses to comply, you gently but firmly make the choice. "Okay, I will help you. I am going to hold your hand."
- **Encourage children to use words to solve problems.** Give verbal prompts. "You don't like it when Sophie takes your toys. Can you tell her how you feel?"
- **Use natural and logical consequences when appropriate to guide learning.** For example, a child who throws the crayons needs to pick them up.
- **Learn nonverbal techniques.** Get down on the child's level and make sustained eye contact; use gestures, such as shaking your head; stand close to the child or gently touch the child on the shoulder. If you find yourself unable to manage a situation even with the use of these ideas or feel angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed, let your partner know. Sometimes it takes more than one person to guide a child's behavior and that's okay.
- **Turn negative statements in to positive statements.** Instead of saying "Don't run." Say "Let's use our walking feet." Instead of saying "Stop yelling." Say "Let's use our indoor voices." Tell children what behavior you would like to see instead of pointing out their mistakes. Try to eliminate the words no, stop and don't.