

# GUIDED SELF-MANAGEMENT TOOLS FOR Disruptive Behavior

Parents of Children 3-12



## BEHAVIORAL PARENT TRAINING

# FOR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS



## INTRODUCTION

Most children have times when they don't follow rules, can't control their temper, or have an emotional outburst or tantrum. These disruptive behaviors are more likely to occur when a child is worried, angry, or stressed. However, when these behaviors become frequent and lead to difficulty at home, school, and/or with friends, working with your child's primary care team can help you get these behaviors under control.

The most effective interventions for decreasing children's behavior problems focus on teaching parents how to best use parenting strategies to consistently manage and respond to misbehavior. This is commonly referred to as Behavioral Parent Training, or BPT. You may have heard of some of these skills before. The worksheets in this packet will explain the skills and help you use BPT strategies at home. All of the skills included in our guide are *evidence-based*, meaning they are strategies that have been tested and proven to be effective through rigorous scientific research. Many families have found that these parenting strategies to be beneficial; we hope they will work for you, too.

## SKILLS & EXERCISES

Each of the skill handouts includes an explanation of the skill, a description of how it will help your family, instructions for how to use the strategy at home, and a list of common questions and concerns parents usually ask, along with our answers. We also include worksheets you can use with your child. Work through the guide with your child and make these exercises and techniques a part of your daily life. See what's working and what's still challenging, then adjust as needed. Let us know how things are going and be in touch if you and your child need any additional support for management of disruptive behavior problems. Good luck!



Skill 1

### Bonding Time

This practice helps increase your child's motivation to behave by improving the parent-child relationship through daily periods of uninterrupted and positive time together.



Skill 2

### Praising Good Behavior

This strategy helps you increase how often your child engages in appropriate behavior by consistently and quickly showing your approval and appreciation of positive behaviors, such as following rules.



Skill 3

### Shifting Attention

This skill helps you decrease how often your child engages in irritating or annoying behaviors, such as arguing or whining, by ignoring those behaviors and then praising your child when their behavior improves.



Skill 4

### Effective Directions

This technique increases the chances your child will follow instructions by giving clear, calm, and simple directions.



Skill 5

### Rewarding Good Behavior

These worksheets help you increase your child's interest in behaving appropriately by creating a program of rewards they can earn for good behaviors.



Skill 6

### Reasonable Consequences

This skill helps you create a structured and predictable home environment by setting and delivering clear consequences for misbehavior, such as breaking rules or engaging in destructive behavior.



Skill 7

### Planning Ahead

These worksheets help you plan how you will manage your child's misbehavior in places and times where your child is likely to act up (e.g., when in public, at the grocery store).

# PARENT HANDOUT: BONDING TIME



Disruptive Behavior Skill 1

## WHAT IS BONDING TIME?

- ▶ Bonding Time is reserving 5-20 minutes a day to connect with your child in an uninterrupted and focused way, like playing a game or sport together, in order to strengthen your relationship.
- ▶ During this time, your child gets to choose and lead the activity, ideally an interactive one you can engage in together. Your goal is to focus on what your child is doing and respond to their actions in an attentive, enthusiastic, and positive way.
- ▶ Some ideas for Bonding Time activities include playing with toys or a game, drawing or crafting, and throwing a ball back and forth. Older children tend to prefer more interactive activities, such as playing a sport, making a meal together, going for a walk or to the coffee shop, or having a conversation about things they enjoy, such as music, movies, sports, or their hobbies.
- ▶ Less interactive activities like watching TV are not as effective, because they provide fewer opportunities for you to participate in your child's play and give positive feedback.
- ▶ This practice can lead to positive results for children of all ages, but is often most effective with younger children.

## HERE'S HOW TO USE BONDING TIME AT HOME

- 1 Schedule a regular time** for Bonding Time, or join when your child is doing an activity you where can participate. Try to do this at least 3-5 times per week.
- 2 Ask what your child would like to do together.** Encourage them to choose an interactive activity, and let them lead it.
- 3 Put on your enthusiastic hat and attitude!** Pay attention to your child's actions and show eagerness and interest. For younger children, you can provide a detailed, running commentary of what you see ("I see you're putting the blue car on top of the red block"; "Now you're drawing a big castle!"). For older children, focus on being attentive and enthusiastic about your child's actions or interests while doing an activity they enjoy together ("I like the way you tried to dunk the ball"; "Tell me more about that band"; or saying "Wow, that's such a great strategy" while playing a game with your child).
- 4 Provide positive feedback.** Let your child know you are interested in them, show approval for good behavior ("Nice job taking turns"; "I like when we spend time together like this"), and show affection in ways that are comfortable for you (give a hug, high five, or pat on the head or shoulder). Be specific about what you like in your child's actions ("I like it when you show me how to draw these animals"; "I love how good you are at playing soccer").
- 5 Try not to criticize your child, ask questions, or give directions.** Avoid using words like "don't," "no," "stop," and "quit." Bonding Time is not the time to scold your child or teach new skills.
- 6 It is important that your child have your undivided attention.** Don't start Bonding Time when you're cooking a meal, on the phone, or about to leave for a meeting or errand. If you have other children, Bonding Time works best when they are doing other activities. Some parents like to have Bonding Time with each of their children.
- 7 Remember to relax and have fun!** This is a great opportunity to spend positive time together and feel closer to your child.

# PARENT HANDOUT: BONDING TIME TIPS



## HOW CAN BONDING TIME HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ When children misbehave, we want to increase their motivation to behave. Bonding Time teaches children to enjoy getting attention from parents for good behavior.
- ▶ We are all affected by the attention we receive. When you do well at work, it feels good to have your boss praise your efforts, even though you may simply be “doing your job”. Children respond well to attention for good behavior too, even if they are doing what they are “supposed to do”.
- ▶ It may seem counterintuitive, but giving children attention for misbehavior (like scolding) can still be rewarding. For many children, any attention is “good attention”. In fact, parents often pay more attention to children when they act out than when they are behaving!
- ▶ Your relationship with your child may sometimes feel less positive if you are dealing with a lot of misbehavior. Bonding Time provides your family with opportunities to repair and improve the parent-child relationship. It gives you time each day that is conflict-free and increases the effectiveness of other parenting skills. With this, you can “reset” your relationship.



## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### I'm busy! How will I fit this in?

A small investment of time now can lead to big rewards later. You likely spend a lot of time now managing your child's misbehavior. Putting aside even 5 minutes a day to bond can help you spend less time arguing and more time enjoying your child. If needed, parents can take turns.

### Why am I the one doing something different when my child is the one misbehaving?

We all do better when we receive encouragement and appreciation from others. It is hard for us to keep working when our good behavior goes unnoticed, even if we aren't always on our “best” behavior. This skill will help motivate your child to get attention by behaving in ways you like.

### This is hard!

Many families find this challenging at first. It gets easier (and more fun!) with practice. If it doesn't go as well as you want, you can always try again. Many families choose to continue doing this even after their children's behavior problems get better.

### Can my partner or other child(ren) join in?

Bonding Time is most effective with one parent and one child. This allows you to devote all of your attention to your child. If possible, each parent can have their own Bonding Time.

### What if my child misbehaves during Bonding Time?

Try to ignore mild misbehavior like whining or complaining. Handle serious misbehavior by ending Bonding Time and saying you look forward to doing it again when your child acts more appropriately. Once your child acts in a way you like, praise it (“Thank you for playing nicely”; “I like it when you talk to me in a polite way”).

### What if my child misbehaves during the day? Can I take Bonding Time away?

Do not take Bonding Time away as a punishment. Ideally, it becomes part of your daily routine. When children have a bad day, they usually need more soothing and positive time with parents, not less. Over time, this special time will help decrease your child's misbehavior.

# PARENT HANDOUT: PRAISING GOOD BEHAVIOR



Disruptive Behavior Skill 2

## WHAT IS PRAISING GOOD BEHAVIOR?

- ▶ Praising Good Behavior is noticing when your child is acting in ways you like and showing your immediate approval and appreciation for those behaviors. This encourages your child to act appropriately, teaches them it feels good to get attention for positive behaviors, and shifts your attention from your child's misbehavior to desired behaviors.
- ▶ The best praise is very specific and direct, or what is called "labeled praise." That is, you let your child know in a clear and straightforward way what you liked about what they did. For example, saying "great job putting your clothes away" is better than saying "great job".
- ▶ Praise is also most effective when it comes directly after good behavior. Giving instant feedback helps your child connect their good behavior with your affection.
- ▶ While most praise is verbal, many children also like physical praise, such as a hug, high five, or pat on the back that shows your approval.
- ▶ This skill is effective with children of all ages, as well as for many different kinds of misbehavior.

## HERE'S HOW TO PRAISE GOOD BEHAVIOR AT HOME

- 1 Pay close attention** to what your child is doing so that when your child exhibits a good behavior, you see it! You are trying to "catch your child being good". Consistently paying attention to your child when they are behaving appropriately will make good behavior more rewarding for them. One way to do this is to **set aside short periods of time** each day to observe your child and practice Praising Good Behavior. Another is to **set an alarm to take a break** from your own tasks, check in on your child, and then praise good behaviors you see.
- 2 Offer praise as soon as possible** after you see good behavior. If you delay telling your child that you like something they did, you will have less control over their future behavior.
- 3 Be specific** about what you like (e.g., "It's awesome how you're working hard on your homework").
- 4 Be enthusiastic and genuine** in your tone of voice. If common in your family, you can also give your child a hug, smile, or high five.
- 5 Be consistent.** Start by giving praise every time your child follows an instruction. This gets you in the habit of spotting good behavior and your child in the habit of being noticed when behaving well.
- 6 Avoid mixing praise with criticism** (e.g., "I love how you got ready for school on time today. Why can't you always do that?"). Focus instead on praising good behavior enthusiastically without any negative statements in order to increase the behavior you want to see (e.g., "I love how you got ready for school on time today!").

Some great times to Praise Good Behavior include when your child...

- a. Follows your instructions or requests** (e.g., "Thank you for sitting down for dinner when I called you; "I appreciate you getting off the phone when your five minutes were up").
- b. Does the opposite of a behavior you dislike** (e.g., "Great job keeping your hands to yourself"; "Thank you for not interrupting while I was talking"; "It makes me happy when you share with your sister").
- c. Shows spontaneous good behavior**, such as following house rules or doing chores without being asked (e.g., "I love it when you clean your room without me telling you to").
- d. Begins to follow a direction they usually don't follow**, or follow inconsistently (e.g., "Wow! It's awesome when you are able to play quietly on your own"; "You did a great job being nice to your brother).

# PARENT HANDOUT: PRAISING GOOD BEHAVIOR TIPS



## HOW CAN PRAISING GOOD BEHAVIOR HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Many parents say their children misbehave to “get attention”. This is often true, because the more disruptive children are, the more attention people usually give them!
- ▶ When a child gets attention for a behavior, *good or bad*, it increases the chances of that behavior occurring again. You can encourage your child to behave by giving them more attention after a good behavior. For instance, if you show your child approval after they follow an instruction (“Thank you for doing as I asked”), your child will be more likely to do so in the future. Similarly, if you scold your child for whining (“Stop it!”), the whining will likely increase.
- ▶ Praising Good Behavior shows your child that you notice when they behave, increasing their motivation to do things you like. This helps you shift your focus toward times your child behaves, instead of times they misbehave. You can then use the power of your attention to its best potential.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### Why should I praise my child for behaving the way I expect them to?

We are all motivated by the type of attention we receive and what we gain for our efforts. Think of giving your child praise like “paying” them for doing their “job”. Even if they just do the minimum expected, they still want to be compensated for being “good enough”, just as adults get paid for going to work even when they don’t go “above and beyond”.

### I’m busy, and it’s hard to pay attention to my child’s behavior this much.

Paying attention to your child’s good behaviors more than their misbehaviors is challenging and perhaps different from what you’re used to doing. With practice, your child should be able to act more appropriately and spend more time independently. Investing in short periods of time now will give you more time for yourself and more positive time with your child in the future.

### I was not raised with praise, so this is uncomfortable. Children should do what they are told!

You are right that you should not “have to” praise good behavior. However, all children are different, and yours may respond better to positive attention than other strategies. Consider trying this skill and seeing if it helps motivate your child to behave better.

### I already tried this, and my child does not respond to praise.

Many parents praise children, but not in the ways we suggest here. All praise is good, but little tweaks like looking out for good behavior, being specific about what you like, and giving praise immediately after good behavior can make it a more effective tool for you. Over time, gaining your praise and approval for good behavior will motivate your child and increase their self-esteem.

### If I pay attention to my children when they behave the way I want them to, won’t they act out more when I’m not paying attention?

Everyone likes to be recognized for their efforts, especially when a relationship has conflict. This skill helps you and your child shift your focus to better behavior and how good it feels for both of you. Over time, as your child’s misbehavior decreases, they will become more motivated to behave in ways you like and to help maintain your improved relationship without as much praise.





# PARENT HANDOUT: SHIFTING ATTENTION



## WHAT IS SHIFTING ATTENTION?

- ▶ Shifting Attention is choosing to ignore *mild* misbehavior from your child, such as whining, sulking, complaining, or arguing, and to instead show your child approval for appropriate behaviors, such as following directions or rules.
- ▶ If you take your attention away from your child when they act in unwanted or inappropriate ways, they will learn these behaviors do not get a response, making them less rewarding. Over time, your child will engage in these behaviors less.
- ▶ At the same time, if you give your attention to your child when they act in appropriate or desired ways, your child will engage in these behaviors more.
- ▶ By Shifting Attention, your child learns that some behaviors consistently get attention (ones you like and are appropriate), while other behaviors consistently do not (ones you dislike and are inappropriate). This strategy works well when paired with the Praising Good Behavior strategy.
- ▶ This skill is effective with children of all ages when addressing mild misbehavior.

## HERE'S HOW TO SHIFT ATTENTION AT HOME

- 1 **Choose the unwanted behaviors you want to ignore.** Shifting Attention works best with *mildly* inappropriate behaviors, such as when your child whines, sulks, complains, argues, talks back, asks the same question repeatedly, or does other things to get your attention.
- 2 When your child exhibits these behaviors, try to **intentionally shift your attention.** Ignore the behavior and avoid eye contact, look elsewhere for a few moments, start doing something else, or even leave the room for a few moments. This shows your child you are uninterested and unaffected by their misbehavior.
- 3 Be sure that when you shift attention, you still **pay close attention** to your child's behavior (so don't leave the room without returning!). That way, when your child stops misbehaving or begins behaving in ways you like, you notice it.
- 4 **Once your child behaves appropriately, show your immediate approval** by making eye contact, smiling, and telling your child what behavior you like (e.g., "It makes me happy when you sit quietly"; "I appreciate when you follow my instructions"). This encourages your child to do these things in the future. Look at Praising Good Behavior (Disruptive Behavior Skill 2) for more tips.
- 5 Some things **not to do** while Shifting Attention:
  - a Do not get pulled into talking, debating, or yelling at your child when unwanted behaviors occur. Re-explaining or justifying your behavior is still a way to give your child attention.
  - b Do not look or act upset. Do your best to hide your reaction so you appear calm and uninterested.
  - c Do not ignore moderate or severely inappropriate behaviors. Shifting Attention is not an effective response for hitting, kicking, cursing, threatening, throwing or breaking things, disobeying directions, or doing anything that is dangerous.
  - d Do not give up! When children don't get attention or stop getting attention, they often try harder to get it. This means what you're doing is working and your child is noticing the shift in your attention, so keep trying!



# PARENT HANDOUT: SHIFTING ATTENTION TIPS



Disruptive Behavior Skill 3

## HOW CAN SHIFTING ATTENTION HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Parents often find it frustrating when children argue, complain, whine, or talk back. But, the more children act this way, the more attention parents usually give them.
- ▶ When a child gets attention for an unwanted behavior, it increases the chances of that behavior occurring again. If your child gets a toy after whining, she is more likely to whine in the future. If your child complains or argues with you until you clean up his mess or leave him alone, he is more likely to complain or argue to get out of other chores.
- ▶ Shifting Attention helps you pay less attention to mild misbehavior such as whining, complaining, sulking, talking back, or arguing. By ignoring these behaviors instead of responding to them, your child learns that these behaviors do not get your attention or lead to anything rewarding. Over time, your child will engage in these behaviors less.
- ▶ Shifting Attention helps you respond to your child's misbehavior in a more consistent and less frustrated or angry way. Using the power of your attention to its greatest potential is one of the most important and effective parenting tools you have at your disposal.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **This is hard! My child is stubborn and acting out more!**

This usually means it's working, so don't give up! Children are smart and know that if they continue to misbehave, parents usually give in. When children are used to getting attention for certain behaviors and that attention goes away, it is normal for them to try harder. This is usually temporary and a sign to you to keep at it.

### **I feel guilty or uncomfortable ignoring my child.**

With Shifting Attention, you are ignoring your child's *misbehavior*, not your *child*. You should keep a close eye on your child, and when they behave more appropriately, return to giving them attention and praise. This way you focus on giving your child attention for good behavior, increasing the chances of good behavior occurring more in the future.

### **What if my child really needs my attention?**

You know your child best. There will be times your child has a genuine need that they may be expressing in an inappropriate way, like complaining about not feeling well. You will usually be able to tell if you need to respond to your child more strongly, or if you have an opportunity to teach your child to cope and seek attention in better ways.

### **If my child misbehaves, how long do I ignore the behavior?**

Remember, the goal is to pay *less* attention to *mild* misbehavior and *more* attention to *good* behavior. When your child complains or whines, shift your attention in another direction. As soon as you see your child behaving in a way you like, shift your attention back to show your approval. If you can do this consistently, your child will quickly learn the difference between behaviors that get your attention (appropriate behavior) and those that *don't* (inappropriate or irritating behavior).



# PARENT HANDOUT: EFFECTIVE DIRECTIONS



## WHAT IS GIVING EFFECTIVE DIRECTIONS?

- ▶ Effective Directions are instructions you give your child that are simple, clear, and direct. They are given when your child's response is important to you and when you are willing to see that your directions are followed.
- ▶ This skill is effective with children of all ages, as well as for many different kinds of misbehavior.

## HOW TO GIVE EFFECTIVE DIRECTIONS AT HOME

- 1 Only give directions if you are willing to see them through.** Don't give an instruction you don't care much about or don't intend to back up with consequences if your child does not follow it.
- 2 Reduce distractions before giving directions.** Turn off the TV, stop video games, put away toys, etc. before giving instructions. You may need to help your child transition from one activity to another to reduce distraction (e.g., "In five minutes, it is time to put the phone down"). This is especially helpful if your child is engaged in a task they really enjoy, like screen time.
- 3 Make statements instead of asking questions.** You are not asking your child for a favor or letting them choose to do what you want. Instead, clearly and directly state what you would like your child to do (e.g., "Please do your homework"; "Please put your phone away"). Try to focus on the behavior you want your child to *do*, instead of what you want them to avoid doing (e.g., say, "Please use a quiet voice" instead of "Don't yell"). Asking your child to do something provides an opportunity for them to say no.
- 4 Give simple and specific commands.** Younger children or those with attention challenges often have difficulty remembering "to do lists". Wait until one instruction has been followed, then give another one. Older children may be better able to keep multiple or multi-step directions in mind.
- 5 Make eye contact while talking.** This will ensure that your child heard your directions and is giving you their undivided attention when you are talking.
- 6 Speak in a calm, business-like voice.** Let your child know you are serious about the instruction(s), but don't let your frustration show. This helps both you and your child stay calm and decreases your child's chances of getting upset in response to your directions.
- 7 Have your child repeat back your directions.** This lets you know they heard you correctly and helps them remember what to do. This is especially helpful for children who have difficulty paying attention, or for older children if you give multiple instructions at once.
- 8 Set a time limit.** Tell your child *when* they need to follow through on your instructions, as well as the *consequences* they will receive if they do not meet that time limit.
- 9 You should also avoid less effective ways of giving directions, such as:**
  - Giving *multiple instructions* at a time (e.g., "Get out of bed, brush your teeth, and eat breakfast").
  - Repeating instructions*, which may make your child more likely to tune you out. Give a direction one time, then give a warning about the consequences for not listening.
  - Not giving consequences* like you said you would. If your child knows you don't mean it, they are less likely to follow the rules.

# PARENT HANDOUT: EFFECTIVE DIRECTIONS TIPS



## HOW CAN GIVING EFFECTIVE DIRECTIONS HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Parents often find it frustrating when their children do not follow directions. In fact, children who misbehave typically get *more* directions a day than the average child. This means they may be used to “tuning them out”.
- ▶ Giving Effective Directions teaches you new ways of giving instructions that maximize the chances your child will follow them.
- ▶ This strategy is one of the easiest and most powerful ways to improve your child’s behavior. By making simple changes in the way you give your child directions, you can significantly improve your child’s behavior.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **This doesn’t work! My child just doesn’t listen.**

Some children may not respond to Effective Directions right away. Keep trying! Over time, children often notice that parents are telling them to do things in a different way, which will make them more likely to respond the way you’d like. You can also combine this skill with other strategies in this guide like Praising Good Behavior (Disruptive Behavior Skill 2) and Shifting Attention (Disruptive Behavior Skill 3) to increase the chances your child will behave.

### **I feel uncomfortable telling my child what to do instead of asking. It seems rude.**

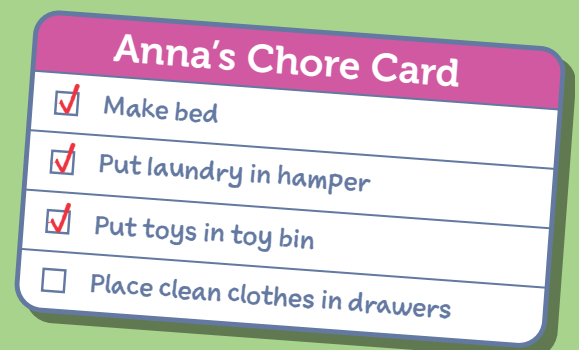
Some parents find this method of giving instructions different or awkward. Remember that you are trying to give directions in a way that makes it clear you are telling your child to do something, not asking or giving them the option to say no. Start your sentences with “please” and use a calm tone of voice. You can be kind but firm!

### **What if I need my child to complete a bigger or longer task and can’t give directions one at a time?**

Ask your child to repeat your directions back to you, which will ensure they heard and understood you correctly. Some children benefit from having a “chore card” that lists the steps involved in a multi-step task. For example, your child can carry around a card that lists the steps to cleaning a room.

### **When I give my child instructions, they act out in serious ways. What should I do?**

If your child’s misbehavior feels uncontrollable or extreme, you may need additional support to manage and change their behaviors. Talk to your child’s primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.



# PARENT HANDOUT: REWARDING GOOD BEHAVIOR

## WHAT IS REWARDING GOOD BEHAVIOR?

- ▶ Rewarding Good Behavior involves tracking your child's behavior and providing specific rewards for good behavior. Rewards encourage your child to follow rules and directions by increasing your child's motivation to act in ways you like.
- ▶ This strategy helps parents and children set clear goals. Parents typically use a chart to track their child's progress, which also provides children with a visual representation of their accomplishments.
- ▶ Families do best with rewards that are simple, sustainable, and desirable to their children. Rewards can be easy and free, extra time with you, playing a game, or screen time. What matters is that you work together to choose rewards you are willing to give and that your child is motivated to earn.
- ▶ This skill is effective with children of all ages, as well as for many different kinds of misbehavior.



## HERE'S HOW TO REWARD GOOD BEHAVIOR AT HOME

1

**Create a list of 3-5 desired behaviors to start.** Be specific about what your child needs to do to earn a reward (e.g., "make bed before breakfast"). Include behaviors with a range of difficulty: some your child already does most of the time (speak nicely to sister") and some your child struggles to do (do homework from 3:00-4:00").

2

**Create a list of at least 5-10 rewards.** Think of as many ideas as you can. Include a range of reward types (items, activities, privileges) and sizes/costs (free, small, medium, large). Have rewards you can give every day (e.g., extra screen or story time) and once a week (e.g., going out to eat), as well as some "big ticket" rewards that take longer to earn (e.g., going to a sporting event or movies once a month). Use our list of reward ideas to get started. Be sure to only include rewards you are willing and able to provide if your child displays ideal behavior. Get your child's input to be sure they are motivated to earn the rewards on your list.

3

**Link behaviors to rewards.** Decide which behaviors earn which rewards, with easier tasks earning smaller rewards and harder tasks, bigger rewards (e.g., If your child makes their bed, they can earn 5 extra minutes of screen time that day. If they help do dishes after dinner, they can earn 15 extra minutes. If they do their chores for a full month, they can earn a trip to the amusement park.). Younger children do best with rewards they earn daily, while older children may prefer to "bank" points to earn bigger rewards over time. With older children, you can also use simple "behavior contracts", where completing a desired behavior earns a reward and not completing it means no reward (e.g., If Liam completes his chores without arguing, he earns 20 minutes of video game time; if he argues, he cannot have video game time and must still complete his chores).

4

**Make a rewards or behavior tracking chart.** Make a chart to track your child's behavior each day, including which rewards they can earn and how often they can earn them. Younger children often like earning stickers for each good behavior, while older children may prefer a checkmark or point system. With younger children, you can make the chart together, which is an opportunity to bond and praise any positive behaviors you see. Be creative and make it a fun project. Use our examples for inspiration.

## HOW TO REWARD GOOD BEHAVIOR AT HOME (continued)

5

**Provide rewards as soon as possible.** When your child earns a reward, be sure to give it to them. Try to provide rewards as soon as possible after your child earns them (*but never before!*). This will help your child connect their good behavior to the positive feeling of earning a reward.

6

**Post the chart somewhere you and your child will see it regularly.** Putting your chart in a busy place in your home, like on the refrigerator, will help you remember to update it every day.

7

**Be consistent and remember to praise good behavior.** Praise your child whenever their behavior is good or earns them a reward. The more parents reliably praise good behavior and provide promised rewards, the better children will feel and the faster behavior will improve. See Disruptive Behavior Skill 2 for tips (Praising Good Behavior).

8

**Adjust the rewards list over time.** As your child's behavior improves or certain rewards lose their value, you can adjust your rewards chart to maintain your child's motivation and progress. For example, after your child is able to consistently do chores 2-3 times/week, you can increase the goal to 4-5 times/week.

### Maya's Behavior Chart

Goal Behavior	Rewards	Frequency	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
Make the bed before breakfast	5 extra minutes of screen time	Can earn once per day	★	★	★			★	
Put homework in backpack before school	Extra bedtime story	Can earn once per day	★	★	★	★			
Do 1 hour of homework without complaining	Cook meal together	Can earn once per day			★			★	
Speak politely to parents for entire day	Have a friend over for dinner	Can earn once per week				★			



# My Behavior Chart

Goal  
Behavior

Rewards

Frequency

M

T

W

Th

F

Sa

Su



# PARENT HANDOUT: REWARDING GOOD BEHAVIOR TIPS



Disruptive Behavior Skill 5

## HOW CAN REWARDING GOOD BEHAVIOR HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Rewarding Good Behavior involves systematically giving your child a reward when they do things you want, such as clean their room, do homework, or use good manners. Rewards incentivize your child to behave and make it more likely that they will do so in the future.
- ▶ This technique helps you create a clear, organized, and fair system to track your child's behaviors and provide rewards. You and your child decide together what they need to do to earn rewards, which will help them focus on behaving and decrease opportunities for arguments between you.
- ▶ While many children behave better when parents use skills in our Disruptive Behavior guide, such as Bonding Time (Skill 1), Praising Good Behavior (Skill 2), and Shifting Attention (Skill 3), other children may need a bigger push. Rewarding Good Behavior can give them that extra nudge. When rewards are carefully chosen and only given for good behavior, you may be surprised how well your child will behave to earn what they want!

### REWARD IDEAS

	Daily/Small Rewards	Weekly or Monthly/Bigger Rewards
Ages 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go to park</li> <li>Read extra bedtime story</li> <li>Play game or do puzzle</li> <li>Watch short video</li> <li>Play with bubbles</li> <li>Take photos</li> <li>Play dress up</li> <li>Have a dance party</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have play date with friend</li> <li>Do art project</li> <li>Go out to eat</li> <li>Take trip to the zoo</li> <li>Camp in the backyard</li> <li>Go to the library</li> <li>Choose dinner for the family</li> <li>Bake treat together</li> </ul>

	Daily/Small Rewards	Weekly or Monthly/Bigger Rewards
Ages 6-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play with friends</li> <li>Spend time with just parents</li> <li>Cook meal together</li> <li>Play cards</li> <li>Go to library</li> <li>Play video game</li> <li>Have extra treat after dinner</li> <li>Make craft together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a sleepover</li> <li>Go for a hike</li> <li>Go swimming, bowling, or biking</li> <li>Go out to eat</li> <li>Plan family outing</li> <li>Visit a museum</li> <li>Go to the movies</li> <li>Decorate bedroom</li> </ul>



# PARENT HANDOUT: REWARDING GOOD BEHAVIOR TIPS



## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### I wasn't raised with rewards and don't like the idea of "bribing" my child.

All children are different, and yours may need some extra motivation to behave the way you want. Your family may already have ways of informally "rewarding" your child, such as promising your child something when they do well in school or follow rules. Here, you're implementing a predetermined, clear, and consistent system to improve your child's behavior, increasing your influence over your child's behavior and keeping you both accountable.

### Why should I reward my child for behaving the way they're supposed to?

Just as adults appreciate being rewarded for their hard work, children respond well to tangible incentives for good behavior. Rewarding Good Behavior helps you shift your attention toward the things your child does right. They provide another way to bond with your child and increase positive time together.

### This seems like it will take a lot of time. I'm too busy!

This may take more time at first, but eventually it becomes part of families' routines. Most parents actually gain time back, because they spend less time managing their children's misbehavior. Over time, parents often find children do not need rewards to behave.

### I started giving rewards, and now my child constantly bugs me about them.

Remember that the goal here is to reward good behavior. This means that if your child is not completing one of the behaviors on your list, they do not earn the associated reward. Do not give in to whining, complaining, or tantruming about rewards. Do not give rewards for behaviors not on the list. Set clear expectations with your rewards chart and stick to it.

### I tried this, and it didn't work. My child isn't motivated by rewards.

Be patient. It may take time for your child to adjust. Using the strategies we suggest, most parents find that they are able to use rewards much more effectively at home.

### Here are some common mistakes parents make when using rewards.

- 1** Giving your child what they want without having to work for it (e.g., Will gets screen time whether he does his homework or not. Sometimes, his parents even let him watch TV first as long as he promises to do his homework afterward. He usually doesn't.)
- 2** Making the goal behavior too challenging or setting reward "bar" too high (e.g., Maria is late to school almost every day. In order for her to earn a reward, she must be on time to school every day for a month. After a few days, she is late again. She gives up trying, because she has already "lost" her chance at that month's reward.)
- 3** Choosing the wrong rewards (e.g., Anna can stay up 20 minutes past her bedtime whenever she is able to express herself calmly instead of arguing or swearing; however, Anna would actually rather earn some time with friends after school, so she doesn't bother to work on her attitude or language.)
- 4** Choosing reward options that are too big or too expensive (e.g., At first, Mark gets a new video game every time he does his chores. Soon his parents are unable to afford new games, and he stops doing chores.)
- 5** Waiting too long to give rewards (e.g., Jenny only gets her rewards at the end of the week, no matter when she behaves well. It's too hard for her to delay gratification for that long, so she doesn't try that hard.)



# PARENT HANDOUT: REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES



Disruptive Behavior Skill 6

## WHAT ARE REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES?

- ▶ Children sometimes act in ways that are disobedient, disrespectful, destructive, or dangerous. You can respond with Reasonable Consequences, which can take two forms: 1) your child makes up for their misbehavior (e.g., cleans up the mess they made), or 2) loses a privilege (e.g., time away from a current preferred activity). Removing your child from enjoyable activities and/or attention discourages them from these behaviors.
- ▶ To use this strategy, you first discuss with your child which behaviors are unacceptable in your family and what their associated consequences will be. By making your expectations and the predictable penalties of misbehavior clear, your child learns to think before acting and to make better choices.
- ▶ This skill is effective with children of all ages when addressing moderate to severe misbehavior.

## HERE'S HOW TO USE REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES AT HOME

- 1 Decide which behaviors lead to a Reasonable Consequence.** Consequences work well for unsafe behavior (e.g., hitting, kicking, running away), destruction of property (e.g., throwing things, punching a wall), and breaking house rules (e.g., not completing homework, refusing to do chores, swearing, being mean or rude). If your child struggles with more mild misbehavior, such as whining, complaining, or having a bad attitude, using other skills in this guide like Praising Good Behavior (Skill 2) and Shifting Attention (Skill 3) can be enough.
- 2 Choose Reasonable Consequences.** Pick the consequences your child will face for the misbehaviors you listed above (review our list of examples for ideas). It helps to tie consequences to misbehaviors (e.g., if your child refuses to turn off the TV, losing TV time may be more effective than sending them to their room). Next, decide how long a consequence will last. For younger children, an immediate and brief break from an activity can be very effective (e.g., if Nina throws her video game controller when she loses a game, she instantly loses access to the device for 15 minutes). For older children, you can require the completion of a task before a privilege is restored (e.g., if Sam shouts at his mother while doing homework, he must help her clean the bathroom before he can ride his bike after dinner like he wants).
- 3 Discuss with your child ahead of time.** Be sure to review the plan with your child. If they know which misbehaviors lead to which consequences, they will not be surprised in the moment and cannot claim you are being unfair.
- 4 When your child begins to misbehave, remind them of the consequences.** Remind your child that engaging in X behavior leads to Y consequence (e.g., "Remember Thomas, it is not okay to call your brother names. If you say mean things to him, you won't be able to play for 15 minutes.").
- 5 Try to deliver Reasonable Consequences immediately after misbehavior happens.** Consequences are most powerful when delivered as soon as possible after misbehavior occurs. If your child throws a tantrum today, they will change their behavior faster if they lose screen time right afterward, rather than the next day.
- 6 Be firm, calm, and consistent.** When delivering a Reasonable Consequence, calmly and clearly remind your child of the connection between their misbehavior and the consequence (e.g., "As we talked about, swearing is not allowed. Because you cursed at me, you will now lose your phone for 10 minutes."). Do not get pulled into arguing or negotiating with your child. The calmer you are, the calmer your child will be. The more consistently you deliver Reasonable Consequences, the faster your child's behavior will improve.

# PARENT HANDOUT: REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES TIPS



## HOW CAN REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ With Reasonable Consequences, you choose predictable consequences your child will face for moderate to severe misbehavior. When children know the penalties for acting in unacceptable ways, they are more motivated to make better choices and take responsibility for their actions. Over time, using Reasonable Consequences results in less misbehavior.
- ▶ This technique increases the consistency of your responses to poor behavior, helps you stay calm when your child misbehaves, and decreases arguments between the two of you. It also lessens the chances that you will turn to a harsh or ineffective form of discipline to manage your child's behavior.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **I tried to use consequences at home and my child's behavior got worse!**

Parents often find that when they start giving consequences, children act out even more. It's common to feel upset if your child's behavior worsens. Remember that if you give in to your child's tantrum or pouting, your child will learn that those are effective ways to get out of facing consequences. In fact, the worse children's behavior is in response to consequences, the more their behavior may improve afterward.

### **When I take a privilege away, my child argues with me or refuses to listen. What do I do?**

This is a typical reaction to consequences. Try to stay calm and firm. Reasonable Consequences are only effective when your child learns that you mean what you say and rules must be followed. Remind your child of the pre-decided consequences for poor behavior and ignore attempts to argue or negotiate. Over time, your child will follow your instructions to avoid facing consequences they do not like.

### **I'm not sure which kinds of behaviors warrant Reasonable Consequences.**

Consequences are most effective in response to moderate to severe misbehavior, such as when children destroy property (e.g., break or throw things), are aggressive or act in unsafe ways (e.g., hit, kick, punch, run away), or violate household rules (e.g., lie, steal, curse, are mean or rude, refuse to do homework or chores). Look at our list of examples for ideas from other families.

You can also use Reasonable Consequences if your child has difficulty with more mild misbehaviors, such as whining, annoying you, or having a bad attitude. However, skills in this guide like Praising Good Behavior (Skill 2) and Shifting Attention (Skill 3) can be even more effective. You can look at these sections of the packet to learn more.

If your child's misbehavior feels uncontrollable, extreme, or constant, you may need additional support to manage and improve their behaviors. Check in with your child's primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.



# PARENT HANDOUT: REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES TIPS



## EXAMPLES OF REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES FAMILIES USE AT HOME

### Younger Children

- ▶ When Monica is done playing, she leaves her toys around the room instead of putting them away. She cannot play with her toys again until she cleans up.
- ▶ Instead of eating his vegetables, Alex throws them on the floor. He cannot have dessert, which he loves.
- ▶ Carmen gets glue and marker on the table, breaking a house rule. She must help clean the table before she can do any more arts and crafts.
- ▶ Henry refuses to share toys with his sister and brother. The next time they play, he has to wait until both his siblings have picked to choose his toys.
- ▶ When it is time for bed, Tracy refuses to turn off the TV. She loses her TV time for the next day.
- ▶ Jordan is frustrated and kicks his sister. He is moved to a separate room and can't play with his sister or toys for 20 minutes.
- ▶ When Nicole calls her parents names, they will not talk to her until she can speak in a respectful way.
- ▶ On the way home, Connor runs into the street. He must hold his parent's hand the rest of the way.

### Older Children

- ▶ Allison is frustrated with her homework and refuses to do it. She cannot use her tablet until her homework is done.
- ▶ While running around the house, Jonathan breaks a lamp. He has to complete household chores to earn enough money to buy a new one.
- ▶ Angela rides her bike outside the part of her neighborhood her parents allow her to ride. She cannot use her bike for the rest of the week.
- ▶ Christopher dislikes his curfew and comes home late. His curfew gets moved up by 30 minutes.
- ▶ Instead of going to the library like she said, Hannah goes to the mall with her friends. She loses her phone and social media access for one week.
- ▶ Anthony leaves his clothes on the floor of his room instead of hanging them up in his closet. Now he only has wrinkled clothes for school.
- ▶ Natalie spends time on her computer instead of completing her assigned chores to clean her room and do the dishes. In addition to her regular chores, she must do an extra chore that week.
- ▶ James and Ben dislike taking turns sharing their video games. Whoever argues or fights loses their turn.

# PARENT HANDOUT: PLANNING AHEAD



## WHAT IS PLANNING AHEAD?

- ▶ Planning Ahead is a skill that helps you anticipate when your child may act up and then take steps to decrease the chances that will occur. Planning Ahead involves:
  1. **Identifying the times, places, and/or situations** where your child is likely to misbehave
  2. **Putting strategies in place** to decrease the chances your child will act up (e.g., rewards they can earn for good behavior)
  3. Deciding on **reasonable consequences** your child will face if they exhibit poor behavior (e.g., loses access to electronics for a short period of time)
  4. **Reviewing the plan** with your child ahead of time
- ▶ Planning Ahead focuses your attention on potentially challenging situations, decreases the chances you will feel angry or embarrassed, and supports you in responding to any misbehavior quickly and carefully. Making a plan reduces the chances your child will behave poorly and sets you and your child up for success.
- ▶ This skill is most effective with younger children.

## HERE'S HOW TO PLAN AHEAD AT HOME

1

**Identify situations that are difficult for your child.** Think of the times, places, and/or situations where your child tends to act up. Do they have a harder time when they are hungry, tired, doing a task they dislike, or transitioning between activities? How do they act in public places, such as grocery stores, parks, restaurants, or shopping centers? Do they whine after being in the car for more than 20 minutes? Do they tend to be more difficult to manage right before or after school?

2

When one of these situations is coming up, use the **Planning Ahead worksheet** to create your plan. We have included an example for you.

3

**Brainstorm ways you can make the situation easier** for your child. For example, will your child be...

- a. **Tired?** Ensure adequate sleep before an event or reschedule if needed (e.g., if your child tends to be well-rested and happy in the morning, schedule doctor's appointments early in the day).
- b. **Hungry?** Schedule activities after meal times or bring snacks along (e.g., take your child to the shopping center after lunch and pack snacks for the trip).
- c. **Bored?** Provide distractions (e.g., give your child a "to do list", like calculating how many different types of cereal there are at the grocery store or playing "I spy" at the post office; bring books or toys to a meal out or on a long drive).
- d. **Overstimulated?** Try to reduce noise, crowds, and factors that make the situation worse (e.g., if your child tends to fight with their siblings over toys, bring a calming toy for each of your children when you visit your neighbor's home and visit at a time when there are less people at home).

4

**Pick up to 3 rules you'd like your child to follow.** Focus on the rules most important to you during your activity, and don't give more than 3. This maximizes the chances your child will remember and follow them.

5

**Choose a reward your child can earn for following these rules.** Review the steps in Rewarding Good Behavior (Disruptive Behavior Skill 5). Remember that many rewards can be free, simple, and easy to provide (e.g., stickers, screen time, time outside). Refer to our list of reward ideas for suggestions.

6

**Choose a reasonable consequence your child will face if they do not follow these rules.** Review the steps in Reasonable Consequences (Disruptive Behavior Skill 6) and refer to our list of examples. Be sure to follow through on delivering consequences if your child does not behave.

7

**Discuss the plan with your child before entering the challenging situation.** Let your child know what is expected of them (the rules), what they can earn for behaving well (the reward), and what will happen if they misbehave (the consequence). Ask your child to repeat the plan back to you to make sure they understand.

8

**Execute your plan, then tweak it for next time.** Remember that children who misbehave may act out more when you implement new rules and limits. This may be challenging at first, but as they adapt to new routines and learn that you mean what you say, their behavior will improve. Keep at it. And when your child does well, be sure to praise them for their great behavior! Review Praising Good Behavior (Disruptive Behavior Skill 2) for tips.

### Planning Ahead for Ella

**Challenging Situation:**

Going out to eat

**I will prepare for this situation by:**

Scheduling meal at her regular dinnertime;  
bringing books and a toy from home to keep her busy

**I expect my child to follow these rules:**

- 1 Sit quietly at the table
- 2 Keep her hands to herself
- 3 Eat with utensils

**If my child follows the rules, they can earn this Reward:**

15 minutes on computer or tablet

**If my child does not follow the rules, they will get this Reasonable Consequence:**

Leave the restaurant early and no dessert

### Planning Ahead

**Challenging Situation (e.g., time, place, event):**

**I will prepare for this situation (e.g. provide distraction, give a snack, reduce stimulation, do task at different time) by:**

**I expect my child to follow these rules:**

- 1
- 2
- 3

**If my child follows the rules, they can earn this Reward:**

**If my child does not follow the rules, they will get this Reasonable Consequence:**



# PARENT HANDOUT: PLANNING AHEAD TIPS



## HOW CAN PLANNING AHEAD HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ One of the most effective ways to reduce children's misbehavior is to anticipate when behavior problems are likely to occur and try to prevent them from happening in the first place.
- ▶ Thinking ahead about when your child's behavior may be particularly challenging allows you to 1) make a plan to decrease the likelihood of misbehavior occurring in those situations, and 2) be ready to respond effectively if your child does misbehave.
- ▶ Without having a plan in place, parents can find themselves responding to bad behavior "on the fly". It can feel stressful, embarrassing, or frustrating to manage children's disruptive behavior in front of other people. This can lead parents to use ineffective discipline strategies that reinforce bad behavior or are too harsh.
- ▶ By Planning Ahead, you have a strategy in place for managing your child in challenging situations. This increases your confidence in handling misbehavior and helps set you and your child up for success.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

**It's embarrassing when my child acts out in public. I always give in. Sometimes I even end up giving them privileges I don't normally allow!**

This is normal! Parents often feel uncomfortable when their child misbehaves in front of others. They usually respond by giving their child what they want so they stop acting out (e.g., allowing candy or electronics to stop tantruming in a store). The problem is, this teaches the child that bad behavior leads to good outcomes, making it more likely they will misbehave in the future. Try to remember that all parents have likely faced this situation, and stick to your plan. If you follow the steps in Planning Ahead, your child will learn it is not okay to act out in those situations and will be less likely to embarrass you in the future.

Behavior problems also occur less often when parents use other effective parenting skills in the Disruptive Behavior guide, such as Praising Good Behavior (Skill 2), Shifting Attention (Skill 3), and Effective Directions (Skill 4). Over time, using skills in this packet will help your child exhibit fewer bad behaviors and more appropriate behaviors. At the same time, you will learn to respond to misbehavior more quickly and effectively.

**When my child acts up and I use my plan, they talk back to me or continue misbehaving.**

Follow through on your plan. Remind your child what the rules are in a clear and calm manner, what the reward is for good behavior, and what the consequence is for bad behavior. Do your best not to give your child more attention if they are talking back. Try to shift your attention (Shifting Attention, Skill 3).

**What should I do if my child acts up and I don't have a plan in place?**

This happens to the best of us! Sometimes you don't have time to make a plan, you forget that you're going into a challenging situation, or something happens that you couldn't anticipate. If this happens, use your skills as best as you can. Don't forget that you have other skills in this guide that you can use when your child misbehaves (e.g., Skill 3, Shifting Attention, or Skill 6, Reasonable Consequences).