

10 Simple Strategies to Promote Positive Behaviour

1. Verbally acknowledge children's efforts.

Tell your child/student(s) specifically what he/she did that you are proud of.

For example, you can say “You were so focused on your math homework tonight! Keep up the good work,” “That was so nice the way you helped your brother with his math homework.”

When children get [specific positive feedback](#) for doing the right thing, they want to do more of it. Virtually all children want to please adults (whether they show it or not) so for most children, specific praise makes a positive impact.

Praise is also an easy way to give your child attention which many children so desperately crave.



2. Use positive body language to show approval for positive behaviour.

[Positive body language](#) can include a smile, thumbs up, high-five, pat on the back, etc.



Keep in mind that some children do not like to be touched and would respond better to something like a thumbs up than a pat on the back. Get to know your child/student to know what they like.

3. Use humour with your child/student(s)

[Research supports the use of humour in creating positive outcomes for children](#). Make jokes, listen to their jokes, smile often, say something silly, sing something you would normally say, or anything else that would make them smile/laugh (make sure it is age-appropriate).



4. Show your child/student(s) that you are happy to see them.

Smile at them when they come into the room; for parents...put your arms out for a hug. Ask about their day, weekend, etc. and really listen when they talk.



5. Remind your child/student(s) that they should be proud of themselves (e.g., “You worked so hard on that science project. You should be so proud of yourself!”).

This helps build internal confidence in them, so they can learn to be proud of themselves for being persistent, working hard, being kind to others, etc. If they feel successful they will be successful.



Recommended Book: [Building Confidence and Improving Behavior in Children: A Guide for Parents and Teachers](#)

6. Take an interest in your child's/students' interests.

Ask them what they enjoy, get excited about their creations or accomplishments, ask them what they want to learn about, ask them their opinion about things, etc. Teachers...[try to incorporate students' interests in the classroom, as research indicates.](#)

Parents...do activities with your children (academic or otherwise) that involve something they are interested in, even if it may not be your favorite activity. Let them choose topics of interest for certain activities.



7. Acknowledge your child/student(s) feelings with empathy.

Be understanding when they are nervous because they are trying something for the first time, frustrated because a writing assignment is difficult for them, disappointed because they didn't get invited to a birthday party, or embarrassed because other students laughed at them.

Avoid saying things like "Stop making a big deal about it," "You'll get over it," or "Why are you having such a hard time with this; it's easy."

Instead, make empathetic statements like, "I understand that this assignment is frustrating for you" or "I understand that you are nervous, that's common when trying something new."

Also, let them know that you are there to help in any way you can.



8. Be open-minded and don't pass judgment on your children/student(s) if their thoughts, values, feelings, or ideas don't match yours.

Of course, it is okay to share your opinion (and unsafe or hurtful behaviour is unacceptable), but in general, don't make them wrong for their opinion.

Children need to feel like they can be open and be themselves around the adults in their lives. When children feel like they won't be judged or made wrong, they are more likely to talk to us when there is a real problem.



9. Be a role model for good behaviour.

If you want your child to treat others with respect, you do the same. If you want your child to be an honest person, set an example of honesty for them.

[How Do Role Models Impact Our Youth and Communities?](#)

10. Follow through on your promises and rules (barring unforeseen consequences) and stay away from empty threats.

If you tell your child/student(s) that they can pick a favourite book to read after they finish their math assignment, make sure you stick to your end of the bargain.

If you tell your child that he can go on the computer after his sister has a turn, make sure he gets a chance to do that.

Have consistent rules that teach your children that they need to stick to their end of the bargain as well.

For example, if you have a rule such as “Homework first, then [TV](#).” stick to that rule by making sure your child completes homework before watching TV. Stay away from empty threats such as “If you don’t stop I am going to leave you here” or “I’ll throw all of your [toys](#) away if you don’t clean them up.”

These types of statements can be scary for children leading to crying, tantrums, etc. and in all probability you are not going to do those things.

If you make empty threats your child will learn that you don’t mean what you say and will also learn to not take you seriously. [Research demonstrates that children need to see consistency](#) and integrity in their [role models](#) to feel a sense of safety and confidence.

When children feel secure and have trust in their caregivers, they are in a better place to learn how to regulate their emotions, cooperate and focus, make healthy choices, and stay confident and motivated.

Say

WHAT YOU
MEAN

— *and* —

MEAN
WHAT YOU

Say