

Can a little praise save parents' sanity?

Behavior Specific Praise

By Leanne Page, MEd, BCBA

How often do you praise your children?

What is your reaction to this question?

Feeling pretty good about your positive interactions?

Do you feel under fire for not being the perky cheerleader mom or dad?

Enter the science of behavior!

Let positive behavior supports help to increase the positive interactions
in your family and help save your sanity!



Enter...

Behavior Specific Praise

Behavior specific praise: include the behavior itself in your praise statements.

By telling your child exactly what you are happy to see, you can increase the future frequency of that behavior.

Nice job!

On what?

Way to go?

What did I do?

When you give your child praise,
do they know what for?

Can they tell you what behavior
they did to earn that praise?

Praise what you prize!

Thank you for sharing with your brother.

I love that you finished all your vegetables!

Great job following directions quickly!

1. Watch for those desired behaviors.
2. Catch them being good.
3. Tell them.
4. Tell them very specifically!

Time to practice...

Behavior Specific Praise

Practice Scenario #1

Sitting at the dinner table with a toddler. You say "Good job!"

Good job for what?! How does your child know?

It could be for:

- Sitting in the chair and not getting down
- Using a fork correctly
- Drinking from a cup correctly
- Not throwing food
- Wiping their own mouth
- Using an inside voice
- Taking bites of food
- Eating all the food
- Cleaning up a spill
- Not dropping food on the floor (or the dog)

Steps to success:

1. Tell your children the expectations clearly.
2. Watch for those behaviors to happen.
3. Praise the specific expected behaviors.
Be clear about what you are praising or rewarding!
4. Watch to see those behaviors keep happening (more often) in the future!

Time to practice...

Behavior Specific Praise

Practice Scenario #2

You take both of your children to the grocery store with you. You say
“Thanks for being such great helpers.”

So what exactly did they do that was helpful at the store?
How are they to know?

You could be talking about:

Staying with you and not wandering off
Holding on to the list and reading off items
Being quiet while you were at the checkout
Sitting in the cart nicely (for littles)
Choosing healthy foods
Using kind words to each other
Not arguing over what type of cereal to buy
Not whining and begging for candy
Waiting patiently while you visited with a familiar face

Steps worth repeating:

1. Tell your children the expectations clearly.
2. Watch for those behaviors to happen.
3. Praise the specific expected behaviors.
Be clear about what you are praising or rewarding!
4. Watch to see those behaviors keep happening (more often) in the future!

The solution...

Behavior Specific Praise

Repeating back the target behavior in the form of verbal praise can help to increase the occurrence of that behavior in the future.

Thank you for emptying the dishwasher.

Way to finish your homework quickly!

I like the way you ate all of your dinner!

Awesome job sharing with your little brother today!

I love how you followed directions the 1st time!

I so appreciate you guys helping me out by: staying close and not arguing with each other while we were at the grocery store!

Great job talking nicely!

Be clear & consistent with:

- ✧ Expectations
- ✧ Instructions

AND

- ✧ Praise statements

The cheat sheet...

Behavior Specific Praise

Sentence starters

Get in the habit of using these sentence starters. The 'fill in the blank', makes it necessary for you to add in the "what for" to your praise statement.

Thank you for...

I like how you...

Good job doing...

Wow! Way to..

You did a wonderful job at...

I really appreciate how you...

Thumbs up for...

When you ..., that was awesome!

You really rock at...

I love seeing you...

Increase your use of praise overall!

Aim to use more praise statements than corrective statements.
Psychology experts recommend a 5:1 ratio of positive interactions to negative.

Goal: 5 praise to each correction

Final thoughts

Behavior Specific Praise

This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to using positive reinforcement as a parent!

The science of behavior, behavior analysis, gives parents a firm foundation to stand on. Instead of just trying out random parenting strategies made up by some person, let's use research-based principles and strategies to teach and strengthen desired behaviors!

The goal is to increase positive, desired behaviors for your children.

- ✓ Teach them how to communicate their needs and wants in functional ways.
- ✓ Teach your kids how to have their own voice and their own personality.
- ✓ Reinforce the behaviors that are appropriate for each setting, and that open up your children to more opportunities for social interaction.

Positive behavior supports increase desired behaviors and teach your children.

If you have a child with severe behavior problems that are impacting your daily life, please find a Board Certified Behavior Analyst to create an individualized Behavior Intervention Plan for you. Contact the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. You can find more information at

www.bacb.com.



Recommended Easy Reads:

1. <http://www.bsci21.org/the-one-phrase-that-can-make-parenting-easier/>
2. <http://www.parentingwithaba.org/2017/07/07/behavior-specific-praise/>
3. <http://www.parentingwithaba.org/2015/03/27/what-is-positive-reinforcement/>
4. <http://www.parentingwithaba.org/2015/06/09/replacement-behaviors/>
5. <http://www.bsci21.org/isnt-positive-reinforcement-bribery/>

Legit Research References

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Kern, L. and Clemens, N. H. (2007), Antecedent strategies to promote appropriate classroom behavior. *Psychol. Schs.*, 44: 65–75. doi: 10.1002/pits.20206

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