

Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

## Parenting and Behavior Changes

### Positive Parenting

In most cases, verbal and corporal punishment (e.g., spanking) increases behavior problems in children. The goal of positive parenting skills is to decrease verbal and corporal punishment in order to decrease behavior problems in children.

### STAR Parenting

STAR is an acronym to help parents to remember what to do when their children are engaging in behaviors of which they disapprove. It is an easy way to cue you to remember what to do when you may find yourself getting upset and a good tool to use to increase positive parenting.

<b>S:</b> Stop	Step away from the situation, take a few deep breaths, count to ten
<b>T:</b> Think	Clear your head and carefully consider your next words and step
<b>A:</b> Ask	What is expected of a child his/her age? Is this a fair expectation?
<b>R:</b> Respond	Use limit setting strategies

### Challenging Cues

Every child knows who to push their parents' buttons. First, identify what your buttons are. Then, focus on your thoughts and feelings when your child pushes your buttons. What are the automatic thoughts or hot thoughts that are going through your head? What are you feeling? Have a specific plan for what to do when your buttons are pushed.

### Child Development and Expectations

Every child is unique, and each child's development is different. Although there are norms expected for most children to reach, there are children that do not meet milestones at the expected ages and there are children who reach milestones earlier than expected. Parents have to focus on what is expected of their own child. What can *my* child do? What is he/she

able to do at this age? Encourage the child to try new activities and provide reinforcement when he/she is successful. Remember that children have feelings too. So, when you are trying new activities with your child, make sure that some activities have a fairly high success rate. A child is like to get distressed with repeated failed attempts, just like an adult will. It is good to identify high, low, and fair expectations for your child.

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## **Nurturing and Positive Reinforcement**

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Positive reinforcement is giving a child something (e.g., a toy, game, time to play, or verbal praise) to increase a good behavior. For example, if your child puts his dinner plate in the sink after he has finished his meal, a good positive reinforcement would be to tell the child good job or thank you for putting your plate in the sink. Other examples of positive reinforcement are stickers on behavioral charts. Young children love to show parents and teachers how successful they have been at their work. Having chore charts in the house with stickers when jobs are completed is a good way to positively reinforce good behavior. Giving a child a hug for nurturance and support after a long day is another way for parents to maintain good relationships with their children. Children get tired after a long day, just like adults and sometimes they need someone to lean on and to be there for them.

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## **Discipline**

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Discipline works with positive reinforcement. As positive reinforcement increases, disciplinary actions typically decrease. Good behaviors should increase as a result of positive reinforcement. When applying discipline, be strong and firm. Do not challenge your children and avoid power struggles (e.g., when your children challenge your rules and argue against your point). Avoid yelling as it is a negative interaction. The more frequently parents yell, the more the children learn that it's okay to yell too. It increases negative interaction in the family unit. The most effective discipline is the one that should be used and the most effective method may not be spanking. Spanking, or any form of corporal punishment, should be avoided and only used as a last resort. Other methods of discipline include the removal of possessions or removal of time to play a game or watch TV. Each child is different. As a parent, you know what your child values. Removing valuable things in the child's life may be the most effective form of discipline. The final rule on discipline is that it must be consistent. For example, you tell your child that if he goes to play outside, he will not be able to have ice cream after dinner. Your child makes the choice to go play outside anyway. After dinner he asks for ice cream. You have to be firm in your decision and not permit him to have ice cream. Additionally, in two-parent homes, both parents should be on the same page regarding disciplinary actions.

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## **References**

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