

# Praise

**Use This When:**

To increase child's appropriate behavior.



**Objectives:**

- to inform the caregiver about the value of praise
- to provide the caregiver with strategies to increase the child's appropriate behavior
- to encourage participation in treatment

**Steps:**

<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Provide rationale</b></p>	<p>Elicit the caregiver's opinion regarding the value of praise. Explain that praise has many benefits, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leads to increased appropriate behavior and decreased inappropriate behavior,</li> <li>• contributes to the child's positive self-image, and</li> <li>• motivates the child to persevere through steps to master new skills or accomplish difficult tasks.</li> </ul>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>How to praise: Labeled praise</b></p>	<p>Instruct caregiver to provide labeled praise that describes a specific behavior to teach the child what behaviors are valued by the caregiver. For example, "I like the way you put your toys away" conveys more information than "Good job."</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>How to praise: Enthusiasm</b></p>	<p>Instruct caregiver to provide praise using a sincere and enthusiastic tone, to vary phrases used to convey praise (e.g., "I like it when you..."; "You did a nice job..."), and to use nonverbal rewards (e.g., high-5's, smiles, hugs, etc.).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>How to praise: Avoid criticism</b></p>	<p>Instruct caregiver to provide praise without criticism. The caregiver of a noncompliant child might say "Good job putting the toys away!" Why can't you always do that?" but this would be better stated as "Good job putting the toys away!" The caregiver of an anxious child who approaches a feared stimulus might say "See! That's not so scary!" in an attempt to praise, but this statement minimizes the child's bravery. This sentiment would be better phrased as "I am so proud that you slept without your night light!"</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>How to praise: Contingent on good behavior</b></p>	<p>Instruct caregiver to provide praise immediately following the desired behavior. Praise is for appropriate behavior on its own, not for when a child is demonstrating appropriate behavior within the context of inappropriate behavior (e.g., playing independently while breaking toys).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Find opportunities to praise</b></p>	<p>The caregiver can create opportunities to praise, such as by issuing commands and praising compliance, or he/she can "catch the child being good"—when the child demonstrates appropriate behavior on his or her own or follows a rule. It is especially important to provide praise in the instance when a child behaves appropriately or carries out a chore without being asked to do so in order to increase the likelihood of such behavior in the future.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Address concerns</b></p>	<p>Address concerns if the caregiver expresses reluctance towards using praise or has questions about the effects of praise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A child should know how to behave without praise. A child who receives praise will learn to cooperate only to receive praise or</i></li> </ul>

## Steps:

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*rewards.* Children learn good behavior through positive reinforcement. (Adults, too, work for reinforcement in the form of paychecks, for example). Behaviors that are praised/rewarded are likely to increase and behaviors that are ignored are likely to decrease. Children who receive little praise tend to be the ones who are most motivated by external rewards. However, children who receive frequent praise internalize their caregivers' values regarding appropriate behavior and behave because they have learned it is the right thing to do.

- *There are ways to make a child behave without using praise.* Caregivers who do not use praise frequently rely on threats or punishment to coerce good behavior. Over-reliance on such strategies usually does not result in consistent good behavior without some other negative effect on the child. Praise increases a child's self-esteem. Additionally, caregivers provide a model for behavior for children. Caregivers who use frequent praise rather than critical statements influence their children to be positive towards others and to themselves.
  - *Praise should be reserved for exceptional behavior.* This approach results in infrequent praise and ignores the learning process a child goes through completing small steps towards a larger goal (e.g., dressing oneself in mismatched clothing worn inside out is a praise-worthy step along the way to dressing oneself appropriately).
  - *The child is so naughty there is no behavior to praise.* It is unreasonable to believe that there are no instances of appropriate behavior to praise. Encourage the caregiver to consider situations in which there are no demands on the child or during which the child is engaged in a favorite activity. Appropriate behavior under such conditions is praise-worthy.
  - *The child appears not to enjoy receiving praise.* Some children appear to ignore or outright reject caregiver praise. This may have occurred because they have received little praise in the past and have internalized a negative self-image. These children particularly need praise so they can develop positive self-image.
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## Helpful Tips:

- Remember to praise often
- Remember to review often, by **asking questions**
- Remember to use examples to explain concepts
- Remember to practice often and provide corrective feedback to the caregiver
- Brief any other caregivers, teachers, or other adult figures who may be involved
- Simplify these steps if you have to
- This material can be covered in more than one session/meeting