

Sunny days ahead!

Helping young children overcome stormy behavior

What is the practice?

The practice is a set of relationship-building and behavior-management techniques that parents can use during playtimes and everyday activities with 2- and 3-year-old children. The practice focuses first on building a strong adult-child relationship (using techniques like praise for appropriate behavior) and then on controlling difficult behavior (with techniques that include establishing consistent consequences). The combination of relationship building and behavior management is key because children change their behavior more readily with guidance from an adult with whom they have a positive relationship.



How do we do it?

During adult/child playtimes and everyday activities, promote a positive relationship with a child by:

- 1 Describing and praising appropriate behavior** ("You're using lots of crayons to make your drawing. I like the way you're handling the crayons so gently.")
- 2 Imitating appropriate play** (Parent draws a circle on paper and colors it in after the child performs the same action.)
- 3 Reflecting and expanding upon appropriate statements made by the child** (Child: "I like to draw big." Parent: "It looks nice when your picture fills the whole page!")

While engaging in playtimes and everyday activities, promote prosocial child behavior by:

- 1 Giving simple, direct, and specific commands using a calm and respectful tone** ("Please pick up the crayon you just threw on the floor.")
- 2 Praising the child when she follows directions in a way that lets her know what you liked about her behavior** ("Thank you for picking up the crayon so quickly.")

If any of the above fails to work, **consistently implement a series of consequences when the child fails to follow directions so that she learns what to expect if she doesn't listen** ("If you don't pick up the crayon, you will have to sit in the time-out chair." If she continues to not listen, parent consequently places her in time-out until she complies with the original request.)



See it happen

Try this idea: Work on building a sand castle together with your child using various plastic molds. During the course of the building project, describe and praise his attempts to build the various parts of the castle. Let your child take the lead in determining the castle's design by imitating his actions. If he starts to dig a moat around the castle, for example, assist him in digging from the other side. When the project is complete, instruct him to put the plastic molds away and be sure to provide specific praise when he follows your requests and directions.



Is it working?

- Has the number of the child's temper tantrums decreased?
- Has the child demonstrated improved attention to adult directions?
- Is the child following adult directions more often?

