



Parenting/Teaching Tips:

CLEAR, DIRECT STATEMENTS (USE "DO" VS. "DON'T"):

It is important to tell children what to do versus what not to do. The reason for this, is that telling someone what NOT to do doesn't teach anything new. Using the following techniques will increase the effectiveness of your directions and in turn decrease general noncompliance to your requests:

- **Eye contact-** Before saying anything to a child obtain eye contact. Go over to the child, get on the same level as the child (i.e., kneel down), make eye contact, then make a statement (i.e., please put your dishes in the sink).
- **Be direct & specific (Use 'first...then...' statements)-** Children often hear only the first part of a statement and tune out the rest. Tell the child what you want them to do followed by what s(he) will earn upon completing the task. For instance, "first, I need you to put your dishes in the sink, then you can play on the computer").
- **Require the child to repeat the instruction-** To ensure that the child heard (and understood) the instruction ask him/her to repeat it back to you (if possible). Position yourself so that you can see the child and s(he) can see you, call the child's name, ask him/her to look at you, then state the specific instruction in a firm voice (e.g., "please put your dishes in the sink"). To ensure comprehension, ask the child to repeat the instruction back to you by stating, "what did I ask you to do?" If the child asks "why" provide a brief explanation, such as "because the dishes need to be cleaned after dinner;" avoid using a generic response, such as "because I said so," or "I already told you why."

PIVOT & PRAISE ("Catch em' being good"):

Adult attention is among the most powerful tools parents/teachers have available. Children and adolescents require a lot of attention from others-parents, family and peers. As a result, it is important to attend closely to the 'type' and 'dose' of attention you are providing. The 'type' of attention refers to positive attention (i.e., verbal praise) or negative attention (i.e., verbal reprimands). The 'dose' of attention refers to the amount of attention you are giving at any one time regardless of whether you (or the other individual) perceive it as positive or negative. *Individuals respond more favorably to positive attention versus negative attention.* Providing attention for 'good behavior' will result in more 'good behavior;' conversely, providing attention to 'bad behavior' will result in more 'bad behavior.' For instance, if a child is yelling/screaming because they "want" a toy, it is recommended that the adult turn away from the child without saying anything (i.e., pivot), wait for the child to calm down, then, when the child is calm, turn back and provide the child with attention for being calm (i.e., praise).

CONSISTENCY

Children are extremely versatile in figuring out how to get what they want. As a result, children will go to whatever extremes are necessary to gain what they want. If one individual gives in while another does not, then the child will learn to behave one way around one person and another way around everyone else (i.e., the child will behave appropriately around one individual, but behave inappropriately around other individuals). When you are teaching a child how to behave it is important to ensure that *EVERYONE IS DOING THE SAME THING*-This reduces the likelihood of sending mixed messages and confusing the child.



Parenting/Teaching Tips:

REQUESTING:

Children often desire access to preferred items/activities (e.g., toys and games) as well as adult attention and affection. Many children behave inappropriately (e.g., pushing, pulling, grabbing, yelling, screaming, etc.) to gain access to toys and other's physical or verbal attention. It is important to teach children alternative ways to gain access to preferred items/activities. Children should learn to ask adults and other children to play with their toys using various carrier phrases, such as, "I want," "can I," "will you," and "give me" followed by "please." When children learn to ask appropriately this allows opportunities for development of other prosocial skills, such as sharing, playing, and turn-taking. Likewise, children are often impatient when desiring attention from an adult. As such, children should be taught to ask for an adult's attention by saying, "excuse me," tapping an adult on the shoulder, waiting for a pause in the ongoing conversation, or requesting assistance via stating, "I need help" or "can you help me?" By teaching children appropriate ways to gain access to preferred items/activities and to gain parental/teacher attention the likelihood of engaging in inappropriate behavior is reduced substantially.

If you or someone you know is in need of behavioral services please feel free to contact BASIX Behavioral Health:

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