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## Practice Being a Positive Parent

by Christina C. Gordon, MS, FCS

Nobody ever said parenting would be easy. The day-to-day activities parents go through are tough, and often parents are tired at the end of a long day of work. It can be hard to remember to “stay positive” when your child makes a mistake, or does something that frustrates you. Here are some tips to help you “accentuate the positive” during those trying times:

- **Take perfection out of your vocabulary.** Television and movies bombard parents with impossible-to-reach examples of family life and parenting. Do not get bogged down with struggling to meet these expectations.
- **Remember that your child is learning.** It is easy to think that young children do things to annoy or frustrate us on purpose. However, this is rarely true. Children are always learning, and testing their limits is part of this process. If you stay consistent and positive in the way you respond to their behaviors, you will see positive results.
- **Use positive statements to correct behaviors.** Take “no” or “don’t” out of your teaching statements. Instead of “don’t run”, try “use walking feet”. “We look with our eyes, we feel with our hands” is another way to say, “hands off”. It works for your child’s classroom teachers...it can work for you, too!
- **Praise with a purpose.** Children hear different types of praise all day long. “I love your picture”, or “You are so smart” are some of the many statements they hear during the day. While children can never hear “I love you” enough, choose your times to praise with a purpose. Instead of saying, “Good job!” over and over, point out the activity that your child is doing well, and let them know how much you appreciate them.
- **Catch your child doing something good.** Be aware of and comment on those times when your child is following the rules, behaving appropriately, or helping you out by doing his job. Pay attention to what you want repeated and it will be repeated.

**Parent for the future, not just right now.** Parents often just want to stop the negative behavior when it’s happening, without thinking about how to correct the behavior in the long run. Invest the time now to make staying positive a habit. The reward will be a positive, confident child who behaves well and feels good about his role in your family!

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