

# Catch them being good

Carley, aged 8, loves bouncing on the trampoline and playing with other children in the neighbourhood. When she comes home from school she has a quick snack and then goes out to play. She doesn't stop to put her school bag away, change her shoes or tidy up after her snack even though her mother, Sandy, tells Carley almost everyday. It is so irritating. Sandy finds it difficult not to yell at Carley when she doesn't do what she is asked. Sandy has tried sending Carley to bed early for her disobedience but all it seemed to achieve was an angry face and more dawdling at bed time.



Recently Sandy decided to try a different approach. She wrote a list of the things she wanted Carley to do after school, discussed it with her daughter, asked for her help, and put it on the fridge. Each night she made a point of ticking off the things Carley had done. She thanked and praised her for doing what she had been asked. Carley's father also told her how happy he was that she was doing things to help. Carley feels really proud to know her parents are so pleased with the things she can do to help at home.

Psychological research has shown that following up a person's behaviour with something positive makes it more likely that the behaviour will happen again. Praise and other kinds of acknowledgement are motivating, and are often needed to help children change their behaviour.

*You can help children to learn positive behaviours by telling them clearly what you want and praising or rewarding them when they do it.*

## Sounds too easy?

What else might be needed?

- Is what you have asked the child to do clear enough? Saying "I want you to pick up the clothes off the floor in your room before you go out to play" is clearer than saying "I want you to tidy your room".
- Are you asking for behaviour that your child can do? Sometimes we ask children to do things that are too difficult for them to do without help.
- Are you asking them to do too many things at once?
- Do you find that you are getting angry with your child for things not done more often than praising his or her efforts?

## Something to try during the week

Double the amount of praise you give your child for his efforts in the coming week. You may need to expand your own vocabulary so you have a variety of positive comments ready to encourage your child.

## Ways to say "Well Done!"

Now you have it! WOW!  
 Nice going. You remembered!!  
 Great work!  
 You're doing well!  
 SUPER! STUNNING!  
 You outdid yourself today.  
 You did it that time!  
 That's coming along nicely.  
 How did you do that? Fantastic.

*If you use positive discipline a lot of the time, you may see more smiles and more cooperative behaviour from your child.*

## Catch your child being good

Keep a record of the behaviours you are pleased about. Reading them over together from time to time will be a positive experience for both you and your child.

You may ask: "Is praise enough to motivate my child?" Praise and acknowledgement work in most cases, but sometimes you may need to **add** an incentive plan with rewards to help change behaviour. If you do add an incentive plan, think carefully about your choice of reward.



## Tips for using rewards effectively:

- Ask your child about what they like. If they suggest the reward, it will be more motivating.
- Make sure the reward is realistic for you to give.
- If the child becomes bored by use of the same reward, use a menu of 10-15 items to create variety. When your child meets his/her behaviour expectation, he/she selects one reward from the menu.
- A mystery reward is also very motivating for most children.
- If a child wants to earn a big reward (e.g. computer game, movie, etc.), you could use a token system. Each day he/she could earn tokens to be exchanged later for a bigger reward.
- Emphasise social rewards and privileges over material rewards. Material rewards (e.g. toys, money, etc.) are expensive and often don't work. Many children enjoy having time to spend with their parents or carers. Rewards involving time and activities with parents or carers, can be reinforcing and promote good relationships at the same time.

Further information on positive discipline is available in the KidsMatter resource pack at your school on *Effective discipline*.

The following web pages may also be of interest:

[http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/behaviour\\_tools\\_intro.html](http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/behaviour_tools_intro.html)

[www.kidscount.com.au/english/topic04.asp](http://www.kidscount.com.au/english/topic04.asp)

This site has information available in several languages in both printed and audio files.

Go to [www.kidscount.com.au](http://www.kidscount.com.au) to select the language you require.

This resource is part of the KidsMatter Primary initiative. The team at KidsMatter welcomes your feedback at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au)



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