

Catch A Kid Doing Good!

Mom tells Joey to stop running in the kitchen. Next mom is telling Joey to stop running in the living room. Now mom is yelling at Joey to stop running through the rest of the house and she is about to loose it with him...

Frustrated parents of young children are yelling and spanking because they do not know other ways to get their children to mind their words. Research shows however, that yelling and spanking often creates new problems. Children who are continually shouted at or spanked tend to be more aggressive in the playground, have less developed problem-solving skills and lower self-esteem.

However, when parents use other skills for gaining compliance and co-operation, children tend to be better adjusted, play more co-operatively and respond to their parents' words.

Here's how it works:

Imagine there are two dogs inside of you – one good and the other bad. Now imagine they are fighting constantly. Which one will win the fight? The one you feed! Why, because you are strengthening it.

Children's behaviour works the same way. Feed the negative and you will increase this behaviour. Feed the positive and you will see more positive behaviour. And the food of behaviour is your attention.

Unfortunately however, many parents focus on catching children when they are misbehaving. They feed the wrong dog. They yell stop this and stop that! This has to change. The main focus must not be on catching misbehaviour. The focus must be on catching children doing things right.

Mom tries something different. As Joey is running she tells him to stop running and to play quietly with his lego set in the family room. As Joey is playing quietly, mom soon goes over to him and simply mentions how nicely he is playing. Joey continues to play quietly and several minutes later, mom goes to him and mentions it again. They smile at each other and mom gives Joey a hug.

The truth of the matter is that Joey was actually a good listener and had always been a good listener. Every time mom told him where to stop running, he did, he just went on to another place.

We cannot assume that children will automatically know what to do, when we tell them what not to do. Tell your child directly what you expect and follow it up with feedback when they do it. Feedback is how you give attention to feed behaviour.

For feedback, all you have to do is mention the very behaviour the child is doing. *You are playing quietly... You ate your broccoli... You shared your toy.* If you forget to mention it as the behaviour is occurring, mention it later, like at bedtime. *You put the crayons away this afternoon, all by yourself!*

The key is not to withhold feedback, but to provide it for appropriate behaviour. Whenever you see your child doing something you would like to see repeated, provide feedback.

Joey is now in bed. Both Joey and Mom feel good about themselves and each other. The home is calm. Mom is relaxing with a cup of tea.

Remember: Catch a kid doing good... and tell them! You'll both be glad you did.

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Buy the book:

To order Direnfeld's book, *Raising Kids Without Raising Cane*, send a cheque or money order in the amount of \$12.00 to:

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