



## Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Use these principles to improve your child's life and future.

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CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) are principles that help *all* children improve their behavior at school, at home, and in the community. The benefits are enormous. When children are in positive, predictable, consistent environments, they have better grades, better behavior, higher self-esteem, better school attendance, greater motivation, and more success in life.

Schools practice PBIS. As a parent, you can too. This presentation will show you how to use positive approaches to teach your child new behavioral skills to use at home and in the community and that will be important throughout life.

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# What Is PBIS?

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Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is:

- a researched-based approach to eliminate problem behavior based on the assumption that children and youth can develop new behavioral skills when adults:
  - **teach** the expected behaviors
  - **recognize and reward** those behaviors when they occur, and
  - **consistently enforce meaningful consequences** when they don't occur



Researchers have spent years studying behavior and how to influence it. They've found that by understanding the reason for the problem behavior, a new, more appropriate response can be developed. PBIS is based on this research.

PBIS requires just three steps:

- Teach the expected behaviors
- Recognize and reward them when they occur
- Consistently enforce meaningful consequences when they don't occur

## Keep It Positive

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Repeated punishment does not help children develop appropriate behavior skills.

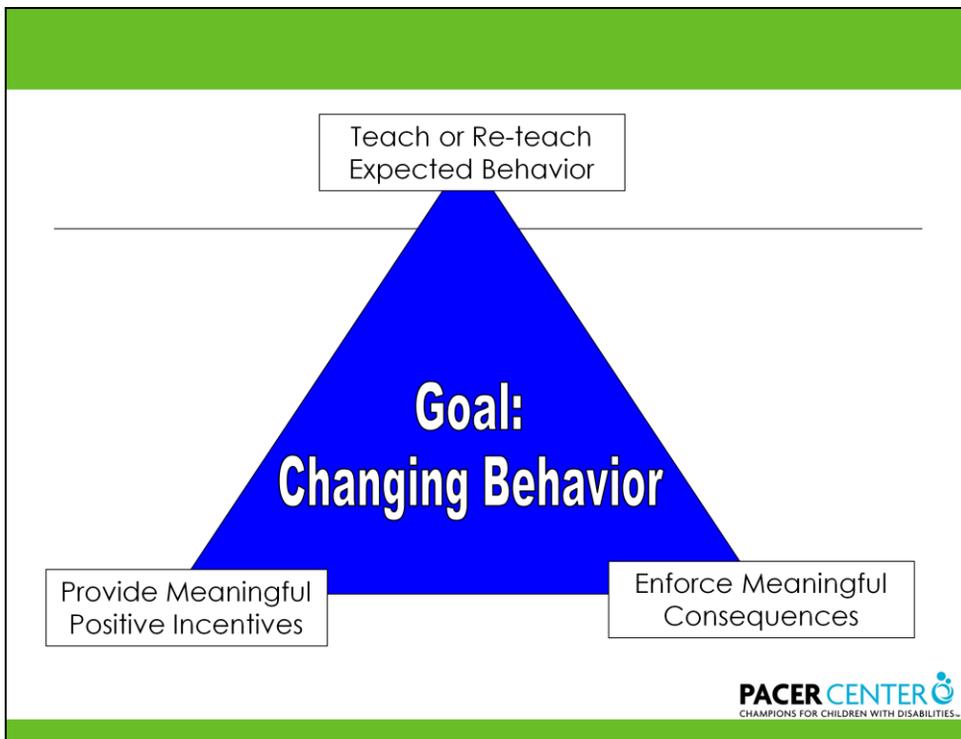
PBIS is a better solution.

Like many parents, you may have found that repeated punishment does not teach your child more socially appropriate behaviors. That is because punishment is just a response to the inappropriate behavior. It does not teach a replacement behavior.

Children will continue to use a behavior, even if it's inappropriate, as long as it helps them meet a need. For example, a younger child who wants your attention may continually interrupt you whenever you are on the phone. Why? It works. You respond (even though it may be negative attention), the behavior is reinforced, and your child is likely to do it again.

Changing that behavior using PBIS is a better solution. You might, for example, plan an activity with your child before your phone call, explain that he or she can continue the activity while you're on the phone, and that once you are off the call, you will continue the activity together.

PBIS is a systematic approach to behavior instruction and management.



Social behaviors can be taught in the same way as academic skills are taught. PBIS emphasizes three keys to changing behavior.

First, teach the child what behavior you expect.

Second, provide consistent recognition for positive behaviors. “Catching” the new behavior when it happens and providing meaningful, positive incentives will reinforce the expected behavior.

Finally, enforce meaningful consequences. Procedures for responding to challenging behavior should be consistent.

## Teach Expected Behavior

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- Begin with simple, broad rules.
  - Be safe, be responsible, be respectful.
  - Describe what each of these means.
- Clearly state the expectation.
- Provide examples of appropriate behavior.
- Provide examples of inappropriate behavior.
- Re-teach expectations regularly.

To teach expected behaviors, start by identifying what is important to your family and then establish some simple rules. Here are some examples.

Is it important for everyone to be safe? What does that mean in your family? For younger children, being safe might mean telling an adult when they are leaving the yard. For middle-school children, it might mean telling an adult if they are going to a friend's house after school. For high school students, it might mean coming home by curfew.

Is it important to be responsible? What does that mean in your family? For younger children, responsibility might include setting the table. For middle school children, it might mean walking and feeding the dog, and for high schoolers it might mean mowing the lawn.

Is it important to be respectful? What does that mean in your family? For younger children, respect might mean saying please and thank you. For middle school children, it might mean speaking in a normal voice tone even when they are upset, and for high school students it might mean talking through a disagreement and working toward a solution.

Providing examples of inappropriate behavior also may be helpful in clarifying expectations. You might, for example, demonstrate to your middle-school child the difference between a calm tone of voice and an upset tone.

Plan to re-teach the expectations over a period of time. Re-teaching helps to reinforce the new behavior through practice.

When you clearly state the expectations, provide examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and re-teach your expectations regularly, your child will understand what behaviors are expected.

## Decide Where to Practice the Expected Behaviors

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- Once the new behavior is taught, practice in different settings
  - Define the expected behavior in different locations.
  - State the behavior in terms of what you want to see.

Once your child has learned a new behavior at home, you can help him or her explore ways to apply it in a variety of places. For example:

- If you expect your young child to tell an adult before leaving the yard, also expect him or her to do the same when visiting someone else's yard.
- If you expect your middle-school child to use a normal voice tone when upset, also encourage him or her to practice and use that skill when disagreeing with peers.
- If you expect your high school child to be responsible about mowing the lawn, expand that expectation to be responsible about snow-blowing in the winter.

By stating the behavior in terms of what you want to see -- "I appreciated that you told Jeremy's mom you were leaving to go to the park," or "I really liked the way you explained to Sue what you were upset about"--you are emphasizing the positive, desirable behavior.

## Be a Teacher

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- Discuss and model the expected behaviors to use:
  - At home
  - In the locations where specific behavior is expected
- Re-teach regularly and when necessary.
- Keep the expectation positive.

Modeling the expected behaviors yourself will help your child learn. Making comments while you are practicing the new behavior helps your child make the connection. For example saying, "Let's set the table together tonight," models the expected behavior, and saying, "Thanks for setting the table," reinforces both respect and responsibility.

Even though an expected behavior has been taught or even used occasionally, it won't automatically become a habit. Habits take time and practice to cultivate. Be conscientious and deliberate about teaching the expected behaviors. Keeping the expectation positive is equally important to success.

## Provide Meaningful Positive Incentives

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- Teaching is not enough to change behavior.
- Children need to be recognized and rewarded when they meet the expectations.
- Positive recognition must occur at least four times as frequently as negative recognition for behavior change to occur.

Teaching and modeling new behavior can help children learn what to do, but it's not enough to change their behavior. Research shows that you also need to recognize children's positive behaviors four times more often than you note their negative behaviors.

So how will you recognize your child's appropriate behavior? Some people create incentives that involve the entire family. They might, for example, keep a chart that shows each time respectful behaviors are used, and then plan a family outing when the chart is full. Others might have specific incentives for each child. For example, if your son is learning to set the table without being reminded, he might earn 10 points every time he remembers. Once he reaches 50 points, he can have an agreed upon reward.

However you decide to reward positive behaviors, be consistent and conscientious to motivate your child.

## Enforce Logical Consequences for Negative Behaviors

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Logical consequences should:

- Be stated clearly in advance
- Be understood
- Be enforced consistently
- Apply to all in a family

Learning new behaviors takes time, and sometimes there are slip ups. Just as your child knows there will be rewards for positive behaviors, he or she should know that there will be meaningful consequences for negative behaviors.

Logical consequences should be stated clearly in advance, be understood, be enforced consistently, and apply to everyone in the family. For example, if the expectation is that homework must be completed before your child can watch TV, the consequence for not finishing homework should be related to watching TV rather than to another privilege, such as going to a friend's house.

## In Summary

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- Teaching skills, rewarding appropriate behavior, and enforcing consequences will reduce overall problem behavior.
- Helping your child to learn appropriate behavior skills will contribute to better conduct at home, school, and in the community.

By teaching your child skills, rewarding appropriate behavior, and enforcing consequences, problem behavior will be reduced over time, sometimes quite dramatically.

Through your careful planning and by being consistent and deliberate, you can help your child learn appropriate behavior skills that will contribute to a more harmonious home life and influence good behavior at school and in the community.

